

Selections.

A SKELETON IN THE CUPBOARD.

There's a skeleton in the cupboard,
Mister Bill;
I can see him peering out
Through the rigs that hang about;
Yes, he's there, without a doubt,
Mister Bill.

There's a skeleton in the cupboard,
Mister Bill;
And it's causing heaps of strife,
Bringing sorrow to your wife,
Blighting, cursing your own life,
Mister Bill.

There's a skeleton in the cupboard,
Mister Bill;
All the children cry for bread,
Your home-coming they all dread,
And they wish that they were dead,
Mister Bill.

There's a skeleton in the cupboard,
Mister Bill;
All your furniture is sold,
After swallowing your gold—
See, it's left you in the cold,
Mister Bill.

There's a skeleton in the cupboard,
Mister Bill;
Landlord says you pay no rent,
To the workhouse you'll be sent,
For on ousting you he's bent,
Mister Bill.

There's a skeleton in the cupboard,
Mister Bill;
'Twas a sorry day for you
When you took that glass or two:
Didn't think 'twould you undo,
Mister Bill.

There's a skeleton in the cupboard,
Mister Bill;
You must twist his neck somehow,
And you had better do it now,
Or he'll be your death, I trow,
Mister Bill.

There's a skeleton in the cupboard,
Mister Bill;
Ask the Lord to give you power
Drink to conquer just this hour,
O'er the skeleton to tower,
Mister Bill.

With no skeleton in the cupboard,
Mister Bill;
You can pay you way, you know;
Respected be where'er you go,
Wife and children happy grow,
Mister Bill.

Now I've given you good advice,
Mister Bill,
And I hope you'll chuck him out
Neck and crop; completely rout
Bunton beer and London stout,
Mister Bill.

—W. Bowen in *War Cry*.

THE MYSTERY OF SANDYCREEK.

BY THE REV. F. DOCKER,

The Tolmarshes were regarded by the people of the little village of Fairfield as a bad lot. They were not far wrong in the unfavorable judgment for the inherited vices of generations seemed to run in the blood of successive members of the family.

At one time the Tolmarshes had been a family of importance in the county, and the effigies of some of them lay locked in stony trance in the ancient parish church. Little property remained for the last heir, young Howard, to inherit, for the splendid estate had been lost by gambling and drinking.

Unfortunately young Howard Tolmarsh inherited the family vices, and was a notorious drunkard.

A great moral and spiritual change passed over him, however, largely owing to the influence which the squire's beautiful daughter, Kate, had exerted upon him.

A Gospel Temperance mission had been held in Fairfield, and Miss Barrowdale had taken a leading part in it, visiting the people and giving invitations, as well as singing solos in the tent erected on the village green, in which the meetings had been held.

She had a slight acquaintance with young Tolmarsh, and she pressed him to attend.

"Are you going to sing, Miss Barrowdale?" Tolmarsh asked laughingly.

She intimated that she was.

"Oh, then I'll come."

Tolmarsh went to the meeting, and from that night he was a changed man. He became an enthusiast in religious and

temperance work, and joined with Kate in her efforts to reclaim her neighbours.

By-and-bye there grew up between them a strong human interest, which in course of time became something stronger. Tolmarsh feared to declare his love for the squire's beautiful daughter, for what had he to offer her?

And yet, somehow, he did declare his love, and to his joy found it was reciprocated by Kate.

Then, in cooler moments, he felt as if he had taken a mean advantage of her.

At length he determined, as an honorable man, to acquaint Squire Barrowdale of his affections for his daughter, and the fact that she had accepted his suit. He felt that his religion demanded such an honorable course of action.

Accordingly, he visited Kate's father, and made a clean breast of the whole matter.

Squire Barrowdale had very little sympathy for his daughter's religion, and while he did not prevent her taking an active part in the revival that was going on in the village, he regarded it with very little favor. The squire held shares in a large brewery concern, which was the real cause of his opposition.

He had heard of young Tolmarsh's conversion, and he exclaimed, coldly—

"I'll give him a month. It won't last." When the young man approached him with his story of his love for his daughter, Barrowdale received him coldly.

"What have you to offer my daughter Mr. Tolmarsh?" he asked.

"Nothing, sir," was the candid reply; "but I can work."

"And you think it the part of an honorable man to encourage the affection of an inexperienced girl, sir?" demanded Mr. Barrowdale.

"You are right sir," replied Tolmarsh, his eyes fixed in the ground. "I ought not to have harboured such a thought, considering what my past has been, and something like a sob escaped his quivering lips.

"I have not usually found that fanatical teetotalers are strong on the point of honor," sneered the old man.

"Will you grant me a favor, sir?" Tolmarsh asked. "If I should be able to win a position worthy of your daughter, will you then grant me your daughter's hand?"

Despite this cold exterior the squire had a great love for his child, and he would not willingly give her pain, so he replied, after some time of silence—

"If such a thing would be conducive to my child's happiness I do not say I would consider my present decision."

Tolmarsh was glad even of this concession, though he felt how reluctant the very people who had pulled him down by their interest in the drunk traffic were to help him rise when he was tired of the swine trough.

Soon after the interview with the squire, Tolmarsh set sail to Australia, in the hope of winning a competency there. Fortune smiled upon him, and in about six years he was able to return and claim the hand of Kate.

He returned home an even more manly man than when he had left the old country, and the possessor of substantial wealth.

The means by which he had made his fortune so quickly were easy enough of explanation.

He had entered into partnership with an old settler in the gold fields, in Western Australia, and they had purchased a claim and dug for gold.

For five weary years they had toiled hard, and the claim had yielded little or nothing. Then came a strange experience. Tolmarsh's partner, an old man named Peter Pearson, mysteriously disappeared from the workings.

Tolmarsh who appeared to have become deeply attached to him, made diligent search for him, all to no purpose. He had disappeared as mysteriously as if he had melted into vapour.

Time went on, and Tolmarsh continued to work the claim, and almost immediately after the old man's disappearance the mine began to yield a splendid output. It was evident that the young man had struck a rich vein.

Tolmarsh's fortune seemed doubled, for only a little while before his disappearance Peters, who had no relations, had given his companion the sole right to his claim in the event of his death.

Tolmarsh went on working, and making inquiries amongst the men of the camp to whom he expressed himself as eager to find his old companion. It was a moment of sweetest rapture when Kate

greeted her lover with the love light of her sweet smile, and the confidence that nothing could now separate them from each other.

Her father could not go back upon his word, for Howard Tolmarsh had more than fulfilled the stipulations he had laid down for winning his daughter's hand. Six years of honest toil proved that he had sloughed off the old habits, and was established in a new life, while he had also earned a competency. So he freely gave his consent to his daughter's union with this representative of what had once been a respectable family.

Only a few days remained before the happy event would be consummated. Harold was busy engaged in making preparations, and he and his betrothed had driven over to a town some few miles distance from Fairfield.

On the way Kate remarked upon a vehicle which she had noticed following that in which they rode, but keeping all along the rode at an even distance from them.

The dog-cart contained two men, and as Tolmarsh turned to look at them he remarked, casually, "I have no idea who they may be, but I have lately noticed either one or the other of them about the village. Fairfield doesn't often have visitors, but these gentlemen, I believe, have taken up their quarters at the hotel.

Tolmarsh thought no more about the matter, and they returned to his fiancée's home.

Kate had alighted from the dog-cart, and had gone into the house, while Tolmarsh was giving directions to the groom. At that moment the two gentlemen, whom Tolmarsh had seen following them, stepped up to him, and one of them, laying his hand on his arm, said—"I hold a warrant for your arrest, Howard Tolmarsh."

Tolmarsh looked at him incredulously, and exclaimed—"A warrant for my arrest, my man. You are mistaken!"

"No, here it is!" answered the man doggedly, at the same time presenting the document which he commenced to read. The purport of it was that he, Howard Tolmarsh, was charged with having murdered one Peter Pearson on or about September 18, 18—, at Sandycreek, South Australia.

"Murdered Peter Pearson!" exclaimed Howard, with a mocking laugh, and was about to say more when the officers of the law administered the usual caution that what he said might be used in evidence against him.

The first feeling of the bewildered man was one of indignation, but he saw that was useless, and so he requested that he might be permitted to soften the blow for Kate by sending her word that urgent business would detain him for a time, and so he sent a message to her to that effect by the groom.

Tolmarsh was at once driven to the county town some few miles distant, and lodged in prison, previous to his removal to Australia for trial.

The young man was confident of easily clearing himself from the suspicion that rested upon him.

Squire Barrowdale visited him in prison, at his request, and listened to the charge against him.

"And you say that Pearson left you his share of the claim in the event of his death?"

Tolmarsh assented. "Singular!" said the old gentleman. "A most unfortunate coincidence!"

"But you don't suspect me of having committed this—this devilish crime, do you, sir?" demanded Tolmarsh, hotly, and the indignant blood mounted to his brows.

"I was not aware of having said that I suspected you of anything, Mr. Tolmarsh," answered the old man, coldly. "Only, in the case of your being put upon your trial, it would supply a motive for such a crime;" and the squire turned his cold, searching grey eyes full upon the young man's face.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Tolmarsh, leaping to his feet. "I thought the story was too impossible for anyone to believe, least of all you, sir."

Mr. Barrowdale was easily persuaded to believe that Tolmarsh was guilty. He called himself a fool for having permitted himself to believe in the young man's reformation.

"No, no," he exclaimed, "such a man cannot reform. Can the leopard change its spots?"

"My child," he said to his daughter.

"forgot him. He has basely betrayed you," and the broken hearted girl bowed her head in anguish.

"But, papa," she murmured, "the court of law has not convicted him. May he not be innocent? I know him as you do not, and his very tones were sincerity itself."

"Child," said the old man, sternly, "you do not know how black the world can be, nor how the devil can transform himself into an angel of light. You are innocent of its sins."

Kate was not permitted to see her lover again, and he was taken to Australia for trial. The result of the trial of Tolmarsh, on suspicion of having murdered Pearson, was not of a satisfactory character.

The jury did not feel the evidence strong enough for a conviction, though they had little moral doubt but what he had committed the murder.

There were one or two links missing in the chain of evidence, but the general verdict of the people was that, if ever a man richly deserved hanging, Tolmarsh did, and he had only escaped by the devil's good fortune that seemed to have come to his help, as it used to be believed good fortune came to a man who had sold himself to the devil.

After the trial Tolmarsh escaped as far as possible from the haunts of his fellow men, and he went into the bush to live its wild life.

Still, the reformation had been so thorough that though all seemed lost to him he did not return to his old evil habits.

One day a stranger came into the camp in which Tolmarsh was living. Tolmarsh sat apart from the rest of the fellows, in moody silence, and the men were grouped round the camp fire, talking together.

Suddenly a word fell on the young man's ears, recalling him to himself. The stranger was saying: "That Sandycreek affair was about the biggest mystery I ever knew. But it's cleared up."

Every other sense in Tolmarsh's being was lost in that of hearing.

"Yes," the stranger went on, "they have discovered Pearson's body, and it is proved he died a perfectly natural death; he wasn't murdered at all. It's this way. It seems Pearson had been subject to a sort of epileptic fits, and he lost himself at times, and so he seems to have wandered into the bush, which, you know, was close to Sandycreek, and heaven help the man that wanders into the bush, even with his seven senses, let alone when he is half daff. They've identified the body by his watch and some papers on his clothes, and now they want the chap that was said to have murdered him. Poor fellow, they're full of pity for him now, though it's precious little he got when he was suspected of the murder. But that's about the way of the world. It's a wonder they didn't hang him. I've been told by some of the fellows that were on the jury that they were within an ace of doing so, the case looked so black against him."

Tolmarsh emerged from the shadows in which he had been hidden, and stood in the light of the fire, his whole frame vibrating with excitement.

"Tell me what you know, man," he whispered, in a thick voice, and the men half rose from their seats, thinking that Tolmarsh was suddenly bereft of his senses, for his aspect was like that of a man who had lost his reason.

The man again related the story. "I am Tolmarsh," that gentleman exclaimed, when the stranger had finished.

"You're Tolmarsh!" answered the stranger, "Then I'm in luck's way, friend, for there's a reward of £500 on you. 'Tain't exactly like that on the head of Tim Kelly, the outlaw; but it's offered by a gentleman in England—I forget his name—for any body that can give information concerning you. But there it is, and he drew from his pocket a greasy cutting from a newspaper. "Barrowdale, that's it; do you know anybody of that name?"

Tolmarsh sat down overpowered with emotion, and sobbed like a child for answer.

Six months after the wedding bells in the tower of Fairfield Parish Church were ringing with delicious joy, and the mystery of Sandycreek had cleared up, amidst the light of bridal festivities, and Howard Tolmarsh never regretted that by the help of God he had been able to keep true to his Temperance pledge through all the dark days of trial.

—Alliance News.