

BRINGING SIGHT TO THE BLIND.

(FROM "THE NURSING MIRROR.")

"WHEN the names of the fighting men are forgotten the name of Arthur Pearson will be remembered as one remembers the name of Florence Nightingale, the Lady of the Lamp. Just as Florence Nightingale revolutionised the whole system of hospital nursing when she went out to the Crimea, and contrived to annihilate Mrs. Gamp, so, in his work at St. Dunstan's, Arthur Pearson performed a work of inestimable value for blind people everywhere."

So writes Mr. Sidney Dark in his *Life of Sir Arthur Pearson*, published recently by Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton (10s. 6d. net), and in their amazing energy and their indomitable courage, the woman who passed her girlhood in Victorian drawing-rooms and the man who spent his boyhood in *Tit-Bits* Office, show themselves as possessed of the true pioneer spirit. It was in the days of her strength that Florence Nightingale served her generation and in the days of his weakness that Arthur Pearson served his, both of them serving also generations that are yet unborn. Long before blindness fell upon him Pearson had been known as a great newspaper proprietor, a man of original ideas and fierce activities, a man of kind heart.

"Until he lost his sight his philanthropic energies were mainly expended in the running of the Fresh Air Fund, but it was when he became blind that the greatness of the man was revealed." "I shall soon be blind," he said to Lady Pearson, after his examination by a great Austrian oculist, Professor Fuchs, "but I will never be *a* blind man. I am going to be *the* blind man." "From the very moment that he was a blind man Arthur Pearson began to work for the blind."

THE GOSPEL OF ST. DUNSTAN'S.

With the most splendid courage he at once dismissed his valet that he might "try and do more small things for himself than he had done when he could see. . . . He was determined never to be content with a half-life, to minimise the results of his loss, and to develop to the full the faculties that remained." It was no lesson of dull resignation to the inevitable that the St. Dunstan's men were taught, but the need for full self-development and self-expression. Mr. Dark tells us that he once overheard Arthur Pearson talking to the matron of the Bayswater Road house, which preceded St. Dunstan's. "She told him that one of the men was rather despondent. 'Despondent,' said Sir Arthur Pearson, 'What on earth has he got to be despondent about?' Such a remark from a sighted person would have been a callous insult. But Arthur Pearson himself was blind. He sent for the man and talked to him in what seemed to me a splendid brotherly manner, repeating what he was afterwards to describe as the gospel of St. Dunstan's. 'There

is much that we cannot see, there is one thing we will not see if we can help it, and that is the gloomy side of our lives ! ” There can be no doubt that the rapid progress of the St. Dunstan's men in all kinds of work was due to the fact that many of the teachers were blind. Pearson said, “ When a blinded man with that terrible feeling of helplessness which first overcomes him, particularly if he tries to do something, finds that the man teaching him is blind himself, he thinks at once, ‘ I am not being asked to do something which is impossible by someone who does not understand. I am being shown the right way. This man who is blind knows what he is doing, and I, too, can do it. ’ ”

THE INSPIRATION OF ONE MAN.

Men were not always eager to go to St. Dunstan's when discharged from hospital ; their natural tendency was to go home to their wives and mothers. “ They had pensions sufficient, anyhow, to protect them from actual want, and a good many of them were inclined to throw up their hands, and become mere dull loafers through life. But Sir Arthur Pearson would not let one of them escape from his meshes without an effort. ’ They were asked, and their relatives were asked, to visit St. Dunstan's, and they speedily realised that a blind man's life can only be endurable if he learns to do things for himself. Pearson himself visited all blinded men in hospital, and gave every man a watch specially made for the use of the blind, with hands slightly raised, and dots to indicate the place of the numerals. With this Pearson watch the man was able to tell the time for himself, and this gave him pleasure and hope. This is one of those apparently small thoughts that would only have occurred to one himself blind.

“ The St. Dunstan's men,” writes Mr. Dark, “ owed their new life to the co-operation of many kindly and devoted men and women, and to a highly efficient common-sense scheme of education, but they owed it most of all to the inspiration of one man whose sole idea of living was never to be beaten, whose sole consideration, when loss occurred, was how to make the fullest use of that which remained.”

TRIUMPHANT ACHIEVEMENT.

We think of Arthur Pearson riding fearlessly on the downs on an “ uncomfortable, mettlesome horse,” and it is tragic to remember that ten days later he was killed by stumbling in a slippery bath. Yet there was really no tragedy in the life of this gallant gentleman, it was all triumphant achievement. As Mr. T. P. O'Connor wrote : “ If one could see the steady hand of omniscient fate it might seem that Pearson was bound in the shackles of blindness that other blind might be free.”

P. W.