

## "BEACON LIGHTS."

## A TALE OF ANDERNACH.

BY EMILIE STANFIELD.

"He that giveth length to the Lord"

IT was autumn in the Rhineland, and the trees in the grove outside the town were just beginning to glow with russet tints, as good "Pastor" Sponheim, as he was called (though in truth he was no pastor at all, but simply a man who spent his days in acts of love), left his snug little room for the open air, intent on teaching a class of poor boys whom he daily assembled, and who, but for his kindly aid, would have passed through the world with but little of good to weigh against the bad on every side of them. Not far from his cottage, in fact it seemed very near viewed from his little summer-house on the right hand side, lay the Abbey of St. Thomas, which somehow seems still dedicated to God, in that within its walls is a safe shelter for those whom He has seen fit to afflict with the worst of all maladies — madness. Now, it was said of this man, Herr Sponheim, that every evening after the boys whom he taught were dispersed, he wandered off in the direction of the abbey; some affirmed that he had been seen to enter the building itself, but as his habits of doing good were duly known and recounted, people did not wonder so much at this as they would otherwise have done. True, his face was stern, and folks said that he had been a soldier in his time — only said, remember, they did not know, for Herr Sponheim was no gossip, and kept his own counsel, so that although he had at the time I am speaking of lived for some years in Andernach, no one knew why he had come to the place, or chosen that town in preference to any other. Well, he looked stern, as I have said, and yet his actions and words bore testimony as nothing else could to a tender heart and a ready sympathy with all mankind. So he went on with his daily round of duties, oblivious of those who watched and commented upon his mode of life, and upon the evening of which I am speaking went out as was his wont to teach the boys who were gathered beneath the trees outside his dwelling the rudiments of his own simple faith, after which he would sing with them, in as mellow a voice as one could dream of or imagine, some of the hymns of the land, which are at once so rich in poetry and so effective

in their simplicity. The boys were gay; he could hear their merry peals of laughter, and — but he stopped short ere he reached them, and stood so as to allow a tree, a magnificent linden, to somewhat shelter him from view, for there, straight in front, stood a boy — a sort of town pest as he was generally voted — and it was entirely owing to his ridiculous antics and gestures that the sounds of merriment had arisen. "Pastor" Sponheim had long heard of this lad, of his witty speeches and mischievous tricks; and if but the half was true which report said of him, he was not quite so innocent of wrong-doing as might have been expected of one whose heart ought still to have been soft and impressionable. Yet the lad possessed a sort of interest or charm for the old man, and he often thought that, if but the current of his life could be somehow turned, he might in time prove a boon to his fellows. He longed (the

"pastor" I mean) to speak to him there and then, but saw the policy of remaining silent, before his own satisfaction, as most probably to have addressed Hans Scholer in his present mood would have been but to bring all his impudence and railery to bear on his — the speaker's — own head. A movement of the good man, causing his coat to brush the tree, was, however, heard by Hans, and he looked around instantly, and in less time than you can well imagine, he had bowed his head, or his most mocking bow to the "pastor," and darted away. It was observed by the boys that their teacher seemed strangely preoccupied and sad during his customary loving teaching and exhortation, and when at the last he declared that they must dispense with their usual melody, for that he could not sing this evening, they all felt aggrieved, for this singing it was



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which proved the one great attraction to the meetings.

They were all gone at last, and joyous shouts spoke in the far distance of the yet untried life which they were leading, and Karl Sponheim, his brow still clouded and gloomy, moved away — away towards the old abbey with its sacred trust. You should have seen him then, how he writhed in his anguish as he knelt on the green sward near the building, how he wrestled with God and with himself, how he bared his grey head and bowed it to the earth, craving a blessing from the Most High, a blessing which he never expected to obtain, though he prayed for it over and over again with groans which seemed to rend his very soul. All at once he raised his face — a slight noise had betokened a looker-on. Ah, there was Hans Scholer. But no merriment was visible upon his round face; it betrayed

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