

tell the Bible Christian Conference, which he visited at Plymouth in 1891, that the reception it gave him he regarded as the greatest honour of his life. In the words of a well-known American journal, "while his abilities and exalted position would entitle him to be presented to the American public as worthy of the highest respect, he is to be honoured particularly for adhering to the comparatively small body in which he was trained. This is an example which should bring the blush of shame to many persons in the United States, who, without any pretence of change of doctrine, when attaining prosperity, have turned their backs upon the church which made themselves and their parents all that they are, and entered denominations which they fancied could give them a little better social standing. Chief Justice Way has successfully proved that merit and magnanimity can make a standing which is not only independent of adventitious aids, but can bring them, when they are no longer needed, obsequiously to do him homage."—(H. W. H., in "Osborne Magazine," 1897).

Rev. WILLIAM BLAKE LARK.

(President of Conference, 1882 and 1898).

ONE of the prettiest of the many pretty places in Cornwall is the little township of Fowey, and here, on December 1st, 1838, the subject of this sketch was born. At the age of fifteen he was "born again," under the ministry of the late Rev. F. W. Bourne. His

birth into the spiritual world was not only of moment to himself, but to others, as his ministry has fully demonstrated. At the age of sixteen he



commenced to preach, and made his first attempt at Elburton, in the Plymouth Circuit, before a congregation numbering seven souls—two men, one woman, and four children. With youthful

earnestness and zeal, he exhorted the little company to "flee from the wrath to come"—an exhortation frequently heard at that time from budding preachers, but rarely heard to-day. His next pulpit effort was at Zion Chapel, Plymouth, and here he had an experience which he has never forgotten. In the congregation were several local preachers, who were accustomed in those days to wear white neckties. These symbols of purity produced such an effect upon the lad that he was almost overwhelmed, and for several days after he was seriously ill.

He became a candidate for the ministry in 1859, and was sent to the Redruth and Camborne Circuit. Here he remained two years, and then proceeded to London. Exeter was the next scene of his labours, and here he became popular by delivering a series of lectures on the Bible. These attracted large audiences, and the commodious sanctuary was crowded every Sunday evening. During his ministry at Exeter he married Miss Chanter. From Exeter he proceeded to Jersey, where he spent one of the most happy and successful terms of his ministry. The church at the Royal Crescent was then in a most flourishing condition, and every Sunday evening was witnessed the spectacle of hundreds of young men and women crowding the galleries of this historic sanctuary. A similar sight was seen at Brougham Road Church, Portsmouth. During his ministry there he delivered a series of discourses on "Christianity and Free Thought," and these created such interest that difficulty was experienced in accommodating the crowds that gathered. It is said that after the first lecture,

such was the excitement generated, it was necessary to admit seat-holders by a side door half-an-hour before the commencement of the service. The other spheres in which he has exercised his ministry are Holsworthy, Penzance, Bristol, Newport (I. of W.), twice, Devonport, and Aberavon. At the Conference in 1900 Mr. Lark was appointed governor of Shebbear College. In addition to his pulpit and pastoral work, Mr. Lark was for many years a contributor to the Connexional Magazine, the articles above the signature "B. W. Kral" being from his pen. Early in his ministry Mr. Lark made a favourable impression on the minds of his ministerial brethren and the Connexion generally, and this impression deepened with the passing of the years. In 1880 he was elected Secretary of Conference, and re-elected in 1881. The highest honour his brethren could bestow was given the following year, when he was elected President. This honour was conferred a second time in 1898. In company with a few others, he has represented the Connexion at each of the Ecumenical Conferences.

The subject of this sketch gives a wide interpretation to the primary functions of a minister, and has but little sympathy with that narrow type of religion which is content with feeding itself upon a multiplicity of emotional gatherings, and permits the outer world to pursue its own irregular and mischievous course. Whatever his theory, the evidence is abundant that in practise Mr. Lark shows that the kingdoms of this world are also the Kingdoms of God—or ought to be—and that in devoting a portion of his time to the discussion

of great public questions having moral bearings he is true, not only to the highest instincts of his nature, but to the spirit and temper of the Gospel of Christ. The platform has been the scene of some of his greatest triumphs. Here he has free play, and many of the conventionalities of the pulpit are ignored. Wit, humour, repartee, scorn, denunciation, and ridicule are all brought into play when dealing with some burning question affecting the liberties and lives of the people. Deliberate in speech, and with every syllable distinctly articulated, he thunders forth his denunciations against political and social wrongs with all the force of his body, mind, and soul. Against the liquor traffic he has waged an unceasing warfare, and few men in the Connexion have done better service than he in disclosing to the general public the attitude of the denomination towards this accursed traffic. He has been its inveterate foe for many years, and his hatred has deepened with the growth of his own observation and experience of the deadly results of this pernicious trade.

As a preacher, platform speaker, and debater, Mr. Lark has been in the front rank for a quarter of a century. His effectiveness as a speaker is not to be found either in the originality or depth of his thought, the beauty of his diction, or the delicacy of his phrasing. In listening to him one is impressed rather with the thought that he is more concerned with driving his message home to the heart and conscience than with the particular manner in which the message shall be presented. Plain, direct, cogent, there is no possibility, in

listening to Mr. Lark, of being led into a fog, and of being enshrouded in an atmosphere where even a metaphysician or a psychologist could not discover his whereabouts. In a sermon heard by the writer a few years since the thought was so clear and the language so plain, that any ordinary lad could understand what Mr. Lark desired to communicate. The thought occurred, after hearing that sermon, "that the wayfaring man, though a fool," had no occasion to err. And it is these qualities of plainness, clearness, directness of thought and expression, joined with an impressiveness of manner which few of his ministerial brethren seem to command, which have given him his position and influence as a preacher and platform speaker. He is one of that limited band of front-rank men who, for about a third of a century, have been potent, determining factors in the life and history of the denomination. That band is rapidly passing out of the ranks—their day is done, their labour ended, and the duties and responsibilities now rest upon other shoulders. In this band of workmen, so rapidly passing into peace and quiet, the subject of this sketch has been no insignificant member. He has played many parts, and played them well; and now, after about forty-seven years of active service, fraught with blessing to untold numbers, the consciousness is given that in "labours more abundant" he has been faithful to the divinely-committed trust.

Whilst the swiftly-passing years have not been without their effect upon him, robbing him of Nature's protecting mantle and carving lines upon brow and face, he still gives evidence of possessing

many of the attributes of youth. His heart is still young, his outlook upon life and society optimistic, and the humour of existence still a potent factor in the varied content of experience. One of the most modest of men, and as brotherly as he is modest, his counsels in the Connexion have always been weighty and valuable. That he has the "defects of his qualities" goes without saying; but, survey him in body, mind, and soul—measure him in the totality of his being, and the conviction is irresistible, that he stands among the peers of the Methodist realm, one of the noblest of his time.

Mr. BENJAMIN MICHELL (Redruth).

AT Hicks Mill, on November 13th, 1840, of humble parents, was born a child endowed with certain qualities, whose exercise brought their possessor into the goodly land of commercial prosperity and influence. Bereft of his father when quite a child, he owed much of what was best and noblest in his life to his sainted mother, who was one of the first members of the famous Hicks Mill Society. Accompanying his mother to the chapel when only a lad, it may be said that, from that time to his death, he did not wander beyond the influences of the Bible Christian Connexion, with which he was more or less closely identified for about forty-six years. Education, as at present understood, was practically unknown to him, the facilities for