

The Pioneers.

BY W. D. LIGHTHALL.

All you who, in your acres broad,
Know nature in its charms,
With pictured dale and fruitful sod
And herds on verdant pastures,
Remember those who fought the trees
And early hardships braved,
And so for us of all degrees
All from the forest saved.

And you who stroll in leisure ease
Along your city squares,
Thank those who there have fought the trees,
And dared the wolves and bears.
They met the great woods in the face,
Those gloomy shades and stern;
Withstood and conquered, and your race
Supplants the pine and fern.

Where'er we look, their work is there;
Now land and man are free;
On every side the view grows fair
And Eden yet shall be.
The credit's theirs who all day fought
The stubborn giant hosts,
We have but built on what they wrought;
Theirs were the honour-posts.

Though plain their lives and rude their dress,
No common men were they:
Some came for scorn of slavishness
That ruled lands far away;
And some came here for conscience' sake,
For Empire and the King;
And some for Love a home to make,
Their dear ones here to bring.

First staunch men left, for Britain's name,
The South's prosperity;
And Highland clans from Scotland came—
Their sires had aye been free;
And England oft her legions gave
To found a race of pluck;
And ever came the poor and brave
And took the axe and struck.

Each hewed, and saw a dream-like home!—
Hewed on—a settlement!
Struck hard: through mists the spire and
dome
The distance rim indent!
So honoured be they midst your ease
And give them well their due:
Honour to those who fought the trees,
And made a land for you!

A BOY'S FRIENDSHIP.

A Story of Boy Life in England.

CHAPTER VI.

OLD BEN PRAISES THE LORD.



YEAR passed away. People said that the Squire had greatly aged; his eyes had a worn, far-away look; and the iron-grey of his locks was turning to white.

He used to walk about the fields, his gun under his arm, but never watching for a bird or firing a shot; more frequently spending an hour sitting on a bank within sight of the Church Meadows. Here he would talk to himself, or to his dog Griff, and to no one else.

The folks in the village grew alarmed at his manner, he was so strange at times. Nobody dared to speak to him about his missing son—not even his disconsolate wife; and yet, again and again, he had been heard calling, "George, George; come back, lad!" along the lonely lane at nightfall.

One day, Dr. Anderson—driving from seeing a patient at Tattering Fitz—met him, and was struck by his woe-begone appearance.

"Good morning, Mr. Christie."

"Eh! there's no good morning for me."

"Nay, my dear sir, don't say that. Cheer up! It doesn't do to give way, you know."

"Give way! Give way! Doctor, I shall never look up again."

Dr. Anderson smiled good-humouredly, and put his hand upon the Squire's shoulder.

"Come, come! I shall have to prescribe for you, if you take such a mournful view of things. Bless my heart, man, things are not half so bad as you imagine."

The poor old man looked up into the doctor's face with an earnest, yearning gaze, which made even him feel unnerved; and then, in a deep whisper, said:

"Doctor, listen, and I'll tell you a secret. My heart's just broken over that lost lad of mine; and wherever I go—in the woods, about the farm, or in his bedroom—I hear voices saying, 'You'll never see him again, never again.'"

And having said this, evidently with much difficulty, he covered his face with his hands, and sobbed aloud. The doctor got down, fastened the reins to the fence, and put his arms round the poor fellow, and let him "have his cry out," with his head leaning on his breast, like that of a child.

Dr. Anderson was like Luke, a physician beloved of the Lord, and when the Squire felt able to listen and talk a little, he tried to pour into that wounded spirit the balm which, in the mercy of God, is for every suffering heart. He told him, too, that his boy was in sight of Christ, who loved him better even than his father and mother, and they must pray that, if it were his gracious will, the dear lad might come back again. And under the elms there they stood, and uncovered their heads, while the prayer ascended from the doctor, echoed in the heart of the old Squire, that George might be restored.

Although hitherto inaccessible to the father, our young friend, Frank, had found a ready way to George's mother, and was never weary of urging her to have faith to believe that the boy would meet her again. She blessed him a thousand times for his comforting and encouraging words, and promised to hope on—hope ever.

One bright autumn Sunday morning, Frank was preparing for what was to him an exceptional treat—that was to walk with old Ben to one of his preaching appointments in a distant village. The old blacksmith had just finished his breakfast as Frank entered. Having no good wife to look after him, Ben had several little household affairs to settle before he was ready. The cup and saucer and plate

had to be washed and put in the cupboard ready for the morrow, and the place left straight and tidy, as becomes the cottage of an old and respectable bachelor like Ben. Then the top-hat was fetched from out of the bandbox under the bed—a head covering of somewhat old-fashioned pattern, and which sat most uncomfortably on the furrowed brows of the old man. But, like the well-brushed black frock-coat, it was indispensable to the worthy brother, almost as much so as the thick volume of Wesley's Hymns which he thrust into one of the pockets.

"Now, Master Frank, I'm ready, my boy, and have been praying earnestly that the Lord may give us a good time."

They sallied forth—the youth and the aged man—talking, as they crossed the fields and trudged along the high-road, about many things.

Nothing pleased Ben better than to talk of his earlier days, and how the Lord called him from darkness to his marvellous light, when he was a foolish, wayward young man, thinking little about his soul. And Frank listened with full appreciation, not the less that Ben had told him some of these stories several times before. And so talking, they reached the village.

The chapel was a little, square building, up a by-lane, and the worshippers had already begun to assemble.

An old lady, in a plaid shawl, nodded pleasantly as Ben walked up the aisle to the pulpit; and the young men and maidens, who formed the choir, looked to their music and found their places. The instruments present consisted of an accordion, with most of the pearl off the notes, a bass-viol, and two rather high-pitched violins. While Ben was finding the lesson in the big Bible on his knee, these sweet singers and sincere players of the sanctuary opened the service by giving "I will arise," on their own account.

Frank had found a comfortable place in a corner seat, and joined heartily in the hymn, which was presently sung. Quite as fervently his young heart went out with the prayer which Ben uttered—a not very correct one in point of grammar, and with many references to local and personal matters not generally heard in such petitions, but full of grace, simplicity, and truth. The Lord was a very real Lord to Ben. He had met him once like as he met Saul on the way to Damascus, and the light which shone around had never faded from Ben's heart.

His text was from the Psalms, read slowly, and with solemn emphasis:—

"When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream."

"Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing; then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them."

"The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

"Praise the Lord!" said a little man at the back, laying down his spectacles, as soon as ever the words had been read.

"Yes," said Ben, "we will praise the Lord, brother. Don't you thank the Jews there in Babylon praised him! Why, when they saw the proclamation of Cyrus stuck about the walls they were glad indeed. I fancy I can see them running through the streets, and, taking each other by the hand, say, 'Have you heard the news?' 'No; what is it?' 'Why, we're going back again!' 'Nonsense, man; you're dreaming!' 'No, I'm not; and I feel so happy, I've been laughing all the way along!' 'But are you really sure?' 'Well, come and see it for yourself!' And then he drags his friend to the spot where the decree is posted up, and they read it together; and then kiss each other, and shout for joy. Then a crowd of the people gather round to look at the strange ways of the Jewish captives, and, seeing their gladness, they say, 'The Lord hath done great things for them.' And they turn round and say, with sparkling eyes, 'Yes, he has; the Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.'

"And it's just for the same reason Brother Twitts here cried out, 'Praise the Lord.' He has done great things for him and for us too, hasn't he? If there's a man or a woman here for whom the Lord hasn't done great things perhaps they may hold their peace; but as for us, dear friends, we will praise the Lord."

And nearly all of them did, with many a hearty Amen and Hallelujah.

It mattered very little to old Ben that he had, somehow, begun with his "thirdly," and that his bit of paper, with a brief note or two, had already got lost between the leaves of the Bible in his frequent reference, his heart was full of his theme, and the mouth never for a moment lacked utterance. He looked the man with the impaired accordion full in the face, and told him, for his comfort, that David, when he was happy, played on the harp, which pleased the Lord. He begged the row of little boys and girls, with a loving tenderness, to "sing praises unto the Lord, sing praises," in the lanes, in their cottages—everywhere to bless the good Lord.

Then, when drawing to a close, he told them of what "the Lord had done for his soul;" how, like a poor, wretched slave, he was fast bound with the chains of sin, when the Lord sent a proclamation to him, and out of Babylon he leaped to Zion, and he had never tired of telling, again and again, of the goodness of the Lord.

"I'll praise him while he lends me breath,
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers."

"My days of praise shall ne'er be past,
While life, and thought, and being last,
Or immortality endures."