

## COMPETITIVE WORKMEN.

BY FAYE HUNTINGTON.

## CHAPTER VI.

I must go back a little and tell you how Fritz's scheme of having religious services and Sunday school in the old church progressed. Mr. Fisher came on Sabbath afternoon, as he had promised, to speak to the people. Fritz had done his work thoroughly. There was not a family within a radius of two miles who had not been notified that "there would be a preaching service in the old church at the Centre, on Sabbath afternoon at three o'clock." The novelty of the thing drew together quite a large audience; about there were a few who came not from love of novelty but from love of the Word, filled with joy that it was to be preached once more in their midst. There was old Mr. Pierson, whose heart had been well-nigh broken when the old church fell into disuse, and whose daily prayer ever since had been that God would "in his own good time re-establish his visible church in their community;" and now he thought he saw in this movement a cloud of blessing, though, as he himself said, it was "no bigger than a man's hand." For years, increasing feebleness, making it impossible to walk to the nearest place where service was held, and being too poor to keep a horse, he had been debarred from all church privileges. And this was to him indeed a delightful Sabbath.

Mr. Fisher had thought and prayed much over the first sermon to be delivered to the people. He had studied their needs, so far as he could make himself acquainted with their circumstances. He realized that to many of them—the greater part, indeed—the gospel would be a new sound. He believed there were many who were in almost heathen darkness, so far as any knowledge of the truth of the Christian religion had been brought home to their hearts. He felt that he must come to these benighted ones with the offer of salvation. He believed that there is no power so great as the power of love. His own soul was alive with the love for humanity. In his own congregation he led his people by love. They knew that he loved them—that their interests were dear to him. He sympathized with them in their sorrows and in their joys. The poor and suffering among them turned to him for comfort; they knew that if help were within human possibility, it would be forthcoming. He lived in and for his people. There were some who criticised and found fault with the first sermon he preached at the Centre, —some, even, who sneered; but they were all present the next Sabbath afternoon. There was a strange attraction which they could not explain, neither could they resist. Though Mr. Stuart was among them, his posed to criticize, he was very careful about expressing his opinions. Only to one or two did he say anything, and yet, as often the case, he chose the very person for a confidant whom his opinions would most harm. Flavius St. John drank in every word that fell from Mr. Stuart's lips as words of wisdom. And when that gentleman said, "Yes, it was very fine; but it seems a pity to waste so much power and earnestness," "How waste?" asked the boy wondering.

"Why I mean it was well done, as a flight of fancy, but the people here need practical talks. I don't believe in the things he portrayed to night, about being lost and all that, and the people here who have not heard a sermon before in years ought to have had some truths presented—some that would help them into better ways of living; something that would have stimulated in the right direction."

Now, the boy Flavius had been deeply moved; he had been "stimulated;" he had almost made up his mind to answer the call of the tender Shepherd, but if Mr. Stuart called it all a flight of fancy, there was no need of thinking any more about it.

Mr. Wilson was one of the scoffers.

"Trying to get up a revival! It won't pay out here. I don't believe in those things, any way. Better spend his breath telling us how to get rid of the caterpillars, and preventing the rust from striking the wheat."

"I wouldn't speak that way before Ernest, if I were you," said his wife, gently. "You know he enjoyed Mr. Fisher's call so much, and he told me this afternoon that he meant to come out again soon to see our boy."

Any allusion to "our boy," was sure to soften Mr. Wilson, and the hint was not lost.

And though Ernest plied his father with questions, and made him repeat half the sermon, no sneer escaped his lips. So well he gave the leading points of the sermon, that his wife declared to Ernest that it was almost as good as hearing Mr. Fisher himself.

"Well, then," said Ernest, joyfully, "I shall make you repeat the sermon to me every time, so you must give very close attention."

Now, Mr. Wilson had declared on the way home that he should not make one of the audience for the future; but what could he do? He had seldom denied his boy anything, certainly never anything as reasonable as this which he now demanded. Scold as he would in his inmost heart, he must give attention to the words of the sermon, and repeat gravely to his boy. Surely God has ways of reaching those who would put themselves beyond reach.

The winter went by. Every Sabbath, through cold and storm, over the country roads, in the breaking up time of the year, Mr. Fisher came out to preach in the old church. There were Sabbaths when they thought he would not come because of the weather or the roads, but they were mistaken. When the roads were so bad as to make it seem a cruelty to take a horse out, he walked; and at length the people learned to expect him. He was getting acquainted with the people; getting a hold upon them. They began to trust him — to look to him for counsel. They even began to speak of him as "our minister." Death having come into their midst, he had been drawn closer to them through his ministrations to the dying, and his words of consolation of the living.

At length the time arrived when it was deemed wise to organize a Sunday-school. The great difficulty had been to find some suitable person to act as superintendent, and, indeed, out of this question, some trouble was likely to arise, unless it should be very judiciously managed. Mr. Stuart had so impressed the people with ideas of his superiority that they considered him fully equal to filling any position. It was true, as some of the people asserted, that in a sense Mr. Stuart was the only suitable person in the neighborhood to conduct the school; but in certain other respects no more unsuitable person could be found. Long and prayerfully did Mr. Fisher look at the question, considering many plans, only to reject them. At length he decided to make a further sacrifice of time and strength, and take the charge of the Sunday-school himself, hoping to train Fritz into an efficient assistant. He had at first thought of Fritz, but that was before he saw the magnitude of the work. He had thought of a few small children coming together; but when he saw men and women wishing to join the school, he felt that Fritz' plea, that he was too young, was a valid one.

The matter was thoroughly canvassed in the bar-room. The landlord grumbled, for, truth to tell, some of the loungers had already dropped off. Counter attractions were having some little influence, and the rum-seller, while he blustered a great deal and declared that he was not afraid—one or two fanatics couldn't turn things upside down and keep 'em there a great while—began to be afraid that his business would be cut down.

"Don't you fear," said one of his followers; "this thing won't last long. It's been tried 'fore now. These fellows, as a rule, haven't got any hold on. It's a big thing for a little while; but it will all go down together—temperance society, debating school, Sunday-school, and preaching. That schoolmaster there—he don't believe much in the preaching, nuther. They're both workin' agin us fellows, but then it's consolin' to know that they're workin' agin each other. You jist keep a-lookin' kinder cool and quiet, landlord, and you'll get all your old customers back agin, no fear."

## CHAPTER VII.

Before Philip Stuart had spent six hours in the school-house at the Centre, he said to himself:

"They ought to have a new school-house."

And before he had spent six weeks among the people, he said, still talking to him self.

"They shall have a new building!"

And certainly if ever a new one was needed, it was there. It was no wonder that Helena St. John died. Indeed, it was a

wonder that any delicate girl or boy survived the winter spent in that old shell. The roof was mossy, and the slope was irregular enough to suit modern ideas of architecture, owing to the fact that the shingles having decayed, the water had soaked through, and one or two rafters had rotted away at the ends; and altogether it was as forlorn a place as you could find in a journey of a thousand miles. Hitherto, when any one had been brave enough to suggest that the school house was in a wretched condition, and ought to be replaced by a new one, there were plenty to frown down the suggestion:

"It is good enough!"

"Where will you get the money to build with?" would be asked.

Mr. Wilson was one of the officers of the district, but he had always opposed the building schemes. His invalid boy would not be benefited by a new school-house; why should he trouble himself about it? It is a curious fact that self-shin blinds people so that they sometimes are unable to see facts that stare them in the face. Now Mr. Wilson had never discovered that the old school-house was uncomfortable, as well as unwholesome and unsafe. He did not know that it was much worse than school buildings in other districts. It was a great piece of folly putting grand notions into the heads of the children of farmers. Why, the old school-house was as good now as a great many houses, and besides they didn't eat nor sleep there. If they gave their attention to their books, what difference did it make as to the surroundings? It was all the people could do to pay their taxes now. A new school-house would ruin the neighborhood.

This had been Mr. Wilson's line of argument, if argument it could be called. And as he was the most influential man in the district, his opposition went for a great deal.

As the months went by it was evident that Ernest was gaining strength. Now he took his meals with the family, sitting in his wheel-chair; he had even stood for a very few moments upon his feet. He had begun to have regular lessons, and talked about the time when he would be able to go to school.

Then Mr. Stuart would remark:

"We must have a new-school house before you can go to school; I should not like to trust you under that roof."

And Ernest became an open and interesting advocate of the cause. Little by little, no one knew exactly how, the opposition gave way, and when at length the meeting of taxpayers was called to consider the question formally, there was a splendid majority in favor of the scheme. Mr. Stuart received a unanimous invitation to return in the fall, when the new building would be ready for occupancy, and take charge of the school. Now it so happened that Mr. Stuart had other plans for the coming year; he meant to try for a professorship in the seminary; he had even been encouraged to hope for just the place he wanted. But from his boyhood he had been somewhat noted for a fondness for seeing the end of things. Having taken hold of the work which he had found to do in that forlorn neighborhood, he was loth to lay it down until he was sure that it would not drop if he left it, so he decided to stay. The offer which the Centre people made him was certainly liberal; far more liberal than he could have expected. And glad as he was of more money, he believed he rejoiced still more over the offer as an evidence of the enlarged ideas that were getting hold of the people. One of the things Philip Stuart undertook in the beginning of the year was to start a magazine club. And he succeeded of course. He had started with two magazines and eight subscribers, making the membership fee seventy-five cents. To be sure, the magazines were a little old before they had been the round of the club, but no one minded that. And before three months of the year had passed the members had doubled their subscriptions, and two more of the leading magazines were added to the list. Ernest Holmes was one of the subscribers. When Mr. Stuart had suggested the plan, she had given her name, as she explained to her mother:

"For fear he would think we couldn't afford it, or were too stingy."

"For that matter," said Mrs. Holmes, "seems to me it would have showed more independence to have told him you were able to pay for your own newspapers. I'd as soon think of owning a coffee-mill or a chopping-bowl in company with some of my

neighbors. Thank fortune I never had to borrow!"

"But, mother, Mr. Stuart said he needed my name to make out eight; I did not think you'd mind it if I helped along. He seemed to be anxious about it."

"Oh, well, if it's going to do anybody any good. I s'pose the poor fellow wants something to read, and can't afford to pay out much money. These scholars think they can't live without books. For my part, I never could make anything out of most of my books."

"But you know," continued Ernie, "that year Cousin Alice was here she took the ——, and don't you remember what a lot of patterns and fashions we got out of it?"

"Yes, I know; I s'pose it is the stories Mr. Stuart is after; he can't care about the fashions."

And this was all the knowledge this mother and daughter had of the popular magazines of the day.

And it must be confessed that after Miss Ernie had devoured the stories, she found "Harper" rather dry reading, and did not even dip into the solid parts of the number. But after a while she grew tired of having Mr. Stuart ask how she liked this or that article, or what she thought of the editor's views on some special subject; and distasteful as it was, she set herself at work to master the next number. And when she had lighted upon some article that really interested her, Mr. Stuart had a book upon that subject which he was sure she would find instructive; and before she knew what she was about, Ernie Holmes was pursuing a course of reading. And as for Jack, finding some articles on natural history, he suddenly discovered that he had a taste for that branch of knowledge; and the pile of story papers ceased to increase, and one by one they went for waste paper.

The missing furniture of the Holmes' mansion, good reading matter, was likely to be supplied—and that through the medium of the Magazine Club.

"My next ambition," said Mr. Stuart, one day, "is to get a library started."

Mr. Wilson laughed outright.

"My dear fellow, you'll never do that. I'll acknowledge you have done wonders, but that is altogether too ambitious! Why, you couldn't raise money enough in this neighborhood to buy half a dozen books!"

"Bless you, if I could do that I should call it a fine beginning," replied Mr. Stuart.

"Whew!" ejaculated Mr. Wilson. "I see the thing will have to be done. Put me down for five dollars to begin with. Here we are, with a Lyceum and a Magazine Club in full blast, and a new school-house and a library in prospect! What are we coming to?"

"Yes, papa," said Ernest, "and a church and a Sunday-school. You forgot the best of it all."

And Mr. Wilson laughed as he said to Philip:

"You see, Mr. Stuart, how this boy puts Fritz's work ahead of yours!"

(To be Continued.)

WASHING BLANKETS.—Rinse from the suds into clear water taking care that the rinsing water is about the same temperature. Put the blankets through the wringer from the suds into the rinsing water, and again if necessary to remove all the dirty water into still another rinsing water, but do not wring them at all from the last water, simply rinse them up and down in the last tub of clear water and take them dripping from the tub and hang them over the line. Allow them to drip themselves dry. By putting them through the wringer the last time, the nap is pressed down and on drying it is left more or less hard and matted, and after a few times their beauty is gone, but by leaving them fall of water the nap is not matted and they have the same fluffy appearance when dry that new blankets have. —The Household.

SCALLOPED FRESH FISH.—This is an excellent way to use the fragments of a boiled fish. Take a pint of milk; put in it a piece of butter the size of an egg, and two table-spoonsful of flour; let it boil a minute, and then add three eggs, previously well beaten. Put layers of fish, shredded and sprinkled with pepper, salt, and nutmeg, alternately with layers of the sauce already made, until the dish is full; cover the top with bread-crumbs, and bake twenty minutes. Serve hot. —Miss Scoville in Christian Union.