

CHAPTER III.

BENJAMIN WILLIAM BRIGHT.

WHEN the villagers looked from their windows and rested their eyes upon a tall, white-haired man, erect to severity, in a suit of rusty black, they invariably exclaimed:

"Well, I never; if it ain't ole Beniman Willum Bright?"

Generally once a month, implemented by a cane in one hand and a market basket in the other, he bent his steps over the uneven plank walk to the general store.

His appearance always excited an exclamation, for, although numbered among the inhabitants, he seldom mingled in their life. In fact, he lived so entirely apart and so apparently unconscious of his neighbors on the hillside and in the valley that as the years went by the uncharitably inclined summed up this exclusiveness in declarations which marked Benjamin as "simple," "queer," or "crazy."

It was several years before his hair had turned from a brown to a silver white that he had wandered to the hillside. Travel-stained and weary he had stumbled into the general store one night in early spring, and depositing his possessions, a cane and a