

Wm Bronscombe

## The Man With Two Chapters

(‘Quill,’ in the ‘Australian Christian World.’)

The hospital of a large mining town in Queensland was crowded with patients. An epidemic of pneumonia had helped to fill every bed in one of the large wards—and many a strong man had fallen into his last long sleep. Several were still lingering between life and death. The distressful looks, the hard short breathing, the tight coughs of the patients filled one with sadness, as he passed from bed to bed. The nurses were moving with quick light steps on their mission of helpfulness. A fagged look was on their faces, for of late their services had been much in demand, and longer hours than usual had fallen to their lot. Less serious cases had of necessity less of their attention than formerly. And some of these patients were perhaps a little inclined to murmur. Passing from the ward on the verandah which overlooked a portion of the city, I found several canvas chairs and couches occupied by patients who were convalescent or those whose strong will kept them out of bed. On one of these couches lay a man who could have been but the mere shadow of his former self. Some fell-disease, that was baffling the good doctor’s skill, was slowly but surely consuming the man. The face of this patient was full of distress, and a lonely soul looked out of his dim and sunken eyes. ‘You don’t seem very well to-day,’ I said. ‘No, sir, I am daily growing worse.’ As he spoke he showed me a limb from which the flesh had wasted, leaving but skin and bone.

‘I was weighed this week, and I am under six stone now,’ and with a sigh he said—‘I’ve been a strong man in my time, and done a lot of hard work, but it’s all over now.’

‘Have you a trade?’ I asked, wishing to hear a little of his history.

‘Well, I may call myself a cook, for I’ve done a lot of cooking on stations and sugar plantations in my time.’

‘A cook, are you?’

‘Yes, sir, and though I say it myself, when I was well, I could cook a meal with any man in the country. But I never made a God of my belly like some.’

‘I am glad to hear that—moderation in eating as well as in drinking is a virtue.’

‘But you must not think,’ he said, ‘that I have always been a cook. I have taken a turn at ploughing, or fencing, or painting—anything rather than idleness. Besides, if a man wants to earn a living in Australia he must not mind what kind of work he does.’

‘Do you know many people here?’ I enquired.

‘Very few, sir, I am a lone man. I’ve had trouble in my day,’ he said with a sigh, and he seemed to be looking into the past. ‘My wife drank herself to death, although I told her what it would come to; the habit got such a hold of her that she could not stop—Poor creature,’ he added, in a tone of tenderness.



## Story Land.

(Fred, Weatherby.)

Do you remember the time gone by,  
When we were children, you and I,  
When the day grew dark and the lights  
were lit,

And all together we loved to sit:  
When mother read to us, soft and low,  
Tales of the brave days long ago;  
And we sat and listened, and held her  
hand,

As she led us away to story-land?

Do you remember the words she said,  
Every night as we stole to bed,

All that she taught us to try to do,  
To be gentle and good and pure and true?  
Do you remember her soft ‘Good-night,’  
As she kissed our eyes in the shaded light;  
And the last sweet touch of her tender  
hand,  
As we drifted away to slumber-land?

All is altered, the years flow on,  
Little mother is dead and gone;  
We wander about in the old, old place,  
And long for the sight of the loving face.  
Mother, speak from the distant shore,  
Speak to thy children, speak once more;  
Call to us, comfort us, stretch thy hand,  
And take us home to the Spirit-land.

I said, ‘I am sorry. I thought you looked lonely and troubled. But there is a friend for the lonely—you are just the man Jesus Christ is longing to find and anxious to help. You may find a friend in him.’ I saw his lip quiver, and a tear start in his eye. I quoted a passage of Scripture, and he followed me, sometimes anticipating the words. ‘I am glad you have some knowledge of the Bible,’ I said.

‘Yes, sir, I was trained in a Sunday-school in the Old Country, and I still remember some of the things I learnt there.’ Here he paused to get breath. ‘I once earned ten shillings,’ he said, with some degree of pride. ‘How did you do it?’ I asked.

‘Well, it was this way. A gentleman visited the Sunday-school and promised to give the boy, who would learn, and repeat