

# The Taming of Timothy.

By E. S. W.

## CHAPTER I.



HE lived in the last house at the end of the long, winding street. The house itself possessed the only verandah in the little bush township. It turned its back on the other houses in the street by facing the river. Personally Miss Matilda Crayley did not approve of the river. It was pretty to look at in summer, when the willows on the opposite bank dipped long, lithe, green fingers into the water, and at night it was rather soothing than otherwise to hear it flowing deeply and softly between its banks. Perhaps it was only the bank to which Miss Crayley objected; particularly that portion of it which went in a curving line round one side of her house and garden. It was low at this part, forming a convenient way for the children of the community to reach the, to them, ever fascinating river. Miss Crayley, though generally of a mild habit of mind, used to sometimes find herself wondering why none of these children were ever drowned. Somewhere in the background of consciousness was a dark thought she did not give utterance—the thought that drowning was too good for them. For Miss Crayley kept a garden. She was, in fact, a garden enthusiast. She rose early, and snipped roses, and swept paths while her neighbours slept. She sent abroad for bulbs, and it was rumoured she once gave five shillings for one. The people of the community therefore, with the simple directness which characterized all their opinions, said she was “daft,” and let the matter rest at that.

They left off advising her to keep fowls or grow potatoes after they discovered that she could afford not to do either of these things. As a matter of fact Miss Crayley had bought the place simply to indulge her hobby. She had accompanied her nephew once on a fishing expedition in the neighbourhood shortly after her arrival in the colonies, and her enthusiasm was aroused at the luxuriant growth of some pungas and maiden-hair fern in the bush around the settlement. Finally she decided to purchase the house she occupied, and set to work to make the wilderness blossom as a rose. She grew clematis over every unsightly stump, and all sorts of sweet scents were wafted over her garden walls. Most of the work she did herself to the half-grudging admiration of the male population. The ne'er-do-weel of the place once ventured to bestow a little patronizing commendation on her.

“Ye do work well, that ye do! just like a man.”

“Thank you,” said Miss Crayley, without stopping her digging; “I hope I do a little better than that!”

The idle one walked away discomfited.

Miss Crayley had a poor opinion of mankind in general, though in appearance she was not unlike one of the creatures she despised. It was a wonder that the sight of the tall, gaunt figure and severe face was not enough to frighten the children, between whom and herself perpetual war was waged. The small plunderers simply could not keep their hands from picking and stealing the roses that, heavy with