THE KING’S SON;

OR,

A MEMOIR OF BILLY BRAY.

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CHAPTER IV.

CHAPEL BUILDING.

“Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favor her, yea, the set time, is come. For Thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof.”—Ps. cii. 13, 14.

PROBABLY no part of England is better supplied with places of religious worship than the county of Cornwall. The great majority of these have been built by the self-denying efforts and liberality of the poor rather than by the encouragement and munifi­cence of persons belonging to the wealthier classes. The power and efficacy of the voluntary principle may be here witnessed in full operation on a large scale. The people generally have put their “shoulder to the wheel,” and have preferred to help themselves to being dependent on the charity of others—they have trusted almost wholly to God’s blessing on their own exertions. “Methodism,” as the late Bishop of Exeter told us, “is the mother-church of Cornwall,” and its different sections have a strong hold upon the affections and sympathies of the population; and notwithstanding some defects of character, and ex­travagances of worship—ignorantly or wickedly exaggerated by some High-Church writers they are honorably distinguished for their sobriety and intelligence, and, greater honor still, as a God-fear­ing, Christ-loving, and Sabbath-keeping people. For this result we are largely indebted to men of the Billy Bray type. This will be more evident in sub­sequent chapters, but we have now to furnish some particulars of his early chapel-building. enterprises, in which, as in all his actions, he sought to do his Master’s will and promote his glory. Billy’s own version of those occurrences, which are so widely known and so deeply interesting, is as follows:

“In the neighborhood where I lived there were a great many dark-minded, wicked people, and chapels were few. The ‘Lord put it into my mind to build a chapel. My mother had a small place; and by one of her little fields there was a small piece of common. The Lord opened my mother’s heart to give a spot on that piece of common to build on. When my mother gave me the ground, I began to work as the dear Lord told me, and to take away the hedge of my mother’s field, and to dig out the foundation for a chapel, or a house to worship God in, which was to be called *Bethel.* Many will have to bless God for ever that Bethel Chapel was built, for many are in heaven already that were born there. In that day there was but one little chapel in our neighborhood, at a place called Twelveheads, which belonged to the Wesleyans. Our people had a little old house to preach in, which would hold only twenty or thirty persons. So we wanted a place to preach in, and the people a place to hear in. Paul had a thorn in the flesh, and so had I. For I had not only the wicked against me; but a little class which was held in the house where we preached; most of them turned against me, and tried to set the preachers against me. But with all they could do, they could not hurt me, though they made me uneasy at times. When I had got out the foundation of the Lord’s house, we had preaching on the foundation-stone. (Mr. A. says that Billy, “standing on the stone, said, If this new chapel, which they say is to be called Bethel, stands one hundred years, and one soul be converted in it every year, that will be one hundred souls, and one soul is worth more than all Cornwall.’ He then danced upon the stone, and shouted ‘Glory, glory, bless the Lord!’”) On the day that it was laid one of our neighbours said he would not give anything towards Billy Bray’s chapel. He had two horses that drew the *whim* at the mine; one of them was taken lame in the geld, and lost many days’ work. Then the people said that the horse was taken lame because the owner would not give any­thing to Billy Bray’s chapel. But the people must know that it was not mine, but the dear Lord’s chapel. And it may be the Lord punished him for not giving anything to *His* chapel. But the chapel was never much good to that man, for he died very soon after; and the Lord enabled me to build the chapel without his help, bless and praise His holy name! When I had taken down the field hedge, cleared out the foundation, had got some stone home to the place where the chapel was to be built; when the masons had put up some of the walls, and I had £1 15s. given me by friends, the devil entered into some of my class-mates, who said that the chapel ought not to be built there; and when my class-mates saw that they could not stop me, they went to the superintendent of the circuit and told him that he ought to stop me from building the chapel there for that was not the place, it ought to be built at *Twelve-heads,* or at *Tippett’s Stamps.* Our preacher came to me, and told me that the class had been to him to stop me from building the chapel where I had begun. Then I told him that the Lord had put it into my mind to build the chapel there, and I showed him what I had done already towards building the chapel. It was the preaching night; and he asked me whether I would be willing to cast lots whether the chapel should be built where I had begun it or in another place. ‘Yes,’ I said, I was willing; for I did not want to build the chapel there unless it was the Lord’s will.’ In the evening we went to meeting and most of our little class were there, and the men who were against me. After preaching our preacher wrote three *lots* for *Twelveheads, Tippett’s Stamps,* and *Cross lanes,* which was the place where I had begun my chapel. When they drew lots the lot came for *Cross Lanes* to be the place for the chapel. They then said they would help me to get on with it by raising stone; but telling about it that night was all they did to help me. The follow­ing day one of them came to me and said, ‘We shall not help you, for *Cross Lanes* did not ought to be ‘the lot.’ So I was as well off as I thought I should be. I went to work, and raised stone, and got mortar, and set the masons to work. And the dear Lord helped me, for I was very poor, and had no money of my own. But the dear Lord raised me up friends, who sent me money to pay the masons; we got the chapel walls up, and timber for the roof; and then got it sawed and put up. But we had not timber enough by one principal; and I asked my Heavenly Father to send me some timber, or money to buy some. That morning there was a Wesleyan local preacher home praying; the Lord said to him while he was on his knees, ‘Go down and give Wil­liam Bray a pound note.’ At that time there were no sovereigns; there were one pound notes, drawn on the banks. After he had taken his breakfast he came down to me by the chapel, and said to me, `What do you want a pound note for?’ and I replied, ‘To buy timber to put a principal up on *that* end of the chapel.’ He said he never felt such a thing in all his life, for while I was home praying this morning it was always coming into my mind to go down and give you a pound note, and here it is.’ So I had the note, went to Truro, bought a principal, put it up on the chapel, and there it is to this day. When the timber was on the chapel, I went round, and got two pounds towards covering the chapel. At that time we had young children, and the young­est of them was taken very ill.

“When my little maid was taken ill, Satan tempted me that it would take seven pounds to cover the chapel, and I had but two pounds; and our little one would die, and it would take one pound to bury her, and then I should have but one pound left. The devil tempted me very much on that point; for if I wanted it I had a right to take it, for the dear Lord and ‘me’ in this place kept but one purse;[[1]](#footnote-1) and I paid any money that I earned at mine to the chapel, when I wanted it. So I had but one to give my account to, and that was the dear Lord, the very best comrade that man can ever have. So the devil tempted me that the child would die. While I was thus sore tempted, it came into my mind that I should be paid for building this chapel, and it was applied to me, ‘Because thou hast built this chapel, I will save thy child’s life.’ And I said, ‘Where is this coming from?’ And it was said to me, ‘I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, be nothing doubting, it is I, saith the Lord;’ and I believed it; and it was so. When I went home I told my wife that the child would not die, for the Lord had told me so. She replied, ‘Don’t say so; for all the neighbors say she will die, she is so very ill.’ I then went to the mine to work; when I came home the child was not any better, and had not eaten any meat, On that night the child was very ill; and got no better all the forenoon of the next day. She was very ill when I came home to dinner. That day I was afternoon ‘core’ at the mine; and ever since the Lord converted my soul I always felt it my duty to pray with my wife and children before leaving my home to go to work. We knelt down to pray; the child was lying in the window-seat; we had for dinner what was very plentiful at that time, fish and potatoes; and in my prayer I said, ‘Dear Lord, thou hast said that my child shall live, but she has not eaten any meat yet.’ And she began to eat meat there and then. She is living now, and is the mother of ten children; so the Lord made the devil a liar once more. The devil did not do me any hurt; he only made me bolder. Ihad only two pounds; and the cost would be seven pounds by the time the roof was on. I borrowed a horse, and rode ten or twelve miles from where I lived, up among the farmers, and asked one of them whether he had any reed to sell, for I wanted three hundred sheaves. He told me he had, and that it was £2 for a hundred. So I told the farmer to bring three hundred sheaves to me as soon as he could, and some spears for them. But I did not tell him that I had only two pounds, He brought down one hundred first, and some spears. I had three pounds when he came; so I paid him for the hundred of reed, and the spears; and had a few shillings left. I asked the farmer to bring down the rest of the reed as soon as he could; but didn’t tell him I had not money to pay for it. And it wasn’t necessary that I should, for by the time the other two hundred sheaves were sent a friend gave me money to pay for it. Then I put a man to work to cover the roof, and that would cost one pound ten shillings, with a little other work besides; and when the man came to be paid I had but one pound; so I wanted ten shillings more. The Lord put it into my mind to go into .a high road near where a great many people went up and down to work; and the first man I met was P. B. I said to him, ‘You have not given me anything yet towards my Father’s house.’ And he said, ‘nor do I intend to.’ I replied, ‘What, are you “amind” for the Lord to say to you in *that* day, ‘You saw me hungered, and gave me no meat; thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not?’ And he said, ‘Well, I don’t mind if I do give you ten shillings.’ I said, ‘That is just the money I want.’ So he gave me the ten shillings; and I went home and paid the thatcher.

“After that I wanted timber for the door and windows and forms. A mine had lately stopped; and they were selling off the timber. There was a bargain in timber, for one pound six shillings; but I had not money to buy it. To a friend who asked me whether I had been to the mine, and bought any timber, I said I had not, because I had no money. Then he gave me one pound, and with that and some other sums the Lord sent me from other places I was able to buy what I wanted. As the timber had to be brought home to the dear Lord’s house, I wanted a horse and cart. One of our neighbors had a horse, but he said she would not draw any­thing. I asked him to lend her to me. He told me I might have her, but she would not draw; but I took the mare and put her in the cart, and brought the timber home. I never saw a better horse in my life; I did not touch her with whip or stick, though we had steep hills to come up over. When I took back the mare,’ and told my neighbor, I never saw a better mare, he said,’ I never saw such a thing; she will not draw with any one else.’ That mare was working that day for a very strong company, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; horses, angels, men, and devils must obey them. If there had been no one there more powerful than Billy Bray, she would have been as bad with him as with anybody else. But, bless and praise the name of the .dear Lord! He said, ‘The horse shall work, for the timber is to seat my house;’ and what the dear Lord says shall be obeyed.

“I went on and finished the chapel. Then some of them said, ‘Now your chapel is done, you shall not have preaching there.’ When they said that, I locked up the chapel door, and carried the key home, and hung it to a nail behind the door. I said, Lord, there is the key; I have done what Thou hast told me to do; the chapel is built, and there is the key; if it is Thy will the key should stay there seven years, or that it should be taken down every minute in the day, Thy will be done, my dear Lord.’ That very day our preacher appointed services at the new chapel even more fre­quently than I should have asked had I been present. They named my chapel *Bethel.* We had preaching there every Sabbath, afternoon and evening, and class-meeting in the morning. The Lord soon re­vived His work, and we gathered a great many members. A large new chapel has been the since near the old one, which has also taken the name of ‘Bethel.’ The old one is now used as a school­-house, and for class-meetings. No wonder that the devil was so against me while I was building the old *Bethel,* and put his servants to hinder me, for I have seen at one time fifty down asking for mercy, and mercy they had.

“A little while after I had done building Bethel Chapel the Lord said to me, ‘I have made you instrumental in building Bethel Chapel, and I will make you the instrument in building one at *Kerley Downs.*’When this was applied to me I believed it, and rejoiced greatly to think that I was honored to work for so good a Master as the King of heaven, and earth, and sky. Kerley Downs was near a mile from where I lived, in the same parish. At this place there was preaching in a dwelling-house, and a class met in the same house. The friends had been trying for some time to get a spot for a chapel, but had been disappointed. They had made a collection for the chapel they intended to have, but the site was sold to a man for a higher price after it had been promised to the society. One of the neigh­bours who owned a farm said to one of the class, ‘Where is the money you collected so long ago towards a chapel, which you have not begun yet?’ He said, ‘If you have a mind to build a chapel, you may have ground of me.’ I told the preacher we could have a spot for a chapel, and if he did not call a meeting to appoint trustees I should begin about the chapel myself. So he appointed a day and got trustees; but all that promised to help left me to myself. So my little son and me went to work, and got some stone; the good friend who gave the land lent me his horse and cart; and we soon set the masons to work. Those who read this must remem­ber that I was a very poor man, with a wife and five small children at that time, and worked in the mine underground. Sometimes I was forenoon ‘core,’ and when I had taken my dinner I should go to the chapel and work as long as I could see, and the next day do the same. The next week I should be after­noon core;’ then I should go up to the chapel in the morning and work until the middle of the day, and then go home and away to the mine. The week following I should be night ‘core;’ I should then work about the chapel by day, and go to mine by night; and had not the dear Lord greatly strength­ened me for the work, I could not have done it. When I was about the chapel, I had potatoes to till in my garden; and every Sunday I was ‘planned’ Sometimes I had to walk twenty miles, or more, and speak three times. I have worked twenty hours in the twenty-four; and had not the Lord helped me I could not have done it. Bless and praise His holy name! for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.’ I *do* know He is a friend when all other friends leave us; and He will help us to overcome our enemies.

“When our chapel was up about to the door-head the devil said to me, ‘They are all gone and left you and the chapel, and I would go and leave the place too.’ Then I said, ‘Devil, doesn’t thee know me better than that? by the help of the Lord I will have the chapel up, or lose my skin on the down.’ So the devil said no more to me on that subject. Some­times I have had blisters on my hands, and they have been very sore. But I did not mind that, for if the chapel should stand one hundred years, and if one soul were converted in it every year, *that* would be a hundred souls, and that would pay me well if I got to heaven, for they that ‘turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever.’ So I thought I should be rich enough when I got there. The chapel was finished after a time, and the open­ing day came. We had preaching, but the preacher was a wise man, and a dead man. I believe there was not much good done that day, for it was a very dead time with preacher and people; for he had a .great deal of *grammar,* and but little of *Father.* ‘It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.’ If it was by wisdom or might, I should have but a small part, for my might is little and my wisdom less. Thanks be to God, the work is His, and He can work by whomsoever He pleases. The second Sunday after the chapel was opened I was ‘planned’ there. I said to the people, ‘You know I did not work here about this chapel in order to fill my pocket, but for the good of the neighbours, and the good of souls; and souls I must have, and souls I will have.’ The Lord blessed us in a won­derful manner. Two women cried to the Lord for mercy; then I said, ‘Now the chapel is paid for already.’ The dear Lord went on to work there; and the society soon went up from fifteen members to thirty. You see how good the Lord is to me; I spoke for one soul a year, and He gave me fifteen souls the first year. Bless and praise His holy name! for He is good, and His mercy endureth for ever, for one soul is worth a thousand worlds. Our little chapel had three windows, one on one side, and two on the other; the old devil, who does not like chap­els, put his servants by way of reproach to call our chapel *Three-Eyes.* But, blessed be God, since then the chapel has become too small for the place, and it has been enlarged; now there are six windows instead of three; and they may call the chapel *Six-Eyes* now if they will. For, glory be to God, many that have been converted there are now in heaven. And when we get there we will praise Him with all our might; and *he shall never hear the last of it.*

“After this the Lord led me to build another chapel in the parish of *Gwennap.* The Lord put it into the heart of a gentleman to grant me a piece of land; and after we had dug out the foundation we wanted stone to build with. The Lord put it into my heart to go down by the railway and try to raise stone. Some one had been there before, and their quarry was poor. They had worked to the east and to the west, and left a piece of ground untouched in the middle. We went to work on this piece, and the dear Lord helped me, as He said. Some won­dered to see what a lot of stone we got out. But they must know I was working for a strong company, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and that company will never break. I worked in my ‘core’ at the mine all the while I was raising stone; and as I was living a great way from the place where I was build­ing the chapel, the Lord helped me again by putting it into a gentleman’s heart to give me five shillings a month while I was raising stone for the dear Lord’s house; at a coffee-house near the quarry, when I came up from mine last ‘core’ by night, I had my breakfast for sixpence or sevenpence, and then away to raise stone. When the masons were set to work; I had no money in hand, and no bank to go to but the bank of heaven. But, thanks be to God, that is a *strong* bank; and I had often to go there by faith. At this time the Lord sent Mr. T. to me, who said, ‘You will want timber, and lime, and slate, will you not?’ I said, ‘Yes, sir.’ Then he told me to go to his stores and have what I wanted. When the masons wanted money I went round collecting, and the friends were very kind and gave me money. I went to Camborne, and farther west. Amongst other places I went to Holston, where there lived a miser said to be worth a great deal of money, who was never known to give anything to any object. When I asked him for something for the chapel, he said he could not afford to give me anything. I said, ‘You can give me some money if you like; and if you do not you may soon die, *and leave it all behind.* Job was very rich, but he soon became poor. I am begging for the Lord’s house, and if you do not give me something the Lord may take you away from your money, or your money away from you.’ When I told him further that the gold was the Lord’s, he said, ‘Go round the town and see what you can get, and come to me again by-and-by.’ I said to him, ‘No, you have got money, and I must have some now,’ and talked to him about what the Lord would do with *greedy* people. Then he wiped his mouth, put his hand into his pocket four or five times and talked away, but at last he took out two shillings and sixpence, and gave me. It was a hard job to get even that from the old miser. I do not think Satan let him sleep that night because the dear Lord permit­ted me to take half-a-crown from his *god.* When I told some of the friends that I had got half-a-crown from him, they said, ‘It was the greatest miracle ever performed in Helston.’ I had a ‘plan’ at St. Just, and after I had done my work there I went on to St. Ives, and was directed to find out a good man named *Bryant.* St. Ives was a small place about the year 1838.

“Friend Bryant told me that I had come to St. Ives at a very poor time, for there was but little fish caught that year; and some of the people were al­most wanting bread. ‘It was poor times,’ I said, with Peter when the Lord told him to let down the net on the other side of the ship.” Br. Bryant missed, for I had come at a very good time, as the event proved. We went up to the Wesleyan Chapel; there were a great many lively members and we had a good meeting. We prayed to the dear Lord *to send some fish,* and He *did.* After the meeting was over, we went into a coffee-house to get a little refreshment-; then we began our meeting, and continued it till *midnight,* praying to the Lord to *send in the fish.* As we came out of the meeting to go to our lodging, there were the dear, poor women with the pilchards on their plates, and the fish was shining in the moonlight. The women were smiling, the moon was smiling, and we were smiling; and no wonder, for the dear Lord put bread on many shelves that night. and blessed many families. We asked the women what fish was taken, and they told us that many boats had taken ten thousand, and some twenty thousand. Against the next day there were, if I mistake not, eight thousand casks taken. And here I must speak it to their credit, though the people had so many fish, and were so poor, they rested on Sunday, and left it till Monday before they went about their fish, *and they lost none.* Some of the fishermen said to me, ‘*Now you shall have some money for your chapel;* and if you will get a boat and come out we will give you some fish.’ A friend with me, a carpenter, a bit used to the sea, got a boat and rowed me to the place where the fish were. They looked ‘pretty,’ for they were shining and leaping about, and the fishermen dipped up the fish, and threw them into our boat. I thought of the church-ministers, who took their *tithe* of the corn; but I took mine of the fish. When we came to land, the carpenter ‘told’ up the fish to the people that brought them, and I took the money, which amounted to £6 15s.

“A druggist also promised me the profits of one week on medicine sold, which brought me two guineas more. Altogether I brought away from St. Ives £17 towards the chapel. So when I came home I could easily pay the masons and carpenters. You see how the Lord helped me through all,—first by putting it into a gentleman’s heart to let me have a spot to build on; then to get good stone in what had been only a poor quarry; also in sending Mr. T. to tell me, when I was not worth a penny, to go to his store for timber and lime and slate; then in enabling me to collect so much towards the expense of build­ing; and particularly at St. Ives, when the dear Lord sent the fish in answer to prayer. He has said, ‘Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.’ And we are ‘in everything by prayer and supplication with thanks­giving to let our requests be made known unto God.’ Bless His Holy name! I will praise Him and glorify Him for ever and ever! O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together. I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. . . . This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.’”

Many further interesting particulars respecting Billy Bray’s chapels might be given, but which we must mostly omit. The details of one circumstance, briefly referred to by Billy, we may append. One account I have received speaks of Billy calling on a Mr. T., a liberal gentleman well known in the neigh­borhood, but Billy speaks of the Lord having “sent” Mr. T. to him. Billy told the gentleman that he was going “to fishing-net’ near Car-barrack, in order to catch the fine fish that might be found in such large shoals in the neighborhood.” Mr. T. was so well pleased with the simplicity and earnestness of Billy, that he said, “So, Billy, you are going to build a ‘fishing-net,’ are you? I understand by that, that you are going to build a chapel; now when you have succeeded in getting up the walls sufficiently high to take the roof, let me know, and I will at once take steps to give a roof to your ‘fishing-net.’” “Bless the Lord,” was Billy’s response, and the same moment he was jumping and dancing for joy! When Mr. T. was told that the “fishing-net” required a roof, he said he would see it to know what was wanted. On reaching the spot, he expressed his surprise that so large a chapel had been built, intimating that when he made the pro­mise he had no idea that Billy intended to erect such a large “fishing-net.” His answer was, “Bless the Lord! my Heavenly Father deserves a large house.” Mr. T. cheerfully fulfilled his promise, and the “fishing-net” was soon adorned with a roof. The gentleman afterwards became a worshipper in “Great Deliverance “Chapel (the name it received, and by which it is still known), and a valuable member and class-leader.

When Billy was building his first chapel, some of his friends, whose faith was not so strong as his own, told him he had better build it with a chimney, so that it could be turned more easily into a cottage if it did not answer as a chapel. “No,” he said, “I will have no chimney in it, except it be to drive the devil out through,” though we fear a chimney would be but of little use for that purpose.

When the little place at Kerley Downs was up, Billy began to think where the pulpit could come from. At last, as he looked about among some furniture at an auction sale, his eye fell upon an old three-cornered cupboard.

“The very thing,” cried Billy, “the very thing. I can cut a slit down the back of un, and strengthen the middle of un, and put a board up in front of un, and clap a pair o’ steers behind un, and then the preacher can preach out of un pretty.”

With much glee he turned to some one near him, and asked, “What do’e think they’ll want for that there cupboard?” The man looked, and gave it as his opinion that it would go for six shillings. Billy told him what he meant to do with it, and the man said: “Why, you’re Billy Bray. Here, I’ll give ‘e the six shillings to buy it.”

After a while the cupboard was put up. Billy knew nothing of auctions. All eager to have his pulpit, he cried, holding out his hand: “Here, Mis­ter Auctioneer, here’s six shillin’ for un; I do want un for a pulpit.”

Of course there was a great laugh at Billy’s ex­pense. As it passed away the auctioneer cried: “Six shillings, going for six.” A nod from behind Billy was quickly caught. “Seven,” said the auctioneer, “seven shillings.”

“No,” cried Billy, ‘tis on’y six; there’s the money.”

Of course, down went the hammer, and much to Billy’s astonishment the cupboard was not his. “Well, Father do know best,” said he, in a rather disappointed tone; “but anyhow I. must give the man back his six shillings.”

The man was gone, nor was Billy likely to see him again. This was a new and even greater trouble.

“I’ll be gone down an’ tell Father about it,” said Billy, as he started off for his little chapel.

With faith renewed, and a comfortable assurance that it would be all right, he was coming from the chapel when he saw the cupboard going up the hill in a cart.

“I’ll follow un, anyhow,” he whispered, “an’ see the end.” They carried it to a house, and tried to take it inside, but it was just too big to get in. They twisted and turned, and they pulled and pushed, but it was no use.

“Here’s a mess,” said the purchaser, angrily; “I’ve given seven shilling for en, an’ shall have to skat en up for firewood.”

Then as his eyes twinkled, Billy stepped over and put his hand on the man’s shoulder as he stood, hat in hand, wiping his forehead.

“I’ll giv’e six shillin’ for un, if you’ll carry un down to my little chapel.”

“That I will,” said the man, pleased at being so well out of it.

“*Bless the Lord,*”cried Billy, “*tis just like Him. He knew I couldn’t carry en myself, so He got this man to carry en for me.”*[[2]](#footnote-2)

This chapter reads almost like a romance; but the devout reader will clearly see God’s hand in the matters related, and that His chosen instrument was eminently qualified to carry out His purpose. The fitting of means to ends has as remarkable illustra­tions in Providence as in Creation. That same Divine wisdom which chose Luther to be the hero of the Reformation, and Wesley and Whitfield to rouse a slumbering church and nation from their spiritual lethargy, and Livingstone to be the pioneer of the Gospel in interior Africa, endued Billy Bray with all the needful qualifications “to serve his generation according to the will of God” in the way described in this chapter. The Lord made abundant use of his tact and cheerfulness, because wholly devoted to Him. He succeeded therefore where others have failed, and brought discredit upon themselves and their friends. Thus when Billy appealed in one instance for a second subscription in behalf of “Great Deliverance” Chapel, the gentleman met him by the objection that he had subscribed to that chapel once before. “Yes,” Billy said; “but how many fleeces of wool have you had since then?” Nothing more was said, but a donation was at once handed to the “wise” beggar. The success of a man whose temper is never at fault, and whose wit turns everything to good account, is certain. A friend who was with Billy on a begging expedition, suggested, as they were coming near a gentleman’s house, and Billy was evidently making for the front door, that it would be better if they went to the back door. “No,” said Billy, “I am the son of a King, and I shall go frontways.” And then his motives were above suspicion, and his faith in God was of the strongest kind. His own words are: “I have no more fear of the Lord bringing me right out and right through than if this road was covered with gold; for His word is as good as ready money.”

We may and we do admire Billy’s simplicity and persistency of purpose, but his inward satisfaction none can share. We get many glimpses of it, but we must content ourselves with the briefest reference thereto. When he was got an old man, and had forgotten, perhaps, many of the exploits of his younger days, he heard in a public meeting, many miles from his home, a person speak of a man who had been instrumental in building several chapels in which many had been converted, and in one of which he, the speaker, had been a Sunday scholar. Billy was listening with interest to this recital, quite unconscious that he was the person meant, but when his name was mentioned his heart leaped for joy that he had been permitted to do some good; that he had persevered though the people did say that Billy was *silly;* that the Lord had sent many *wise* men to preach in the chapels which *silly Billy* Bray had built; that though he was only a *ram’s horn,* the Lord had given His people some *silver trumpet,* that many were in heaven who had been converted in these chapels; and above all did he rejoice that his dear Lord was the great master-builder, to whom all the praise belonged.

1. This expression may be misunderstood without an expla­nation. He freely used his own money, when he had any, but what was given him for the Lord’s cause was sacredly appropriated. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This graphic description is from the pen of the Rev. N. G. Pearse. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)