

The Death of Mrs. R. S. Willis.

With deepest regret we have the painful duty to record the somewhat sudden and unexpected death of Mrs. Willis, the beloved wife of the Rev. R. S. Willis, the much-esteemed incumbent of the Church of England, Manly. The deceased lady was the youngest daughter (Julia) of Dr. Kenneth Mackenzie, of Ardras and Dundonnell, Ross-shire, Scotland, and of Bundanon, Shoalhaven, N.S.W., sister of Mrs. Hugh Mackenzie, of Terrara and Bundanon, and of Mrs. James Thomson, of Burrier. On the 8th November, 1868, she married the Rev. Robert Speir Willis, then incumbent of Shoalhaven. She had two children, Helen and Kenneth, to whom she was ever the wisest and most unselfish of mothers. Her bright youthfulness of feeling and physique made her a comrade to them in all their amusement. Early training had made her a superb horse-woman, and on coming to the district she delighted riding out to distant parts of the parish, visiting old and dear friends the majority of her circle being young people and children. She ever worked diligently and indefatigably for the Lord, her Master, and for His Church. She has been a Sunday-school teacher over twenty-five years, and for seven years played the harmonium at the Church of England, Manly gratuitously, where she conducted a branch of the Girl's Friendly Society, and subsequently one of the Young Women's Christian Association for several years. She occupied a prominent position as one of the principal organizers and workers in bazaars and flower shows, by which two thousand pounds has been raised towards the enlargement of the Manly church and the erection of parsonage. Her last work in Manly was to organize Guilds of the ladies of the congregation for attending to the church furniture and decorations, a movement which had the happy result of making all the ladies of the congregation feel that the church belonged to them and securing their best interest in its welfare. Mrs. Willis was one of the few prodical Christians who never neglected private prayer and reading of God's word morning and evening, and her religion was bright, genial, and cheerful, without a tinge of harshness or censoriousness.

In the early part of April the Rev. R. S. Willis arranged a mutual exchange with the Rev. A. G. Stoddart for a few months, both rev. gentlemen deeming such exchange desirable and likely to be healthful to their families. Unfortunately the deceased lady caught a severe chill a few days ago which developed congestion of the liver. Dr. Stevenson was summoned on Tuesday last and despite all that medical skill and devoted nursing could do death took place at 7 o'clock on Sunday morning from acute peritonitis, and as the sad intelligence

peritonitis, and as the sad intelligence became known during Sunday forenoon it cast quite a gloom over Moss Vale and the district.

The funeral took place yesterday (Monday) afternoon, the cortage leaving the Parsonage for the picturesque little church at Sutton Forest at 3 o'clock, the attendance, despite the wet afternoon, being large. The mortal remains of the deceased lady were enclosed in a handsome polished cedar coffin, with black and brazen mouldings, and was received at the Church door by the Rev. G. D'Arcy Irvine, who conducted the funeral service, assisted by the Rev. R. S. Willis. The church was filled, and the service throughout was conducted in most solemn manner. After singing the lachrym and before leaving the church for the grave, the Rev. R. S. Willis with deep emotion said—My Dear Friends I thank you for the kind sympathy you have shown to me and mine in our great loss, but for myself and my children we have in the midst of it all great consolations. We have the blessed assurance that the soul of my wife, dear to me, mother dear to them, has passed from earth to Heaven as we have just been singing "Safe in the arms of Jesus" For ever in the Lord to be again gloriously. The dear one who has been summoned hence lived in close communion with her God. I alone can guess her reading of the Scriptures every morning and night, and much time she spent in private prayer. On our marriage twenty-six years ago the prayerful wish was expressed that we should both be equal to see our children grow up. This prayer thank God has been answered. I have been touched and cheered by the sympathy of those present, and large numbers that are not present. The sympathy has been honest generous and beautiful. For me much of the brightness has gone out of life, its solid duties to my children, to my relations, to my friends here and elsewhere, to God my Saviour, must ever remain, and in their performance I shall be ably aided by each other's sympathy aided by each other's help, guided and strengthened by the great loving comforting spirit of our God. I know that it will cheer you who are so kind to me and mine to hear that we can lay these consolations to our hearts.

The attendance at the funeral was unusually large, the relatives and more intimate friends present being H. H. Mackenzie, T. M. Thomson, M. Tison, J. R. Thomson, Miss B. Thomas, K. Robertson, D. Robertson, T. E. Willis, W. C. Willis, Masters H. and Mackenzie. There was a large number of friends from the Forest, Moss Vale and District also present.

The floral tokens of sympathy were exceedingly large, and embraced some lovely wreaths, crosses, &c. being forwarded by Mr. E. W. Knox, Miss Stevenson, J. P. Brantton, Sutton Forest Debating Society, Mr. A. B. Dimelow, Mrs. Chapman, Mrs. With

ton, Sutton Forest Debating Society, Mr. A. B. Dimelow, Mrs. Chapin, Mrs. Withcombe, Mrs. Smith, Miss Idshaw, Friends at Exeter, Mrs. Monk, M. J. F. Evans, Mrs. Adams, Sunday School Children, Sutton Forest, Mr. and Mrs. Norris, J. Cross, Miss M. Cross, M. O'Regan, Henderson, Mrs. Nye, M. T. Sewell, Bell, Mrs. H. A. Moss, L. Pinhey, Miss Lawrence, Mrs. August Morris, Miss Nicholson, Mr. Nicholson and many others.

Expressions of deep respect and sympathy were heard on all sides, mainly on Sunday afternoon when the cause of the death of Mrs. Willis was made known.

The whole of the funeral arrangements were entrusted to Messrs Taylor Brothers, and were carried out under the personal supervision of Mr. James Taylor.