

Lines

ADDRESSED TO MISS BESSIE TRUSTON ON HER
DEPARTURE AS A MISSIONARY TO JAPAN.

We bow the knee, O Lord, to thee,
In reverent prayer to pray,
That thou wouldst bless the bright girl
Whom duty calls away
From friends and home,
And help to come
And each brother's best plan,
To teach thy word of truth and grace
In far-away Japan.

Grant her safe voyage o'er the sea,
And in that land afar
May all her life-work honour thee,
Not less nor weakness mar
The good designed;
O may she find
Rich harvest-ground for seed,
And may she sow for thee, and know
A full return, indeed.

Oh do thou bless each willing gift
She sanctifies to thee!
And by thine own strong Spirit lift
Her soul and let it be
Ev'n unto death
Firm in the faith
Her sires have kept so well:
And grant a crown for work well done
At life's dismissal bell.

Thy "Prophet's Children" love the Truth
As in the olden days,
And in the blush and zeal of youth
Aspire to speak thy praise.
For thy dear name
And faith intensely burn
And yield each consecrated life
Thy promised-pearled return.

Each earnest toiler in thy way—
Do thou in mercy bless;
And hasten on the glorious day
Of ultimate success,
When 'neath thy sway
Men Truth obey,
And Christ's dear love shall span
And rule the Nations—one and all
And far-away Japan.

—L. A. Morrison.

A BOY'S FRIENDSHIP.

A Story of Boy Life in England.

CHAPTER II.

WHICH INTRODUCES A FRIEND AND AN
ENEMY.

 HE widow and her son led a quiet life at the cottage, having few acquaintances in the village, hearing little and seeing less of the people of Middleport, who, in days gone by and in better times, were so ready to call. Poverty drives those away who do not really love us, and sends us for shelter and comfort to the arms of that unflinching Friend "who sticketh closer than a brother," and judgeth not by what we have but what we are.

The simple folk of Crickleford did not fail to appreciate them, however.

Frank had a friend to whom, next to his mother, he was most anxious to tell all the news about the stranger and his kindly talk on the way. So, the following morning, he lost no time in walking up the one steep street of the village in search of the forge, where Ben Garwood worked and sang. The place was grimy, smoky, and noisy, as a blacksmith's

shop is expected to be. It stood at the top of the street, just where the road branched off by the elms to the old church; and the musical clink of the blow of Ben on the anvil could always be heard first by anyone entering Crickleford. The next thing, probably, which would catch the ear of the visitor would be Ben's voice singing away some familiar hymn, and the next object would be the rough, smoke-blackened, but most happy countenance of Ben himself, if he cared to pause by the wide-open door.

In a corner of the forge was a heap of old chains and a big block of wood, where many a day Frank sat, safe from the shower of sparks, and talked with the old Methodist.

"Come in, Maister Frank, I be right glad to see ye. It's warmish this morning, I fancy."

"Yes, Ben, very; and I've been walking so fast up the High Street that I am for once almost as hot as you always seem to be."

"Eh, ma lad, I sometimes feel a bit tired after all these years o' work here at the forge; but then, as I say to my missis, arter all it's not such hard work as having nothin' to do."

"You're always happy, Ben."

"Happy! Bless yer heart, what else can I be? It's because 'He maketh me lie down in green pastures, he leadeth me beside the still waters,' that's why I feel like singing all the day."

And the old man took off his black, rough cap, and wiped his brow—a head already besprinkled with the snows of advancing age, a face furrowed and begrimed with honest toil. But the hand that held that old red pocket-handkerchief had never lifted the beer tankard to his lips; and those bright, sparkling eyes, under the bushy brows were the windows through which a holy and blessed soul looked out upon a world without fear of man. One of the Lord's great men was Ben—a nobleman of divine rank—living in a two-roomed cottage down the lane, on eighteen shillings a-week, and working early and late, at the age of seventy-three.

"Ben, I met such a nice gentleman last night when I was out fishing in the backwater under the willows."

"Aye, and what did he say to you, boy?"

"A good deal, Ben, and very kindly too."

"God bless him for it, I say."

"I told him, Ben, about my idea, you know, of writing a book, and what do you think? He said I couldn't do better than begin at once."

"Nay, dear heart, you'd better not fret yourself about so much writin' and readin', for you're not over strong, Maister Frank."

"But, Ben, the book he spoke of is the book of my life, writing by every thing I do and every word I say."

"Aye, that's it, that's it, Frank! The Lord Jesus wrote large over everything in love and mercy, and he

wants us to be also 'rep-thes known and read of all men.'

"Please God, I mean to do it, Ben!"

"And by his grace you will. You remember those words I'm so often singing. Fetch that hymn-book, Frank, from the window-sill, and turn to No. 96f:

"Let all thy converse be sincere,
Thy conscience as the noon-day clear;
For God's all-seeing eye surveys
Thy secret thoughts, thy words and ways."

These, and other words from the Word of Life, Ben commended to Frank, and the boy sped home with a light heart. Ben was never weary of Frank's company. He had all the pleasure which old people feel in finding young ears ready and grateful for good counsel and stories of days gone by.

There was another reason why Ben liked him. Many years ago, when his hair was all brown, and his forehead less furrowed with toil, Ben too had a son, a bonnie bright-eyed lad, who used to make his little white pinafore dirty with playing at the forge, while his father, with loving glance, leaned on his hammer watching his play. How he loved that boy! But in the corner of the old churchyard is a grassy hillock, where, even now, after all these past years, Ben goes still to sit sometimes, while the big tears roll down his face.

A few days afterwards, Frank was returning from a walk across the fields when a familiar voice called from behind the hedge.

"Hallo, Frank, what's the hurry?"

It was young George Christie, the Squire's son, a youth some three or four years older than Frank, and not by any means a desirable companion. But the cottage where they lived belonged to the old Squire, and Frank could not well afford to offend him. George was one of those ill-natured fellows who take a pleasure in tormenting others who are weaker than themselves, or otherwise in their power. His training had been none of the best, truly; a hard, ungracious father, and a loving but too lenient mother; and George was growing up a source of trouble and contention at home, and an object of general dislike in Crickleford.

"I say, Frank, I've got such a capital plan in my head; what do you think it is?"

"I'm sure I can't say, George."

"Well, now, don't be a fool, and get frightened, or say you won't join me, for it will be such a lark, and I know we shall enjoy it."

"What is the idea?"

"Why, just this: You're fond of fishing, so am I. Down by the Church Meadows is a quiet little stream, flowing through the grounds of Captain Starkie, full of fish. I've seen them leaping, like silver, over and over again."

"Oh, yes, I remember the place

well, but you know, George, it is preserved."

"Preserved! what does it mean? You're not afraid of a bit of poaching, my boy, are you? It's grand fun!"

George drew closer to him, looking furtively round lest he should be overheard.

"Look here, I say, next week the Captain goes up to London, and we can just slip down under the shadow of those thick trees some evening and catch a lot of fish, without being seen."

"Which will be stealing, George Christie, and I for one won't do it."

"Nonsense; don't be a ninny."

"Ninny or no ninny, I'm not going, George."

"Wait a bit, my boy. Think of the sport we'll have. I'm bound to say there's a pike or two to be had."

"You needn't talk any more about it, George. I don't want to quarrel with you; but once and for all, I say 'No' to your plan."

These firm words made the youth pause a moment, and a change came over his face. He saw that no amount of coaxing would move Frank from his purpose, so he tried, with ill-concealed temper, another tack.

"Look here, if you don't go, I'll never speak to you again."

"I can't help that."

"All right. And what's more, I shall tell my father that you are scarcely civil, and you know he can easily get a new tenant if one is wanted."

The arrow struck home, and Frank's pale face showed it. A year ago, the Squire, in a snappish mood, had grumbled at the modest rent they were able to pay, and he knew full well how much they were attached to the place. The boy winced, but he was not to be bullied.

"George Christie, I will be plain with you, whatever it costs. To fish without leave in the Church Meadows is wrong, and I won't join you; it is not only breaking the law, but I should be breaking faith with Captain Starkie, who has always been kind to me; and, most of all, I should be sinning against God."

"You're a preaching little prig, that's what I call you, my boy; and I'll make you sorry for this, mark my words."

So speaking, George turned on his heel, nettled exceedingly that he had been foiled by the plucky determination of Frank, and all the more because he could not help feeling that his decision was a just one. George, who had been ill brought up, cared for nothing but himself, and had no thought of God, so he hated Frank for his words. He was not going to be done out of his treat, and yet he was not quite sure whether Frank might not prevent it. Anyhow, he would have his revenge.

Turning these bitter thoughts over in his mind, to injure Frank and save himself, this churlish fellow walked away.

(To be continued.)