

EARBY THROUGH 60 YEARS (1)

A New series of Articles to "Herald & Pioneer"

"Earby Through 60 Years" is the title of a series of articles which, beginning this week, will appear monthly in the "Craven Herald & Pioneer" from the pen of Mr. John Hartley, who may be aptly described as Earby's unofficial historian. Mr. Hartley has an unexampled knowledge of old Earby families and institutions, and his engaging literary style, tintured with the gift of telling an anecdote admirably, invests his writings with a special value. Begin to day with Mr. Hartley in a survey of Earby by one pre-eminently qualified to undertake it.

A PEEP INSIDE GREEN END COTTAGES

Family's Settlement on Opening of Victoria Mill

"I remember, I remember,
The house where I was born,
The little window where the sun,
Came peeping in at morn."

The cottage was one of ten, and the fourth from the top. They were in line with the master's house, from which they were separated by the terminus of the carriage drive, which was half a mile long from the main road, leading to the railway station, and to Colne and Skipton.

The village green must have been of considerable dimensions before the Enclosure Acts came into operation, and in addition to being flanked by cottages, there were accommodated within it's purview the village bakehouse (usually called the "Bakus"), the blacksmith's shop, the tithe barn, and the village inn (the "White Lion.")

The Green End cottages were favoured with a most pleasing aspect, the farm meadows being in front, and the "Banks" pastures in the background, surmounted by Bleara Moor, with Pinhaw Pike on the left and Kelbrook Moor on the right. Originally the cottages were "one up and one down," but a partition in the living room provided a convenient kitchen, and the bedroom was also equally divided in the same manner. The rent of the cottage was 2/- weekly, with 1d extra for water.

In my early days the cottages were modernised by the provision of beautiful doors and large window panes, and they have been more recently provided with up to date conveniences at the rear. They have always been regarded as attractive dwelling houses, and non of them has been known to remain empty when there has been a change in the tenancy.

Our cottage was well furnished for its size and in addition to the usual wood chairs, we had a square snap table with mahogany stand; a mahogany chest of drawers with a bookcase on the top; a good kitchen dresser with a ledge for ornaments (which included a pair of "lustre vases"; a long table under the window; and the bedrooms were appropriately furnished. The house window sill always contained a few flowering plants, including a rose tree, a lily, geraniums and musk. There was a small strip of garden at the front of the house, and the pavement was of small cobble stones.

FAMILY PRIVATIONS

My parents were neither of them natives of Earby , but their families had come to reside in the village after the erection of Victoria Mill , where they were all eventually employed , either in the spinning or weaving section.

My father, George Presland-Hartley was born at Thornton-in Craven, and his mother, Margaret Presland, was a native of Chester. There was a numerous family, and they suffered much keen privation when the children were of tender years. Their food consisted mainly of " porridge and stop, " with a "sad cake" for tea on Sundays.

The only outing my father had as a lad was a visit to Skipton show, walking both ways, a sixpence in his pocket with which to go onto the show field, and a sad cake for his dinner. When he got work as a doffer at the mill he was like many more lads, rather of a rough disposition, and kept a few pigeons.

An amazing revival at the Methodist Chapel, which affected the whole village, occurred during the Cotton Famine caused by the American Civil War , and my father, then 13 years of age , was "brought in." If ever a lad was transformed by conversion it was he, and no church was ever served with more enthusiastic devotion than he unstintingly gave to the local chapel and school and the connexional cause. The testing time of his conversions came, because the problem he was confronted with was what to do about his pigeons. However, he definitely made up his mind, and packing his pigeons in his baskets, he walked with them down the road towards Skipton until he came to the bridge over the River Aire. There he "despatched" them, never to return, and their dead bodies floated down the river to the sea; but he never seemed able to cross over that bridge without a little pang of regret as he thought of his beloved pigeons!

A LEADING WESLEYAN

At the new Wesleyan Chapel and school he became a leading figure, though he was always content to be " either a hewer of wood or a drawer of water." He served the Sunday School as teacher, treasurer and superintendent; he became manager of the Day School and its correspondent. He occupied in due course the office of poor steward, society steward , chapel steward and circuit steward , and he was the first elected representative of the Barnoldswick circuit to the District Synod.

He was returned as one of the first members of the School Board, and until his death he was a member of the local Education Sub-Committee. In this sphere he co-operated with the Rector of Thornton (Rev. L.B.Morris), who never could address him except as "George". They were " boys together " in the same village, and social distinctions made no difference to them.

In the spinning mill he became a mule spinner, and one of the best. He was well liked by his co-workers, and well respected by his employers. There were occasions

when he was chosen to lead the deputation, which waited upon the employers in their private office when difficulties arose about working conditions. When things were very bad in the early "Eighties" he went with a deputation to Burnley to confer with the Spinners' Union. The meeting was held in the "Spinners' Arms," and "pints round" was the rule in that fraternity, and in consequence negotiations did not proceed any further, most of the Earby spinners being teetotalers and "chapel goers." He was fortunate enough to leave the mill before the long stoppage ensued in 1889, and for six years he was manager of the Co-operative Society. During that period a vast improvement was effected in the condition of the Society, which was contributed to by the increase of the population.

In 1895 he assisted in the formation of the Earby Manufacturing Co. Ltd., and was one of the first directors and also the chairman for several years. During part of that time he worked as a tape sizer.

CRICKET MEMORIES

From a youth he was keenly interested in cricket, and while he only appeared occasionally with the first eleven, he often officiated as an umpire. On one occasion at Colne, he was mobbed off the field because he had given their "pro" (Dick Boys) "run out." In 1874, at Earby Feast, Arthur Bracewell took the Earby cricketers to Bolton Abbey by waggonette. They all jumped the Strid except my father, because he had promised my mother he would not attempt it. The explanation is that I was born a fortnight later.

My father's younger brother, Jack, was an enthusiastic cricketer, and captain for some years, and two of his sons have earned renown on the cricket field. His elder brother, Jim, was the manager of Bracewell's weaving sheds at Victoria Mill and Albion Shed for above 20 years.

My mother's family came from Gargrave to Earby, and they prized their association with that beautiful Craven village from which they migrated, and where they had numerous relations. My grandfather was John Green, and Ann Burrows was the maiden name of my grandmother. In earlier years the Green family lived at Giggleswick, and my grandfather was a chorister in the Parish Church. After his marriage at Gargrave he was employed as warper in the cotton mill on the High Green, and was working there when the riots against steam driven machinery took place.

On Sundays he was engaged in his favourite role of chorister in the choir at Gargrave Church, and usually attended the old Methodist Chapel afternoon and evening, where he was the "tune starter." At one time he was similarly engaged at Broughton Church, and when he came to Earby he rendered service likewise at the Methodist Chapel.

After working as a warper at the Victoria Mill and "putting other men" into that branch of the industry, he was placed in charge of the warehouse at the Old Shed, where he remained until his retirement in 1885. He was a well read man, and closely followed the events of the times in the "Manchester Examiner and Times."

SERVICE AT LOTHERSDALE

My mother, Elizabeth Green, was the eldest of six children, and from her earliest

days she displayed unusual aptitude for literary pursuits. Before she left Gargrave she was presented with a Prayer Book and New Testament, bound in leather, by Miss. Curren, of Eshton Hall. Her education at Earby was continued at the Old Grammar School, and she became a very close friend of Mr. Bentley, the schoolmaster, and his family. Mr. Bentley pleaded with her father to allow her to become a teacher, but home circumstances prevented such a course. She, along with her sister (Mary Jane, afterwards Mrs. Edmund Lund) became a beamer at the mill and continued in her occupation until her marriage.

During the stoppage caused by the cotton famine she went into service with the Spencer family at Raygill, Lothersdale. At the public entertainments of that period, especially "Penny Readings," she often appeared as a reader. She was endowed with a clear, sweet voice, and her intelligent rendering of interesting "readings" was a sheer delight, and a welcome variety from extracts from the "Clock Almanac" by "Old Dode" (Mr. Joseph Wilkinson). She was a vocalist, too, of considerable merit, and frequently took the solo part in the anthems at anniversary services. She enjoyed immensely taking part in the rendering of "Messiah" and other oratorios.

She was a very devoted teacher in the Sunday School, and took a keen interest in all the activities of the chapel and school. Elderly people have told me how their parents used to "hold her up" to them as a worthy example of young womanhood. She had a gracious disposition, and I can never remember hearing her say, or repeat, an unkind word of anyone. Her neighbours and friends esteemed her very highly, and it was very impressive to listen to the respectful manner in which they addressed her and spoke her name.

The mistress at Green End House used to drop on occasionally for a short chat, and when the last baby was born she was very pleased when the name was Mary Louisa. In the last few years of her life she suffered from physical weakness, and during one winter I was kept from school on Mondays and Fridays to help with the washing and the cleaning. That little ministry served to bring me into closer and more sympathetic association with my mother, and the fragrance of her memory has never lost its charm, though fifty years have passed since those days.

A BOYISH PRANK

Our family circle included two brothers and two sisters (Charlie and Johnnie, and Maggie and Pollie). My brother was named after the most popular Wesleyan minister in the country at that time (Rev. Charles Garrett), but "Garrett" was the name his mates gave him and that name became one of the best known in Earby. As a lad he was noted for mischief, as, for instance, when he treated his schoolmates with "sticks of Spanish" from the school pence with which he had been entrusted. He never took the school pence to school again!

He went into the mill as a reacher-in, and then became a weaver; later he was a loomer and twister, and after a brief spell with Briggs Brothers, printers, as their Earby representative, he entered the printing profession, and established quite a successful business at the "Caxton Works," Skipton Road. He had a special aptitude for secretarial work, and for long periods he was secretary of the cricket club, the Wesleyan Sunday School and the Wesleyan Chapel Trustees, and at the close of his career he was co-secretary of the Skipton Division Liberal Association. He also occupied the office of society steward and circuit steward of the Wesleyan Church, and he was a great lover of the cause. For over forty years he was in the choir, and as a singer

he was particularly successful in amateur operatic circles. He was ever ready to give assistance to any deserving cause, and served the public interest to the full extent of his capacity. He followed his father on the local Education Sub-Committee, and for six years represented the Barnoldswick Division on the West Riding County Council. His public services were recognised by his being appointed a Justice of the Peace. Our Christmas festival was observed as was customary in cottage homes. Of course, we put our stockings up on the mantel-piece, and they were filled with apples and oranges, sweets and nuts by a black-bearded "Santa Clause," and we received picture books such as "Early Days," "The Prize" and "The Family Friend" (the latter being a gift from Green End House). We decorated the pictures and ornaments with sprigs of holly, and nailed appropriate mottoes on the walls.

GRAND OLD TUNES

Christmas morning was spent quietly, except for a rousing salutation from the village brass band. Music in various forms of expression has always afforded me keen delight, but I have known no pleasure of that kind which surpassed the playing by our band of "Hail Smiling Morn" and "While Shepherds" to the grand old Yorkshire "Shepherds" tune, more than fifty years ago.

The afternoon and evening, according to long established custom, were spent at Sunday School, where the great event of the year took place. Preparations were made well in advance, and there was such a spread on the tables as is rarely, if ever, seen in these days. There were ham and beef sandwiches, warm sad cakes and tea cakes, cracknels and tarts, queen's cakes and mince pies, seed bread and current loaf with cheese, all home baked. What a time it was for everybody who could go, but especially for youngsters, who could have such a good "tuck-in" for 3d. (half price).

The evening entertainment was free to all comers, and every nook and corner was packed. This was the time when young artists "came out" and many a reciter and singer started his or her career under those conditions. And how they cheered when anything pleased them! One such event I recall when little Tom Brown sang "The Grandfathers Clock," and the exuberant delight of everyone present was a joy to behold.

In our village they were "star artists" where dialogue were concerned and no programme was considered fit for a Christmas entertainment which did not conclude with a good dialogue. Walkers of Otley, were always the favourites, and one can still recall "Paul Pry," "Muddles at home make husbands roam," "Uncle Grumps the grumbler," "Wild Oats," and others.

In addition to the fare provided in this way, these Christmas festivals were especially welcome as a meeting place for old friends, and:-

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind,
We'll tak' a cup of kindness yet,
For the sake of auld lang syne."

(to be continued)

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The next article will appear on January 28th.

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Transcribed by Mr. Bob Abel & John Turner.