

CHAPTER V

THAT evening at dinner Lieutenant Willet, the second in command to Lathom, was present, having sufficiently recovered to accept Mrs. Lathom's invitation to meet Mr. Marsbin and Dr. Haldane. He was a good-looking, but slow moving, dull-witted young man, and had, so his superior officer one day had told the doctor, but two motives for existing at all—sleeping and eating. Mrs. Lathom, who, when she first came to Waringa to join her husband, had endeavoured to draw him into a flirtation in order to while away the time during Lathom's frequent absences, had so signally failed—purely from want of perception on the part of Mr. Willet—that she had abandoned the attempt in disgust after a few weeks. For although Lieutenant Willet was always pleased to accept an invitation from the captain's beautiful wife (or any one else) to lunch or dinner, he invariably went to sleep as soon as he had satisfied his appetite, which was always very robust, even when he declared he felt ill and was barely able to attend to his military duties.

In addition to Mrs. Lathom, there was another lady—Mrs. McNab, a round-faced, merry-hearted little Scots-woman, who, with her husband, Captain McNab, lived six or seven miles down the river from Waringa. He was a retired naval officer, who, after a long and honour-