

CHAPTER XXI.

The revival into which was merged the special meetings at Dr. Guide's church continued so long that religion became absolutely and enthrallingly fashionable at Bruceton. Many drinking men ceased to frequent the bar-room of the town, some old family feuds came to an end, and several couples who should have been married long ago were joined in holy bonds of wedlock.

Nevertheless, the oldest inhabitants agreed that never before had life in Bruceton been so pleasant. Everybody was on good terms with everybody else, and no one, no matter how poor or common, lacked pleasant greetings in the street from acquaintances of high degree.

There had been some wonderful conversions during the meetings; hard-swearing, hard-drinking men had abandoned their evil ways, and were apparently as willing and anxious as any one else to be informed as to how to conform their lives to the professions which they had made. All the other churches sympathized with the efforts which Dr. Guide's flock had been making, for they themselves had been affected to their visible benefit.

Dr. Guide himself became one of the humblest of the humble. Always a man of irreproachable life and warm heart, it never had occurred to him that anything could be lacking in his church methods. But he also was a man of quick perceptions, so as the meetings went on, and he realized that their impetus was due not at all to anything he had said or done, but solely to the personal example of Sam Kimper, he fell into deep thought and retrospection. He resolutely waived all compliments which his clerical brethren of other denominations offered him on what they were pleased to call the results of his ministrations, and honestly insisted that the good work was begun by the example set by Sam Kimper, the ex-convict.

Dr. Guide was an honest believer in the "Church Universal," but he had been trained to regard the Church of Rome as the "Scarlet Woman" of Revelation, and whenever he met Father Black in the streets he recognized him only with a dignified bow. The day before the closing meeting, he encountered the priest at the turning of a corner—too suddenly for a change of manner.

"My dear brother," exclaimed Father Black, extending both hands, and grasping Dr. Guide's hands warmly, "God bless you for the good work you have been doing."

"My dear sir," said the pastor, rallying all his powers to withstand the surprise, "I am very glad that you are pleased to regard the work as good."

"How can I help it?" said the priest, impetuously. "The spirit which your church efforts have awakened has spread throughout the town and affected everybody. There are men, and some women, of my flock whom I have been trying in vain for years to bring to confession, so as to start them on a new life. I've coaxed them, threatened them, prayed for them with tears of agony, for what soul is not dear to the Saviour? The worse the