

OLD MAN GREEN.

BY EDWARD WILSON WALLACE.

HOW he got there the good Lord above, to whom nothing is secret, alone knows. In some way He had led "Old Man Green" there.

"Old man" Green as he was called by the people of Albion was an old man who lived by himself in a large house out of the town. No one had ever seen the inside of his house except the old man himself and his housekeeper. No one knew who he was. He had come suddenly to the village, no one knew from where—and had taken the old Smith homestead, which had been empty ever since Arthur Smith had left the country many years ago. On account of his reticence of manner, the lack of all knowledge about him, and also on account of his known shrewdness at a bargain, the town called him "Old Miser Green," or "Old Man Green," which ever came handier.

The old man had scarcely ever been known to attend a religious meeting of any kind, and in late years he had only been out to church once or twice. It was therefore no wonder that people were astonished beyond measure to see him at the annual meeting of the Albion Auxiliary of the Woman's Missionary Society.

This was a small, struggling society which had been organized two years before in the Methodist church, when a wave of missionary enthusiasm swept over the town. But the enthusiasm—as it so often does—had died down, and the society was only held together by a few ladies who were full of the true missionary zeal. But it was hard for them to work alone—so hard!

And now, at the annual meeting in January, when the life of the Society depended on the number of people who attended the meeting, and more on the number of people who were willing to put their hands in their pockets—only a few people were present, for a blinding snowstorm had come on.

As the President looked over the people (nearly all ladies) who had assembled, her heart sank.

"Only twenty-four," she murmured with quivering lips. "And 'Old Man' Green among them. What does he want here? To ridicule us? O God!" she prayed silently, "Thou knowest best, but it is so hard to keep up my faith. Bless our society to-night and keep it alive. Thou alone canst do it." She arose and gave out the hymn,

"From Greenland's icy mountains,"

The old organ feebly raised the tune and the hymn was carried through in a half-hearted way by the score or so of persons assembled. Then the President led in prayer. It is not our purpose to give an account of the meeting. Reports for the year were read and a paper on Africa—that was all. There are a thousand and such being held every year all over the land.

The President arose and with quivering voice spoke a few words.

"My friends," she said, "two years ago Mrs. Arkwright, now in heaven, organized this society. For a year we worked heart and soul for our Master. Mrs. Arkwright, as you know, left us five hundred dollars

when she died. Last year a consecrated young girl, a girl well known to all this town, went forth to Africa as our representative in the mission field. For a whole year she has worked there alone—yet not alone, for her Master has ever been with her. Three hundred dollars a year is all she asks for—is it too much? When she went out we promised to support her. Must she come home? Our money is gone and we must send her a hundred dollars at once or she must come home. Fifty of that has been promised already. Will you give the rest? Remember she is out in Africa, alone, perhaps suffering terribly for want of food and clothing, while we have our own homes. She says in her last letter:

"I cannot stay longer without more money. I am living on two scant meals a day and these are furnished by the few native Christians here."

"Will you help her?"

With streaming eyes the President sat down and the basket was passed round. Old man Green who was sitting at the back of the church passed it by without saying a word or putting in anything. He was staring straight ahead with a grim expression on his face.

The President gave out the next hymn and it was sung while the treasurer counted the collection. When she whispered the result to the President her voice shook. It was with an effort the President rose and said:

"We have got \$9.47. The mission will have to end!" She broke down here.

There was a silence for a moment and then suddenly a man came up the aisle to the altar-rail.

It was Old Man Green!

People noticed his face was strained and his whole body trembled with emotion. "The mission shall not end," he said, "I will help you with all the means God has given me. You may wonder why I of all people wish to help you. I have been a wicked man and God has punished me. You all wondered who I was and where I came from. I used to be a wealthy man in New York with a daughter who was the pride of my life. She married a young man and—when he offered himself as a missionary, I disowned my daughter because she went out with him. I never saw her again. Two years after she went out I got a note from my son-in-law telling me my Annie, my daughter, had died in Africa, died from want of medicine and other necessaries. Just at that time I lost my wealth, I left the city and came here to live, a broken down man. This evening I happened to be passing the church and I thought I would come in. God must have led me! As your president was speaking of the young girl dying in Africa I thought of my Annie. Perhaps your missionary has a father who cares as much for her as—as I cared—for—my—Annie—." Here the old man broke down.

The President stepped forward her face shining. "Let us sing the doxology," and so the mighty old hymn,

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow,"

sounded through the old church and the President's heart was full of thanksgiving.