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REVERIES AND REALITIES:

OR,

LIFE AND WORK IN LONDON.

BY

F. B. MEYER, B.A.,

AUTHOR OF

"THE BELLS OF IS";

THE "SCRIPTURE BIOGRAPHY" SERIES; "EXPOSITORY" SERIES;

"CHRISTIAN LIFE" SERIES; ETC., ETC.



LONDON: MORGAN AND SCOTT,

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REVERIES AND REALITIES; Or, Life and Work in London
THE BELLS OF IS; Or, Voices of Human Need and Sorrow.

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P R E F A C E .



THESE brief sketches of Life and Work in London are issued with the view of answering as concisely as possible many questions which are put respecting the best methods of work in large centres of population.

Nothing is said in these pages of the large associations of young men, and of young women, which meet weekly ; of the great network of Sunday Schools, thirteen of which, with their attendant organizations, are scattered like points of light through the dark neighbourhood in which Christ Church is situated ; or of other more ordinary branches of Church work. Those have been selected for description which are rather unusual, in the hope that they may suggest similar efforts to others.

We must, above all things, be practical ; and, if one method of winning men does not avail, we must try another, and yet another. There is only one Gospel to preach ; but there are many ways of bringing men beneath its influence.

The welcome accorded to "THE BELLS OF IS" has led me to follow its narratives by the present volume, which shows how the same general principles of Christian Love and Tact are not less potent, under the Divine blessing, in London, than when first learnt and practised at the Leicester Prison Gate.

F. B. Meyer

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REVERIES AND REALITIES.

I.

Childhood's Sabbath.

"I sow again the holy past,
The happy days when I was young."

LOWELL.



AS I look back on my boyhood, the days that stand out as red-letter days are the Sundays. Not the birthdays, or the public holidays; not Christmas, or Easter, or Whitsuntide—but the Sundays. It surely was a great art, though largely unconscious in its exercise, which enabled my parents to make so lovely that day which to myriads of children has been the dullest of the week.

There are cases where an excess of strictness and rigour have begotten a dislike to Sunday for all after-time, and made the pendulum swing to the other extreme of laxness and irreverence. The golden mean is always difficult: on the one side, we mar the weekly rest-day by undue and unnatural gloom; on the other, we miss its tenderest benediction unless we withdraw from our usual business, lay aside ordinary engagements, and call it holy of the Lord, and honourable. "Not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words."

It is all-important that we should make as much as possible of the rest that God intended one day in seven

to bring. Dr. Talmage said he once asked an engine-driver, with whom he was riding, "Why do you switch off your locomotive on a side track? you appear to have a straight track before you, and it is signalled clear." The man replied, "We have to let the locomotive stop and cool off, or the machinery would very soon break down."

The manufacturers of salt were told that if they allowed their kettles to cool one day in seven, they would have immense repairs to make; but the experiment was tried, and it was discovered that those manufacturers who allowed the kettles to cool once a week had less repairs to effect than those who kept the furnaces in full blast and the kettles always hot.

Man needs the weekly pause. A manufacturer says that the goods which his employes turn out in the early part of the week, before the benefit of the Sunday rest has passed away, are always better made than those produced at the latter end, when the men are tired. The rest-day soothes the nerves, calms and quiets the rhythm of the heart, and slows down the speed.

That is when it is spent aright. But a great deal depends on that. To loll in bed, to sit drinking and smoking in a public-house, to spend the time in dissipation and frivolity, to ignore the nobler and better spirit within us, and distinguish the day only by more sumptuous food, more fashionable dress, and more inane conversation, is surely as foolish as it is wrong, prostituting a divine gift with its priceless possibilities to the worst possible ends.

Very different was the Sunday of my boyhood. The breakfast hour was 8 a.m. (on other mornings 7.15). No one was ever late to family worship, and there was no hurry or bustle. The clean linen on the table; the starched print-dresses of the maids as they sat in a row, Bible in hand, whilst husband and father led in prayer; the bread

and butter that seemed fresher and sweeter than on other days ; the texts said round the table after the eldest child had said grace—in all these respects, the day seemed to begin right. And the talk at the meal was always rather different, as though ordinary topics were by common consent tabooed ; and yet there was seldom what might be termed directly religious conversation, demanding an unnatural silence among the children. These particulars are referred to, because it is so desirable that as far as possible there should be a distinction between the ordinary week-day and the day of rest. It should stand as a mountain, rearing itself amid the country out of which it springs ; or like the tabernacle of the Lord amid the tents of Israel. All day the distinction was maintained in our home. The early dinner at 1.30 precisely, the joy of which was that the father was there, and the family complete ; the early tea, with its hour of singing first, and its repetition of hymns after ; the light supper after church, to share in which was the coveted mark of growing old. It was Sunday, and there was a fitness and freshness in everything being different from the ordinary week-day.

Directly breakfast was over, the mother took the lead. We used to sit round the table and listen. I can remember her reading *Peep of Day*, *Line upon Line*, *Barth's Bible Stories* ; and in after years we used to find Scripture references, and read them in turn ; after this, a story. The hour or two were never irksome ; no eye wandered to the clock ; no one ever dreamt of suggesting or wishing anything else, till it was time to get ready for church. If parents would only exert themselves on their children's behalf, looking out for stories, studying the Bible with them, making the children's interest their first concern, there would be fewer gaps in the family circle, and fewer prodigals and heartbreaks than there are.

There was no hurry or irritation in our home. How often

I have noticed, in houses where I have been staying, that friction has been created by some members of the family lingering unduly over their Sunday toilets; and many a service is spoilt because of the sharp remarks, during the churchward walk, about being "always behind," and "late again."

In my boyhood we went each Lord's day morning to Bloomsbury Chapel, to hear Dr. Brock; and it would be impossible to exaggerate the effect on my young heart of that crowded chapel, that resonant voice, those prayers and hymns and sermons. I love to sit now in that old corner-seat on the book box, and try to dream myself back into the blessed past. Then the "quaker's meeting," till we reached St. Martin's Church, that we might have time to recollect what we had heard; then my father broke the silence by saying it was the grandest sermon he had ever heard; and then the children were encouraged to repeat all they could remember. Even the attractions of the Horse Guards were not sufficient to check the boy's eager flow of reminiscence! It is of the utmost importance, in selecting your residence, to be within the reach of a minister that your children can respect and understand. I owe everything in my life to those experiences, and consider that they were well worth their cost.

The early afternoon was spent in hearing one or other of our parents read some religious periodical or story. My favourite was the *Young Pilgrim*, by A.L.O.E., and such like. Then we read to ourselves, or did puzzles; after which came the great function of the day. For an hour before tea we gathered round the piano and sang hymns, whilst my mother played. It was long before Mr. Sankey had introduced his first melody, and even Philip Phillips was unknown. The graver Psalmist was our tune-book, and the old-fashioned tunes our favourites. We sang the hymns through as an act of worship; my father chose and sang them with

his magnificent bass voice. Few could sing as he. We usually sang "Around the throne of God in heaven," in memory of a baby-sister who had died. It is well on the Lord's day that a family should remember its absent members, whether in Paradise or living across the sea.

In very early years, we children always had our evening service together, at which I preached my earliest sermons, standing at the head of the dining-table, with my sisters and one old servant as congregation. I generally succeeded in making one of my sisters—rather given at that time to tears—weep bitterly; which seemed to be the fitting climax: but this characteristic has not largely marked my after-ministry. The other day I came on some yellow letters, in which my mother, with fond pride, chronicles these reminiscences. All mothers, I suppose, ponder these things in their hearts!

Thus the blessed day passed on, its slowly moving hours gliding sweetly and happily away, until the evening fell, with its service, its walks in the long garden in summer, its gathered circle at the fire in winter. Sometimes one mourns them as gone for ever: but the sunshine lives in corn and flower, the dew lives in the freshness of the verdure, the impression of the love lingers when the subtle fragrance of the spikenard has vanished; and there remaineth a rest for the people of God, in which the most blessed experiences of childhood's Sabbaths come back again, and become a lasting and permanent inheritance.

II.

Christmas Days of Auld Lang Syne.

"O blessed day, which giv'st the eternal lie
To self, and sense, and all the brute within ;
Oh, come to us amid this war of life ;
To hall and hovel come ! To all who toil
In senate, shop, or study ! and to those
Ill-warned and sorely tempted—
Come to them, blest and blessing, Christmas Day."

CHARLES KINGSLEY.



THESE days stand out clearly on the pathway of our lives as we look back upon them, from whatever eminence we have gained in our mountain climbing. Even more than our birthdays, the Christmas Days have left a definite and permanent dint on our memories. Probably there is no one who shall read these words that would not be able, after a little consideration, to say where, and how, and in what company, each of the Christmas Days of other years was spent. From out of the past each steps up to us, and says, "Don't you recognise me? Read this token, and by it remember the hours we once spent together. I have come to recall the outbursts of merry laughter, the gatherings, the games, the songs, the faces thou wilt never again see, the voices that are for ever still."

My earliest Christmas recollections take me back to Clapham, and the fine old house on the Common where my grandfather lived, and where the whole family gathered once a year. Christmas has never been the same since that home was broken up. Each family spent the earlier part of the day by itself, with exchange of presents, the welcome of scattered members that gathered from school or business to the home-circle. But in the afternoon there was the

converging of all on the one centre, where, after fifty years of married life, the aged pair awaited their nine married sons and daughters, with their partners and the elder grandchildren. Then the same jokes and riddles were propounded, the same stories told, the same fun and frolic had its way; whilst after dinner the same speeches were made, full of family pride and unity and good nature. Again I form part of that gathering, and see the long table spread, surrounded by familiar faces, and hear that buzz of voices, and sit in that circle around the spluttering yule-log in the room where Macaulay is said to have written his History.

And why recall these days, except to urge parents and grandparents to do their best to give bright memories to the children! These are the scenes which get enamelled on young hearts, to abide with them until the vase of life is broken. And, amid the inevitable sorrows of life, it is of unspeakable importance to give the soul some fair pictures to hang in the corridors of memory, on which it may gaze with lingering affection when the scenes of more recent years shall have faded from view. It is the remarkable faculty of age to recall the earlier impressions of life. Many an aged soul, when the far-away look is in the eye, is living over again the days of childhood and youth. Let those who are surrounded by eager little eyes and retentive little memories take care that only holy, sunny, and blessed memories gather around every succeeding Christmas Day. No wrangling, no misunderstanding, no clouds on the blue, no drink in the home—one unsullied day of innocent and childlike joy.

Another type of Christmas Days comes back to me from Leicester, from the days when Providence House was under my care for the benefit of discharged prisoners and others. The early morning was pretty busy with unpacking

parcels, and clearing away great wrappings of brown paper. One Christmas morning, when I was alone, Mrs. Meyer being away in France for her health, five sweet children came to me by half-past eight in the morning with their Christmas greetings, which they had walked a mile and a half to bring.

Then morning service, when the families of my people were wont to gather ; at least the men, fathers and sons, and the younger children. I always judiciously refrained from inquiring after the wives and daughters that day. One had a dream of snow-white pinafores and floury arms, and dexterous fingers arranging flowers, and hot faces roasting with turkeys before the fire, etc., during the preparation of mince-pies and other delicacies to coax appetites which needed no coaxing, because their owners were set on taking a brisk walk in the crisp air for no other purpose than to get the appetite that would do justice to the fare. What a relief it must be, when men go to service or for a walk on Christmas morning, that the women may give their undivided attention to the event of the year !

Few uninterrupted dinners, however, fell to my lot in those days, though it was not for want of invitations. The fact is that I had to go round in a four-wheel cab to pick up the dinner which the ladies of my congregation had provided for my men, whose usual number was greatly augmented by guests whom I had specially invited to spend the day with us. One friend had promised a joint of beef, another a leg of mutton, a third a goose, and so on ; while puddings of all sizes, wrapped in white cloths, awaited me at various houses. It was no small business to collect all these articles. I have often hardly had a place to sit on. Puddings to right of me, puddings to left of me, puddings in front, on the seat, on the floor of the cab, threatened by floods of gravy, and steaming with a savouriness which, instead of stimulating the palate, soothed and satisfied it.

Thus I arrived at my destination. The cab was soon emptied of its contents, and in due time the meal began, followed by the speeches and songs. How proud and thankful I was of those gatherings, too full of self congratulation as it seems to me now, and yet unfeignedly grateful for what God had wrought !

After all, life has no sweets like these. And surely the heavenly banquet itself will lack some of the sweetest ingredients, unless we know that some are sitting there who would have been absent unless we had given them the loving invitation to be present. Sad indeed is that lot, and pitiable that soul, to which no opportunity is given of making some heart glad and thankful as the "Day of Peace and Home" returns. Let each of us seek out some lonely one, and, if possible, invite such an one to share in the festal joys of Christmas. Why should not each of our more well-to-do families provide for one or two other families? This might be done by giving money to the Pastor, for him to distribute. But a still better way would be to ascertain the name and address of some poor neighbour, to learn the number and ages of the children, and to suit the Christmas gifts to their wants. What could be more beautiful and Christlike than for each family in our congregations, that has no other claims, to put itself into personal touch with some poorer family, the children ministering to the children, the women to the women, and the men to the men?

This is the religion of Jesus Christ, and this the ideal philanthropy. Give yourself to Him who gave all for you. Go your way, and be glad as a Christian should in all that is innocent and right, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared.

III.

A Reminiscence of Northfield in 1894.

“Blest are the moments, doubly blest,
That, drawn from this our hour of rest,
Are with a ready heart bestow’d
Upon the service of our God!”

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.



It is one of the calmest, sweetest days of the year. We are more than five hundred miles from Sandy Hook, and are rushing, as only these mighty ocean steamers can, twenty miles an hour, through day and night, Eastward. Every morning we meet the dawn nearer home, and already are one hour nearer the home-hours. The sea around lies calm as a lake, of deep caribbean blue. Homer would have called it purple. And nothing lives over its far expanse to the horizon-circle but a few sea-swallows, busily engaged in fishing. They seem regardless of their distance from land; maybe, they will find a resting-place somewhere in this vast bulk. Thus resting, pen in hand, I have time to review the past most memorable weeks.

In many respects they have been apparently the most fruitful in my life, and my heart wells up with gratitude to Him who so graciously took me into fellowship with Himself for this service. Who, or what are we, that the King of heaven should thus deign to use us? To lend Him one's life, as Peter did his fishing-smack of old, is not only to have His blessed companionship, but to receive the boat back again, laden to the water-line with wealth. To place in His hands the scanty provisions, is to see them multiplied beyond all count, and to have baskets full of fragments in addition.

Northfield is always beautiful, and doubly so after the hot five hours' journey from New York. No Englishman

need wish to exchange our comfortable railway carriages, with their corner seats and comparative roominess, for the average American cars, so often overcrowded and dusty, where you are generally compelled to share your seat with another, and there is no cushioned back on which to rest back, head or neck. A single line, leaving the main line, runs from Springfield to South Vernon, along the valley to which the Connecticut River gives its name. Paul Moody is waiting to meet me ; and ten minutes' sharp climb brings us into the village of Northfield, with its one long main road, shaded on either side by a continuous line of noble elms. And there is the view, always beautiful, stretching up the valley to the north-west, with the river gleaming below, to the undulating hills on either side ; whilst far away in the distance a range of mountains—the highest in New England.

In the main road, Mr. Moody meets us. His buggy and horse are known everywhere. At all hours, from early dawn, you are liable to meet them. And in this country, with its heavy dust lying deep in the roads, and its intense, lazy-making heat, it seems to be the exception to walk.

"Meet me at the new Auditorium," is the word of command. So, hastily depositing our baggage at the door of the annexe to the hotel, we make straight tracks for this more recent addition to the noble buildings which are arising at Mr. Moody's end of Northfield. His house, shaded with trees, stands a little off the road, commanding a fine view of the valley, and behind it the land slopes upward, opening like a huge fan ; and at different points, handsome erections have sprung up, one after another, as at the bidding of an enchanter, to accommodate the 250 young girl-students who fill the place from October to June. Chief among these now stands the great Assembly Hall, built substantially of red brick, the front flanked by two great towers, and the interior spacious enough to contain

3,000 people. The galleries are unseated—only tiers of steps rising one above another, but the people were glad enough to sit on them ; and, after all, as Mr. Moody slyly hinted, it was no worse than the provision made for the London crowds during his great and memorable campaign.

Certainly it seemed almost absurd to put up so huge a structure in this quiet town among the woods and hills, the souls in which cannot number more than 800, all told. But, to use his own words, God had so often exceeded his faith, that he felt justified in building ahead, in the firm belief that the Lord would come up to the margin-line he had drawn, and exceed it—and so it proved on the next Sunday, and on the next, as well as during the intervening week. It is certainly a noble place. The choir-seats banked up behind the platform ; the floor of the building rising up from the entrances ; the circle of seats, six deep, sweeping around the central block from one side to the other, separated by a low partition from the passage, which also makes a complete circuit, and into which the side and back entrances open. On right and left are vast windows for light and air, and a large skylight above. The gallery rises in a dozen steps, each forming a seat. When full, the acoustics are perfect.

I spoke in it on that evening (Saturday) to an audience of 1,200 to 1,500 people, on "They which receive abundance of grace shall reign in life"; and the presence of Christ was revealed. But the pressure of responsibility lay heavily on me until the following morning. Ah, what a morning that was ! So calm, so sweet, so utterly still. I woke early, and rose and went out. There was not a soul stirring, so I climbed the little eminence, passed the house where Mr. Moody's mother was then living, passed the Auditorium, and then into the shadow of the great pine woods. An hour there settled it all. I had not come to do the work myself, but to be the instrument through which He would do it. It was a partnership as between a pen and

an author, an organ and the organist. The sole responsibility that rested on me was to keep in abiding fellowship with Himself, to take His messages, and to be, so far as I knew, clean in heart and life, so as not to hinder the inflow or outflow. This done, it was easy to claim that not a single soul should leave Northfield without receiving very definite blessing.

It was an amazing sight to see the Auditorium that morning. From an area of twenty miles the country poured in its contributions, in every conceivable kind of vehicle, and all the roads and fields were filled with the tethered horses standing contentedly in their slight harness. It seemed as if a crown had been put on Mr. Moody's life, that here, amid those who had known him from his boyhood, he should be honoured, respected, and beloved, as not even in the greatest missions he has ever held. Some men are esteemed in proportion to their distance from where they are known best. The contrary to this is the case with Mr. Moody. And during his sermon he was not ashamed to point out his old employer, for whom he used to work when he was a lad.

Mr. Moody preached, and I followed him. There was a large meeting in the afternoon; and I preached again at night, on the awful power men have of blocking and thwarting the Divine purpose. On the following day the Conference proper proceeded. Mr. Moody gave me the first hour each day for my special line of subjects; and afterwards an address was given by some leading American minister on the great subjects of New Testament Theology, such as the New Birth, Justification, the Holy Spirit, the Advent, etc. Drs. Chapman, Pierson, Gordon, Dixon, Mr. G. C. Needham, and others, dealt with these. In the afternoons Major Whittle addressed children. And there was another great gathering at night, when missions of various sorts, and various topics of interest, were dealt with.

In addition to my morning Bible talks I had two most interesting meetings with the ministers, of whom there must have been between two hundred and three hundred present; and one meeting for men, especially young men, at Mount Hermon, which lies four miles across the valley, and where buildings for two hundred and fifty young men stand amid a large acreage of farm land, so that the students are able to earn something towards their maintenance, and get a practical acquaintance with farming operations, whilst they are pursuing their studies in every department of useful knowledge.

So the week passed on, full of private interviews and public work. The closing Sunday was a memorable one. Two sermons in the morning, by Dr. Gordon—since deceased—and Mr. Moody; and two in the afternoon, by Dr. Dixon and myself. Then a baptism in the lake by Dr. Gordon, witnessed by thousands. Finally, an evangelistic service by Dr. Chapman. Such crowds! Such blessing! Such singing! Such a climax!

The following fortnight was to me very enjoyable. A large number of people remained on for my Bible readings, which were held every morning in the spacious church. Thus the hotel and other buildings were kept full, which meant additional remuneration to the young people who were acting as cooks, waitresses, and drivers, as well as bringing funds for the maintenance of the institutions. In the evenings we had informal meetings for song and testimony, and mutual help. I was able in this way to come to know quite a number, and to remove difficulties by individual conversation. One of the most memorable episodes was the baptism of three friends in the neighbouring town of Brattleborough, where the Baptistry of the Baptist Chapel was placed at our disposal, and a large congregation assembled. Certainly the arrangements for the ordinance, as made there and which are in vogue

throughout the States, leave nothing to be desired, and might well be copied by the Baptist Churches of England.

On the last morning of our series of meetings I asked those who would, to put on a half-sheet of paper the thoughts which had helped them most, and I reproduce some of them in the hope that they may be of service to some among my readers :—

“I have had the Personality of the Holy Spirit made clear to me, and have come under His power. I have put away many things of the past, and am looking forward to the glorious hope.”

“I have learned that all the fulness there is in Christ is mine, just in so far as I open my heart to receive Him.”

“These two things have made the deepest impression on me : that we receive the Spirit by faith, as we receive the forgiveness of our sins ; and that God’s facts come first, then faith, then feeling.”

“I have learned, 1st, the importance of complete and entire surrender of my will to Christ, that He may have His way with me ; 2nd, the necessity of putting away every weight or sin that may prevent God from doing in and through me His holy purpose ; 3rd, the importance of reckoning by faith that Christ is in me by the Holy Ghost.”

“I have a clearer understanding than ever before of the blessed restfulness of a life in which God works all in and through us ; and how we may be, as it were, instruments in His hands, and be greatly used by Him ; also the importance of implicit obedience, and the joy which accompanies it.”

“The thought that helped me most was to ask God to consecrate us, not to try to consecrate ourselves.”

“I have learned that by obeying the law of a force, we get the power of the force ; and by obeying Christ, we get all that Christ has for us ; also that we may have the Holy Spirit by faith ; and in order to retain the consciousness of His presence, we must give out to others.”

These are but a few out of a large sheaf of replies.

The last day (Monday) I spent in Northfield was very delightful. In the morning I signed my name and gave a motto in I know not how many Bibles. In the afternoon, had a long and memorable time with my beloved friend, Dr. Pierson, in the new oratory, library, and summer-house, which he has erected with his own hands, and where we have spent some delightful times together. And at night

Mr. Moody gave a kind of farewell meal at his house. He had invited a goodly number of ministers and evangelists to meet me, amongst them Dr. Pierson, Major Whittle, Mr. Needham ; and we had talk such as became such a host and such a time. It was principally of how to turn the tide of teaching in the American pulpit from the cursory handling of the topics of the day into those deeper truths that are needed to nourish the Christian life. It was suggested, amongst other things, that Conferences should be promoted in the leading cities, on the model of those which the Keswick teaching has initiated in various parts of England, although the basis might be widened to include the re-affirmation of the old doctrines of the Cross, as well as the inculcation of the lessons of Christian living.

So Tuesday came with its farewells, the guests gathering at the entrance in two lines, singing, "God be with you till we meet again"; then the carriage, which Mr. A. Moody drove ; and the waving of handkerchiefs from portico, piazza, and window ; the train ; New York ; the evening service at Dr. Simpson's Church, where I met many beloved friends, amongst them Mr. and Mrs. Barclay Buxton, on their way to Japan ; then the quiet night's rest ; the steamer ; the comfortable arrangements made by the Master for my return voyage.

And now the opportunity for recruiting from the slight indisposition caused by the heat ; for rest and reading ; for thought and prayer ; the anticipations and hopes for the coming winter ; the daily opportunity of testimony in the gathering for Morning Prayer in the saloon ; the calm, beautiful weather. "Of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things, to whom be glory for ever."

IV.

The Great City.

“Be useful where thou livest, that they may
Both want and wish thy pleasing presence still.
. Find out men’s want and will,
And meet them there. All worldly joys go less
To the one joy of doing kindnesses.”

GEORGE HERBERT.



WE say that London is a great city. What do we mean? Often we mean only that its extent covers many acres of God’s fair earth, driving away the deer, the song-bird, the fish from the river, the fox from its burrow, the red cattle from the meads. Often we mean that it is a larger collection of houses than is to be found anywhere beside; though so many of them lack every essential of a home, and thousands of families are housed in defiance of the conditions of health, comfort, and purity. Often we mean that a greater number of people congregate to this one centre than to any other, though we take no account of the moral worth of these five millions and more; only counting them as we would cattle in a fair.

But, after all, none of these estimates of area covered, buildings erected, and of numbers congregated, touch the heart of true greatness.

Perhaps one will call attention to our wealth. The foreigner is amazed at Hyde Park in the height of the season; such equipages, liveries, dresses, jewels, display. He does not visit the East End, to see that the wealth of London is very unequal in its distribution; and that the few are rich, while uncounted thousands exist in the most destitute and miserable poverty.

Or, perhaps, another will remind us of the splendid intellectual force of London. Here are congregated in an unusual degree many of the greatest, clearest thinkers of the

age ; artists, poets, scientists, lawyers, divines ; statesmen and political economists ; authors and musicians. And yet what thousands act as make-weight, besotted, ignorant, degraded !

The answers are not satisfactory. In the best sense, greatness is the die stamped on a city, not by numbers, nor bigness, nor wealth, nor the intellectual force of the few, but of the possession to the largest possible extent of all those conditions which enable the greatest number to realise the life for which God intended them.

Now to this end, seven things are absolutely needful—

(1) The sufficient supply of physical need.

(2) Health by obedience to sanitary laws.

(3) Recreation.

(4) Beauty for the imagination.

(5) Love and purity for the heart.

(6) Truth for the mind.

(7) God for the hunger of the spirit.

Each of these might be the heading for a few explanatory words. But perhaps they are needless. If we will read over the list again, we can give our mental affirmation to all we find there ; and it will be difficult to suggest anything essential to the best life that does not fall under one of these categories.

Surely, then, it goes without arguing, as a self-evident fact, that the city in which these conditions are present to the fullest extent will be the greatest city. And if this standard were adopted, it is not impossible that there are cities on the face of the earth containing fewer people, wealth, and intellectual force, and yet realising more completely the ideal of a great city.

Still we love London, and are proud of her—her miles of wharves, her bridges, and historic sites, her churches and palaces, her shrines of art and science and culture, her monuments, parks, and public places, her marvellous machinery for receiving and distributing the news of the world. We are citizens of no mean city, and are eager to do

what we may, each in his small sphere, to make her great in the highest and noblest sense.

There are, of course, public duties to perform, as citizens in the exercise of the vote ; and in the creation and maintenance of strong public sentiment against the liquor trade, the betting curse, the flaunting vice of the music hall and the street. Each of us, especially the women, have a marvellous power in creating the mighty breakwater of strong public sentiment, which, perhaps, of all laws is the most imperative.

We may also do much in making our own homes and lives beautiful. I always like to think of the man who induced his neighbours to keep their gardens tidy, not by admonishing or exhorting, but by doing his best for his own, which was in the middle of the row.

But, after all, our most efficient weapon is the gospel, which, when truly received, transforms the inner life and remakes men. Of what use is it to begin with the outward conditions of human life, while the man remains unaltered ? You may put a pig in a parlour, but it will remain a pig, and soon transform your parlour into a sty. But if you begin in the heart, and set up there the principle of divine love, if you lead a man to feel the constraints of gratitude, reverence, hope, desire, you have set shuttles in motion, which, ere long, must weave a fair and beautiful exterior.

The process seems long and slow, but it is sure. It may be tried by each for all others within the area of daily life. It is the divine way, to evolve from the hidden germ ; to unfold mysteries of colour and fragrance from the heart of seeds, whose greatest marvels, like the redemptive work of Jesus, begin when they fall into the ground to die.


Let us again gird ourselves to our heaven-given, man-blessing work of preaching the gospel, whether in the pulpit or the workshop, by word and life, knowing that it is the power of God unto salvation, in every sense, of every one that believeth.

V.

The Poetry of London Streets.

“ There is a voice can speak to thee
Amid the works of men ;
Speak, with a sound as loud and clear,
As in the lonely glen.”

E. HAWKSHAW.

HEY are always interesting ! The artist goes to them for faces and situations, the novelist for suggestions, the religious teacher for parables, the sight-seer for a never-failing panorama of interest and diversion. The moralist thinks pensively of the myriads which have passed along those thronged thoroughfares, never to come again ; whilst the gay pleasure-lover laughs at the humours of the crowd. In the ever-shifting contrast of wealth and poverty, of the portly city magnate and the poor careworn mother, of the gorgeous official and the ragged *gamin*, of the man of business and the foreigner lolling lazily along Cheapside or the Strand, there is always something to fascinate attention and suggest thought.

One of the most interesting things in London is the rush from the suburbs into the city in the morning, and the rush back at night. It is like the flow and ebb of the ocean, which sends its waves up the inlets and alcoves of the shore, to withdraw them presently down the sand. Or we may compare it to the expansion and contraction of a great heart, pouring forth and calling back again its tides of life. Between eight o'clock and half-past nine in the morning the platforms of countless stations on all sides

of London are thronged with city clerks, interspersed with many ladies, who compete with men in increasing numbers, but to whom life on this wise seems always hard and wearing. Every man has bought his daily paper. You have but to glance at the paper to know the colour of his politics. The earlier the hour, the fewer the first-class passengers who buy their *Times*. These wait till the world is more thoroughly aired and warmed, and come later. Stand by Liverpool Street and Broad Street Stations, and see the hosts pouring out on their way to office and warehouse ; or on London Bridge, over which the crowds teem in omnibuses and on foot ; whilst far below the river the electric railway is bringing its contingents in crowded carriages. But what a story is told as each face passes you—of hope and anxiety, of success and the pressure of great responsibility ! And what a spectacle it is to watch those same faces as the tide pours back at night ; there is the inevitable expression of despondency, the gleam of unappeased desire ; unrest and discontent, sadness and sorrow are depicted upon the countenances of countless thousands of human beings.

Living as we do in this great brick labyrinth, full of courts and streets, wide thoroughfares and open places, there is great danger of our starving one of our noblest faculties—the faculty of imagination, the habit of idealizing the simplest, commonest things ; the power of living in the great life of nature, which, of all the influences that sway men's souls, is the most pervasive and tender.

The solemn splendour of night is viewed from the top of an omnibus or tram, or through the windows of a cab, as we hurry along the lighted streets. By great straining and reaching out of window, at imminent risk of catching cold, we may be able to catch a glimpse of a patch of starlit sky. But the atmosphere is thick ; there is always the soft smut-drift falling from above ; and the glare of gas-lamps dazzles

our eyes. What do we know of Spring save that the flower-girls crowd their baskets so plentifully with the nurslings of the woods? But the charge of sixpence a bunch is unromantic, and we miss the delicious rapture of espying and picking them for ourselves. The birds have lost the romance of love-making. The serious-minded little sparrows bring up large families under the shadow of water-pipes, and teach them to fly on the wet slates. Summer simply makes the streets intolerable, as the sword-beams strike diagonally down upon our heads, to be reflected from the flags; the only shade a railway arch, with its thundering trains; or the fluttering curtain of an enterprising tradesman, careful to protect his wares. Instead of the droning hum of the bee, the song of the bird, the rustle of the live thing in the grass, the music of the breeze through the trees or over the corn—there is the clatter of the vehicle over the stones, and the metallic voice of the huckster announcing his goods. As to Autumn, the leaves that have struggled through Summer, parched, grimy, despondent, “speedily drop off dispirited, and their life is at an end.” As for Winter, we associate its snow with mud-carts and processions of the out-of-work.

How much the children miss of the refining, elevating, and inspiring lessons which Mother Nature teaches from picture books!

To meet this we must be careful to make much of the clues which still survive for us.

There is, first, our River, with its barges, steamers, wherries, ships—always full of fascination, and providing immense scope for the play of imagination. That water, if flowing to the sea, has come from the sweetest tracks of English scenery away in Oxfordshire, where deer come down to drink, and milkmaids call their cows at milking time. Or, if the tide is flowing up, there is an incoming of the sea-water, which, blue and green, has surged far out from

land. Or we can transpose ourselves to days when Britons, Saxons, and Normans built their castles and homes on the banks of the yet unsullied stream. Listen when the evening quiet is settling down, or at night, or in the early morning, as the light is breaking, and you will hear the lapping of the water against the piers as it does along the coast. The music of those waves has often borne me far away to the dash of the Atlantic around the steamer; or the rhythmic chime of the waves against the Inn at Clovelly, close down on the pier.

Then there is always the sky, with the pale blue of April or the intense azure of August: the clouds—whether the heaped cumulus, or the long lines of the strata—telling us of God's home, of Eternity, Immensity, the Infinite. That sky includes in its arch Venice, Rome, the Alps; vine-clad hills, shores lined with chiselled shells, tropical forests, with their wealth of hue and form. Let us permit ourselves to be enticed from the narrow street into the expanse of Heaven, where the discords, and quarrels, and losses, which afflict us so sorely, seem unworthy of remembrance.

And then this breeze. Think whence it has come. This East wind, from sweeping over a vast extent of steppe and plain, through the pine-woods of Norway, and over the cheerless expanse of the Northern Sea; much abused, hated, and feared, but come to catch up the germs of disease on its searching blast, and to carry them away on and on; to be drawn perhaps, some day sunwards, and sent forth as the West wind, welcomed and beneficent. And this West wind has come to us from the broad Atlantic, laden with health. Let us get behind the winds, and think of their sources, their home, their mission, their career.

One of my favourite resting-places in London is on the City side of London Bridge, where the merchantmen unlade their freights of spice. Ever since I was a boy I have loved to lean over that stone parapet, and scent the

fragrance of oranges and citron and spice, that steals up from those ugly packages which the dockers laboriously unload.

In addition to these, there are the flowers which the girls carry. Granted, that they are not picturesque in costume, pretty in face, or soft in tone, and that you have to pay for every common flower: yet you can guess of the haunts of the primrose and violet; and there comes before you a vision of dells and woodland glades and sunny banks. Ah me! I can smell, even as I write, the delicious scent of the earth, "as a field which the Lord hath blessed."

A great deal more might be done than is done to make our homes and rooms suggestive of the sublime and beautiful. What a difference is made by the cultivation of flowers in the windows or on the table! Those shells which we gathered on our last holiday, and which murmur the roar of the ocean wave; that sweet songster who tears his little throat in his greeting to the sunbeams, and fills the street with music; those pictures of waves, and woods, and pastoral scenes—these do something to relieve the dull monotony of existence: and surely it is a solemn duty that those who have children growing up in their homes should make free use of such things as these to keep alive their sense of the wonder and beauty of God's world.

I often wish that I could look at London through the children's eyes. I suppose that they find romance and interest in its most squalid courts—more there, probably, than in the public parks, where they conduct themselves with a good deal of self-restraint. The dance to the organ-grinder's music is probably associated with the romance of the stage; the street is a palace, and they the mimic kings and queens. For the boys, the streets are glades in Sherwood Forest, and themselves the gay highwaymen. The power of make-believe cannot be wholly extinct in the heart of the child of the London streets. What would we not give to have the child-power of idealism!

But there is yet another way of turning the grim prose of London to poetry. There are villains enough, Heaven knows ! But there are lives being lived, and deeds being performed on every side, which are worthy of recital in the noblest strains of heroic verse. That girl is foregoing the offer of a good man's love that she may rear a motherless family ; and that other is working her fingers to the bone to support herself and her younger sisters. This man is a philosopher, and that a poet. At yonder bench sits a carver, and at that desk a martyr—each life so full of fascinating interest, that if its record were only truly written, it would command and hold the eager attention of the world.

But, above all, angels tread these streets, and thread these devious intricacies of lane and court, intent on loving ministry ; while the principalities and powers of hell are in full force. London is a great battle-field, where the hosts sway to and fro in mortal conflict, and deeds are done by silent sufferers that ring through heaven ; and the white-cross workers minister to the wounded and dying. Think away the houses and buildings ; imagine only this vast congregation of human beings engaged on one side or the other of the great fight ; people the atmosphere with battalions of good spirits and bad ; view each incident as an episode that makes for the success of one or other of the conflicting sides—and you have romance enough for the imagination ; incidents that might engage the poetic genius of a Homer or a Virgil ; a succession of scenes sufficient to stir the pity and excite the admiration of the Son of Man Himself.

The sights of London streets ! Here the Egyptian smites the Hebrew, in the shape of the grimy little boy who takes away the half-smoked cigar end, or sweet, or boyish treasure from some smaller boy. Here the brethren put Joseph in the pit, as a number of boisterous companions almost force some timid associate into the public-house. Here Rizpah

watches the rotting bodies of her sons, as many a woman seeks husband or son in scenes of wild carouse. Here Jephthah sacrifices his daughter; men shout hoarsely for Barabbas; and Demetrius and his craftsmen fill the streets with hubbub. There is no scene in the old Book which has not its counterpart at some time or other amid the infinite variety of the sights of London streets.

To most people the Strand and the Embankment, Regent Street and Piccadilly, present the chief interest; but in my judgment most of human life in its simplicity is to be seen in poorer districts, where no disguise is assumed, no kid-gloves or broadcloth are worn.

Of the scenes to be witnessed in London streets at night I dare not speak. It must make the angels weep to see what is only too common and familiar. When the theatres empty, when the public-houses close, when children of sin and shame, like night-birds, hunt for prey—O stones of London, what stories ye could tell if ye had tongues! What tragedies! What conflicts between passion and conscience!


Of the picture-galleries that cover all bare walls and hoardings, and which in some cases are perfect works of art; of the policeman patiently listening to every enquiry, and directing, with wonderful accuracy, each bewildered passenger; of the traffic which day and night rolls through the streets, the coach of the alderman, the empty barrow of the coster, the omnibus, bicycle, hansom, "crawler," news-paper-cart, heavy dray, mingling in inextricable confusion—we have not time to speak. But may the day soon come when the King of Righteousness shall ride in lowly pomp through broad street and narrow alley; when the people of this great metropolis shall be characterised by purer speech, soberer customs, and chaster lives; and when peace, good-will, and God shall replace discord, selfish competition, and grinding, ill-paid toil!

VI.

How to Work a City Church.

"I would have you be . . . like a fire well kindled, which catches at everything you throw in, and turns it into flame and brightness."

MARCUS AURELIUS.

N one of my last conversations with the late Dr. Gordon, of Boston, he said, "At the beginning of my ministry, I promoted various kinds of organisations, with the endeavour to enlist as many of my people as possible in Christian work. But I discovered that what I started, I had to maintain; thus the whole of my strength was given to find work for my workers, and to keep the workers up to their work. This dissipated my spiritual power, and broke in upon that serene condition of soul in which the Spirit of God is able to teach His deepest lessons, and effect His greatest marvels. Latterly, therefore, since I have come to see that the Holy Spirit is the supreme Administrator in the Church, I have found that my specific work is to keep in touch with Him, and to magnify Him before my people, leaving them to follow His promptings in various directions. As the result, my church has never been so abundant in Christian activity as it is at the present time."

It is impossible not to recognise the profound wisdom of this way of looking at Church organisation. It is perfectly true that the Holy Spirit is the Executor and Administrator of the Divine plan; and where He is recognised in a community, He will work through its members on the line of least resistance—by which I mean, that those who yield most utterly to Him will be led out most fully into various and fresh manifestations of Christian usefulness. But there is another side of this question, and I am sure that there

is a place for sanctified common-sense, and the gift of administration, in the arrangements of church life and work. Let us notice some few points which deserve more consideration than they generally receive.

It is of the utmost importance to be perfectly acquainted with details. He is the successful business man who has passed through each phase of his business, practically working with his hand in its most menial processes: and equally the minister should be personally acquainted with the minutest details that lie at the base of his machinery. He should know the structure in which he works, and understand its arrangements for heating and lighting; the fire-extinguishing apparatus, and the boiler used at the great tea meetings, should be equally familiar. It is not necessary that he should handle any of these things himself; but he should know how they should be handled. We cannot allow any details to pass uncared for, because it is so often on one of these that the greatest spiritual success may hinge. A vergers once said to me, "I would rather have the church *fusty* than *dusty*." How absurd! Of course he was saved work if it was not dusty; but all the congregation were liable to go to sleep, and put themselves beyond the reach of the most earnest appeals if it was fusty—the meaning of which was that it had not been ventilated. That the place of worship should be too cold, and the people shivering; or draughty, and the people complaining; or too hot, and the people fainting and sleeping—will mar the effect for which the minister had been preparing with prayers and tears during the whole previous week.

We should be also ready to do the most menial acts that require doing. I should think but little of a Christian leader, who, at a push, could not shift the forms for a meeting, dust seats, light a fire, and see to the boiling water for a tea meeting. I have done all these things many times in my life, and should be prepared to do them again

to-morrow, if there were need; and no leader of men should ever ask another to do what he is not prepared to do himself. It is fundamental to your influence over men that they should recognise that you are prepared to do anything. It is said of an eminent statesman that, on receiving an appointment to a very prominent and important position, his duties were so multifarious, that he would not have been in the least surprised if he had been asked to sweep out the office. His willingness to do this, if there were need, no doubt laid the foundation of his rapid rise in popular favour.

On the other hand, it is a fundamental principle never to do work yourself that you can get another to do. As a man grows older, his knowledge of detail enables him to show younger men how to perform the initial acts; whilst he engages in the larger schemes which give employment to many. Wedgwood began by making separate vessels; but afterwards established an industry that employed hundreds. If another man is able to move the forms after the tea-making, and superintend the ventilation, it is much better to let him have the opportunity of serving God in these directions, or even for the responsible leader to take the pains to teach him, than for apostles to serve tables.

It is sorrowful to see how many good men dissipate their energies and waste their time by burdening themselves with innumerable details which do not require the exercise of their special gift. As life advances we become increasingly aware of the special function that we are called to exercise, the place we were formed to fill, in the Body of Christ. We have vied with others in various directions, and have found ourselves easily distanced; but in one respect we find ourselves endowed with a power that easily distances all competitors, and puts us in the front rank of useful and responsible service. When that discovery is made, a man had better leave others to do what they can do as well as

he, and concentrate the whole force of his nature to cultivate that special power for the glory of God and the good of his fellows. It is pitiful, in my judgment, for parents to compel every girl to learn the piano, quite irrespective of the aptitude of ear or touch. It is equally a mistake for a minister, who is specially gifted as an expositor of the Bible, and a leader of Divine truth, to throw himself away in vying either with the essayist in literature, or the party-politician on the platform—equally so, to see him engaging in mechanical details which can be done equally well and better by a cook or charwoman. Find what you can do best in the world, and do it; and learn to set others to work on the details which are needful for the elaboration of your scheme.

It has been truly said that the head of the firm who deals every day with thousands sterling has no right to waste his time in hunting up a mistake in the pence column of his ledger; nor would you expect the general of an army of a million men to worry about the buttons on his soldiers' gaiters; nor would the great historian spend hours in verifying some minor detail when the operation of profound principles, the rise and fall of mighty empires, wanted the skilful delineation of his pen. It is the prerogative of those in high places to deal with the aggressive, and not expend themselves on details and trifles: these may be left to subordinates, that time and energy may be saved for larger issues.

It is a great faculty to be able to devolve work on others. In most men and women there lie vast stores of undeveloped power. Now and again a supreme occasion evokes the heroism of a Grace Darling, the passion of a Jeanie Deans; but for the most part millions of mankind pass off the stage without having had a part in which to show the stuff they were made of, the unknown depths that slumbered beneath a very common-place exterior. What an untold benefit it

is to detect these unknown stores, as the water-finder alleges that he can detect the presence of water underground by the movements of his hazel wand. To set one soul at work is to open stores of blessedness, not only to others, but to itself. Unused water gets stagnant and poison-making; free it from its restraints, let it go forth toward the sea, and in its progress it will laugh in murmuring ripples, glisten in breaking wavelets, and nourish trees, and plants, and fields, which shall bless it for its beneficent ministry.

The faculty by which this wealth of latent power is detected is not altogether an attribute of the mind, it seems a special endowment of the Holy Spirit. In my own case, all through my life, I have had reason repeatedly to adore Him for directing me to select for various departments of work, those who, perhaps, before they received the summons from my lips, had no more thought of such a thing than Elisha had of succeeding Elijah; but, when they have once dared to believe and step forth, have shown themselves to be extraordinarily gifted for the posts entrusted to them.

But when once you have selected your helper, it is a mistake to deal directly, unless under stress of special emergency, with the particular department handed over to his care. A business man passes through his manufactory, and as he does so, notices that certain of his workpeople are inefficient and slovenly; however, he does not reprimand them directly, or deal with any questions they may raise, but refers them to his manager or overlooker, holding him responsible. He may dismiss his manager; but so long as he keeps him, he is bound to touch the departments of his factory or business through the man who has the daily responsibility on his shoulders. What foreman, with any self-respect, would care to feel that at any moment his instructions were being superseded by the head

of the firm, who acted and spoke without consultation with himself? Similarly, when once a Christian worker has deputed a department to another, he must be content with an indirect influence, which will be all the stronger as he shows consideration and courtesy to his subordinate. It must be understood, however, that the power to appoint always carries with it the right to dismiss. There is nothing which men will not do for you, if they are good and sincere, if you will only give them a chance to show what they are made of, and trust them in the development and improvement of work entrusted to them. It is always within your province to suggest fresh departures; but then it is wise to do it so delicately, that your fellow-workers may pride themselves that the suggestions were their own. What does this matter, so long as the work is done?

It is good advice to Christian Workers to adopt the departmental system. Do not let the same people do everything. Some churches remind me of travelling theatres, in which the same three or four people sustain all the characters, and appear in each act under a different guise. This is a great mistake. They have too much to do to do anything really well. They have no unity of aim, no fixity of purpose. The butter is spread so thin, that you can hardly taste it at all. It is of course well, when your leading workers are officers in close connection with yourself; but, with this exception, as much as possible let there be one man one work.

Where there is no work on hand to suit the peculiar idiosyncrasy of a worker, it is wise to create a post, and even to call an entirely new organisation into existence, in order to find a niche for him. It is almost certain that there are others of the same make not far away; and to meet the exigencies of one will be to open the door to many. Some of the freshest and most successful branches of work in which I have ever engaged were started in the

first instance, with the simple desire to find appropriate avenues for certain who had no fitness for Sunday School work or district visiting, but could impart to working men the elementary and more advanced branches of education, could teach gymnastics to a lot of lads, or could superintend a cluster of women in a Mothers' At-Home.

Make much of Committees. Much harm has been done by undervaluing committee work. Of course there are committees *and* committees. The committees which are abortive and disappointing are those in which there is no policy, no purpose, no prevailing spirit or leader. But where these are present, especially where the known and trusted leader is in the chair, a committee affords opportunities of direct contact with your chief workers in any department which are quite unrivalled. In my own case, my principle is to meet each of my committees once a month, at certain specified and regular hours, and to pass in review what has been done, the financial position, and proposals which may from time to time be made for revision or extension. It is specially valuable when your committee is a council—that is, a representative body, on which representatives of subordinate committees sit, because in this way you not only meet those representatives, but through them are able to touch the bodies from which they have been delegated.

By all means, enlist the help of Christian Women. What the Church owes to its women will never be known till we have access to the annals of eternity. But the fact that more than half the names mentioned in the last chapter of the Epistle to the Romans are those of women, is probably a pretty fair gauge of the part that consecrated women have played all down the ages. They help the servant of God in countless ways, whether in District Visiting, Dorcas Societies, Sunday Schools, or Sales of Work. Still, as of old, the Saviour, in His progress through the

world, is ministered to by women who love Him—as did she out of whom He cast the seven devils.

Christian women are specially able to take up the visiting, which must be done, but which encroaches so seriously on time. In my judgment, the plan adopted in more than one of the churches over which I have presided, is of supreme importance. I have requested several of the more prudent and godly of the women of my church to constitute themselves into a kind of Minister's Help Society. The monthly social tea for conference, the allotting of our membership in districts for systematic visitation, the reception of reports of cases needing more than ordinary care, the looking up of those who have been absent from the monthly communion, the loving tendance of the flock—all these items are capable of easy transplantation and adoption in other cases, and would be an immense relief to many an over-pressed minister, who sorely needs for meditation and rest the time which otherwise he might be spending in visiting cases that others could attend to with equal success.

A Word about Visiting. The closing words of the preceding paragraph are not intended to depreciate pastoral visitation; this is all important, especially to the young minister, enabling him by the study of different types to know the human heart, and the remedies with which to meet its various needs. I shall never be able to say how much I owe to my systematic visitation of the first three congregations of which I had the oversight. And at every period of one's ministry there will be cases of sickness, family trial, and personal anxiety, when the presence of the minister and friend will be indispensable. But it is perfectly absurd for a minister to contract the habit of calling in merely to look up his people, and to discover the reasons of absence from their accustomed place, when all around there are the great unevangelised masses.

Surely it becomes the servant of God to leave the ninety-and-nine of whom he is sure, in order to go after the lost ; the more specially may he do this if he has a number of faithful watch-dogs who can do the work of superintendence as efficiently as he !

It is urgently needful that the Christian people of our charge should come to understand that they are not a company of invalids, to be wheeled about, or fed by hand, cosetted, nursed, and comforted, the minister being head-physician and nurse—but a garrison in an enemy's country, every soul of which should have some post of duty, at which he should be prepared to make any sacrifice rather than quit it. If only this spirit animate our churches, their available forces would be found to be much more numerous than we have ever realised, and their work would tell, not only upon the religious life of their immediate adherents, but upon the vast crowds who are living in perfect indifference to the claims of eternity.


Once more, we would insist on the urgent necessity of making the Holy Spirit the supreme Director of all the work of the church. Let the government be upon his shoulders. Wait before Him in prayer and the quiet of natural impulse till his will and way become manifest. When that is known, go right forward. Where God gives the plan, He always provides the material. If He commands an advance, He assumes all the responsibilities of the commissariat. Only let every thing be begun, continued, and ended in prayer. Much prayer, much blessing ; little prayer, little blessing ; no prayer, no blessing.

VII.

Our P. S. A.

“ I thought these men will carry hence
Promptings their former life above,
And something of a finer reverence
For beauty, truth, and love.”

LOWELL.

 IT down, sir, if you can spare the time, sir, and I will tell you all about it.” So a working man accosted my valued helper in this great work.

“ You see, sir, I’ve been teetotal for a good many years. Look at all my medals and my certificates !” pointing to a number of badges and emblems of Teetotal Societies. “ There was a chap that worked with me—he was employed on one of the great London dailies—a regular drunkard ; and oh, didn’t I try hard to get him to give up the drink ! but bless yer, it warn’t no more good a-talkin’ to him, than jest knocking yer head agin a wall like. He used to say he would have it, and he jest did have it, I tell yer !

“ Well, sir, one Monday morning I was feeling a bit down. The fact was I had been accused (never mind by who) of doing something wrong—stealing something, in fact. Now it’s true, sir, I was as innercent as my poor little baby, but I couldn’t prove it, don’t yer see ? And, as I was a-sayin’, I was a bit down in the mouth like ; but that’s it, sir, that’s what I’m comin’ to.

“ Well, that Monday morning, my mate, he was jest as ’appy as ever he could be, and what was more, he was as sober as a judge. ‘ Well,’ you would say, ‘ if it was Monday morning, of course he was sober.’ Ah, sir, that don’t count ; he always started afore breakfast, but I could see he hadn’t had any that morning.

'So I says, 'Jim,' I says, 'what's up?'

"And he says, 'Harry,' he says, '*I've chucked it.*'"

"'What,' I says, 'not the four-alf!'

"'I have,' he says, 'I've chucked the whole bloomin' lot, and what's more,' he says, 'I've signed the pledge, and I'm turned a Christian.'

"Well, sir, you might have knocked me over with a feather, I was that there took aback. So I says, says I, 'Well, and where did that 'appen?'

"So he says, 'Why, up at Christ Church, Meyer's, at what they calls a Pleasant Sunday Afternoon.'

"So I says, 'Tell us all about it.'

"And he says, 'Well, Mr. Meyer—they all call him Brother Meyer—well, he was a-talking there, and it seemed just as if he was talking straight to me, and at last it seemed as if I couldn't stand it any longer, I felt as if I couldn't get out of it; and when he said, "Now, man, as you sit there, say, God be merciful to me a sinner,' and as you say it, believe that He will have mercy; and then go straight." Well, I did; I cried it—and look here, mate, I am going straight.'"

His listener here interrupted him: "That's all about your mate: what about yourself?"

"That's what I'm coming to now," he said. "You see, sir, I warn't soddened with drink; I had got my wits about me, and I said in a minute that I thought that chap has got something I ain't got, with all my teetotalism. So I said, 'I would like to go with you to see that show next Sunday afternoon, mate.'

"'I wish you would,' he said.

"Well, sir, I went. I liked it well enough to go again, and I went two or three times; but it didn't touch me like it had my mate. I knew that; but I couldn't see jest what it was. Next Sunday afternoon a gentleman spoke about Enoch walking with God, and he says, 'You want to walk with God; well, don't try to do it, but do it. And what you feel you

cannot do, tell God, and let Him do it for you.' That hit me. I couldn't get away from it. I can't tell you what else he said ; but when I came home, I says to my wife, 'I'm going to be a Christian !'

"She looks at me and says, '*What !*'

"I says, 'I'm going to be a Christian,' and taking hold of her hand, I says, 'Let us kneel down.' So down we kneels, jest over there, sir ; and both of us gave our hearts to God. How do I know that ? Why, sir, because of what I've been since I've got it in here (striking his breast). And now, sir, comes the most wonderful part of my story.

"You know how I told you I had been accused. Well, sir, that night me and my wife sat talking, and I says to her, 'If God has saved me, and I'm His child, perhaps He'll clear me.' So we jest kneeled down, and prayed about that as well. Well, we kept on praying every day, and about a fortnight after, the person who had accused me came to me, and says, 'I want to beg your pardon, old fellow ; I found what I thought you had taken ; I must have put it away myself.' So you see, sir, the Lord saved me, and cleared me."

"And what now, my brother ?"

"Well, sir, he keeps me. You know what I've gone through jest lately, that's why you've come" (referring to the brotherly sympathy with which we were trying to help him over a rough piece of the road) ; "but, spite of it all, sir, I'm very 'appy, and I've bought myself a Christmas present. I ain't a-going to look inside it till Christmas Day, and then I'm going to have a good read."

"What is it ?"

"Why, Brother, it's the President's new book, 'The Bells of Is.'"

This is one case out of the many, very many, which might be cited to show what God is doing through the wonderful movement which began at Christ Church on the first Sunday

in December, 1893. I was encountered with most gloomy prognostications of the result of my endeavour to make Christ Church the home of the working people that throng the adjacent streets. "It can't be done," said the prophets. "In the old days the working classes would throng Surrey Chapel on a Monday evening for a Popular Lecture; but this place is too imposing, too ecclesiastical, too much associated with top hats and kid gloves. It is the church of the better classes. You will never be able to blend the two." And they pointed me to the scanty handful of men and women that composed the afternoon Mission Service, as a beacon to warn me off the rocks of failure.

On the other hand, one afternoon before I entered upon my new charge, whilst walking over Westminster Bridge towards Christ Church, it was definitely impressed upon me that I was to undertake a Sunday afternoon meeting for men. The vail was withdrawn, and I was able to see one part, at least, of the Divine plan; and what you have once seen you can never unsee. This, therefore, made me strong against all argument and recapitulation of past failure.

Two or three weeks before we started our meetings, I called together those who were prepared to help me. About a dozen met, promised to help, and gave every indication of being the sort of men who would readily shape for the respective posts that had to be filled; and if I were to search the world over, I could not find truer, more devoted, and more willing fellow-workers. One of them especially has rendered invaluable service ever since as the Secretary of the movement, and has been so evidently endowed by God with the very gifts needed for the direction of such a movement, that I have arranged with him to leave his daily employment, and to concentrate all his energies on this great work. He is also Warden of the new Hostel for young men.

I can well remember the first Sunday afternoon. Whether

there would be any audience was a serious question, as we had done comparatively little advertising, beyond a few large posters. My friend, Mr. Nuttall, of Liverpool, who gave me many valuable suggestions, had told me it would be necessary to visit every house in the neighbourhood with invitations, in order to gather the men, and this we had not done. Moreover, the singer with whom I had arranged, failed me almost at the last moment. However, all came out right. About two hundred men came in, of whom sixty gave in their names to the book scheme. Dr. Newman Hall, who had been preaching for me in the morning, gave the address; and in answer to my earnest prayer, a singer came forward to fill the gap.

In my first address, I said that we were there, not simply to initiate a number of afternoon gatherings for men, but to form a Brotherhood, in which we should stand shoulder to shoulder, the strong helping the weak, the saved trying to rescue the unsaved, the gifted using their powers for the betterment of the rest. I showed that there must always be distinctions among men, because of the variety in natural endowment and capacity; but that the talents with which God has endowed us, were not to be accounted matters for vain glory, pride, or contempt of others, but held as precious trusts. We abolished the word "Brethren," as being specially associated with the unreality of the pulpit and the pew, and determined to call each other "Brother," and "Brothers." Reaching out our hands towards the Brother who is at the right hand of God, through whose sacrifice and eternal life we might be linked to God Himself.

It was during the delivery of this address that the men first broke out into applause. This greatly startled me. To applaud in a church and on a Sunday seemed rather incongruous. I lifted up my heart for direction, and instantly felt led to treat it as a matter of course. And to this—under God—I attribute a great deal of the heartiness

which has marked our meetings, rising sometimes to an enthusiasm. We know that applause was frequent in the early Church. Why should it be forbidden to-day? It is natural, expressive, stimulating. Many a poor speaker has had wings given him by the consciousness that his words were striking home to the heart and sympathy of his audience.

At the end of two months so many men had joined, that I felt it desirable to apportion the work amongst them; and therefore invited them one Wednesday evening to a meat tea. This was a great occasion. The ladies of my congregation cooked the joints, which disappeared with surprising swiftness; and, after the tables were cleared, the men arranged themselves around the platform for business.

At that meeting, also, I hit on the principle which has served me well, under similar circumstances, ever since. We determined that five committees were necessary: for Visitation, especially of the sick; for the promotion of Teetotalism; of Stewards; of Markers; and for the Benefit Societies. Then I indicated certain parts of the Hall where those interested in each of these should gather. The whole crowd of men immediately broke up into five large groups, each man making for his own special hobby, and finding himself surrounded by those like-minded. Each group then elected their chairman and secretary, in which selection I confess to have had a good deal to do, as the men were strange to one another, and I was very anxious that suitable ones should be chosen at the outset. These two from each group, together with myself, a few vice-presidents, the treasurer and secretary of the society, formed a first Council. The five groups dwindled as time went on; but the residuum became the committee in each case, with power to add to its number, and with full warrant to carry forward its own work, subject to the general approval of the Council.

VIII.

Our P.S.A.—continued.

“O brother man! Fold to thy heart thy brother;
Where pity dwells, the peace of God is there.
To worship rightly is to love each other—
Each smile a hymn, each kindly deed a prayer.”

WHITTIER.



AN intelligent man who visited the Afternoon Meeting six months after it started, came again to see us about a year after. “You’ve got a new set of men in,” was his first remark; “where are the old ones gone? These are much more respectable—in fact, quite different.”

“No,” was our reply; “they are the same men. We have had very few changes; but they are changed in soul and body, have got new clothes and new homes; old things have passed away, and all things are become new.”

Certainly there is a marvellous change in the appearance of the men and in their lives; which is the best testimony to the worth of this movement, so maligned, because so little understood. We are constantly having testimonies of this character from the brothers themselves.

“You don’t know me, sir, do you? Well, six months ago I entered Christ Church—it was the first time for twenty years that I had darkened a place of that sort—I signed the pledge, and have kept it ever since. Don’t I look different?”

“Yes, I should scarcely know you, but for the voice.”

“Ah, sir, I found I couldn’t keep the pledge till I let God help me; but since then it has been all right.”

Within two years of our starting the P.S.A. at Christ Church, we had received fifty brothers into church fellowship; we could count about fifteen who had become Sunday

School teachers, and twelve who had gone into Mission work. A large number go out on Sunday evenings into the open air, or to Mission-rooms and Gospel meetings, to testify for the Gospel, which has done so much for them. There is a vigorous Prayer meeting on Thursday evening; an Adult School on Sunday morning; a Christian choir of about thirty; and many other developments of holy and earnest activity. It is gratifying also to record that during the second year of our existence, the total amount contributed in various directions for Benefit Societies, the support of our Working Men's Institute, and for other objects was £690.

Let us now imagine that Sunday afternoon has come. It is about three o'clock. The doors of the church are opened. In the porch are the markers, sitting at the little tables, prepared to stamp the cards of the members, as they file past, and register their attendance; and, in the case of those who have joined the Book Scheme, to receive their penny subscription. This part of the work is most important, as it enables us to detect the absence of a brother; his name is handed to the Visiting Committee, who look him up. During the fourth six months of our work, this Committee paid 1,112 visits!

A few stragglers are already beginning to drop in, and are being shown by the stewards into their places, well to the front. We never believe in gaps. If I see any when I come on to the platform, I always take care that they are filled up before the meeting begins, that we may touch each other. The magnetic current of sympathy must be able to pass easily from man to man. There should be contact, the sense of a crowd, of pressure on space. Perhaps these early comers have business to do with the secretaries of the Benefit Societies, who are at their posts, their special branch being indicated by a large card, affixed to one of the columns just inside the church. I am glad that this work

should be transacted at that hour and place, if it is impossible for all the men to attend to it on the Saturday evening, which is also allotted to it. We believe in Slate Club, Penny Bank, Provident Society, Medical Society, and at Christmas a Goose Club.

Meanwhile, the members of the Band are arriving for their preliminary practice, and at 3.15 will take their seats in the chancel, opposite the organ, to beguile the waiting time by their playing. There is a delightful sense of bustle and expectancy, a business-like air, a good-humoured greeting of one another, a stir in the church, which is the best preparation for what is coming. We do our best to cultivate this; and sometimes before we begin the meeting, or in the middle of it, we shake hands with our neighbour, first on the right, then on the left, and say, "Welcome, Brother, glad to see you."

At 3.25 the Prize Choir, as we call it, consisting of men specially instructed, takes its place behind the Chairman's seat, prepared to lead the singing. It is quite a spectacle to watch the faces of our friends, as they are rendering some piece laboriously acquired to sing in parts, from the Tonic Sol-fa system. And they do it remarkably well; and I am sure that we appreciate their efforts, not simply because of their intrinsic worth, but because we know that some of these men, not very long ago, used to sing the devil's songs in the public-house.

With one of these men I was much touched and moved the other day. He had been getting more and more respectable in his dress; quite smart; indeed some of his mates chaffed him about it, as I overheard. I said, on one occasion, that we should all be obliged to come sometimes now and again in our working clothes, that men, who were reduced through drink and sin, might not be abashed by our too smart appearance. The next Sunday he appeared again in corduroys, and with a handkerchief round his neck, wearing

them, with a view of showing that our meeting welcomed any and all, irrespective of the dress they wore. It was a faint echo of the mighty music of the Incarnation, whereby He emptied Himself, and for our sakes became poor.

It is now 3.28, and the Secretary gives out the opening hymn, which is sung by the assembled men, sitting. I enter, with the speaker for the afternoon, at 3.30, sharp; as soon as the hymn is finished, there is a hearty clap. I have said how the first clap startled me, when the P.S.A. started; plenty of it has resounded through our noble church since then. To my ear it is very sweet: it is the men's "Amen"; it is the welcome which they give to the Gospel which has been to so many the power of God unto salvation. The following is our order:—

- 3.30. *Hymn.*
- 3.35. *Reading of Scripture*; about ten verses by a selected Brother.
- 3.38. *Anthem, or Hymn with Chorus*, by the Prize Choir.
- 3.43. *Prayer*, followed by the Lord's Prayer, led by a Brother.
- 3.45. *The first Solo.*
- 3.50. *The Notices*, by the Secretary.
- 3.53. *The Chairman*; always, when at all possible, myself.
- 4.0. *Hymn.*
- 4.5. *Our Speaker* for the Afternoon.
- 4.25. *The second Solo.*
- 4.30. *Exhortations* to sign the Pledge and decide for God, followed by the last hymn.
- 4.35. *A short Prayer.*

We are very particular that the soloists should be Christians, who will give us high-class sacred music. Pieces out of the oratorios; pieces like "Calvary," "The Children's Home," are what we enjoy best. Encores are very frequent. The speakers who are most appreciated are those that deal directly with Gospel topics. It is not wise to take a text or deliver too set an address. To hit from the shoulder, to speak from the heart, to tell stirring stories of seafaring or military life, to cull lessons from the streets or newspapers, to touch on the home-life, its anxieties and

joys—these are the best material for an address, which the men receive with cheers, and talk about gleefully afterwards. They are splendid listeners, and very rarely miss a point.

The meeting generally goes with a swing. There is every element in it to make it do so. I have often noticed that every additional five minutes has deepened the impression ; and that laughter, tears, and clapping, singing and speaking, all conduce to produce the effect which God's Spirit consummates with that blessed help and power, without which all else must fail.

We have two corners in the church which are respectively named Teetotal corner and Consecration corner. Those who want to sign the pledge are invited to the one ; whilst those who are willing to aid us in any special work, or to become Christians, are exhorted to the other.

We lay great stress on Pledge-signing. It has been in scores of cases the beginning of something better. The men all stand together, read with me the pledge on the card ; I explain its meaning, and pray that they may have grace to keep it ; then all sign together. It is quite an impressive little ceremony, when ten or twenty are doing it together.

In Consecration corner we initiated our Lantern Services, which have been held in the Large Hall on Sunday evenings after the services of the day are over, and when the great church stands dark and empty. Here the people have flocked in large numbers to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We generally begin with a well-known hymn, thrown on the screen ; then prayer, and another hymn. Then we may take a series of pictures, hired for the occasion, illustrating the life of Moses, or of Christ, and interspersed with striking texts. On each of these the speaker dwells for a few moments, enforcing the solemn lessons, or illustrating by homely incidents. Or we may preach a regular sermon, with its successive points driven through the eye to the heart.

I asked for fifty men to help me, and I got them. We must set these saved men to work to save others. The first new love opens their lips ; and we must see to it that the devil does not shut them again. The young disciple learns as much by teaching as by listening.

Thus the P.S.A. meeting concludes. Often my parting counsel to my brothers is to go home, kiss their wives, tell them all about the meeting over the tea-table, and come with them to the service at night ; 6.30 for the prayers, or 7.15, in time to miss the collection and get the sermon ! We make constant references to the wives and home-life. Once a quarter we invite the women to meet with us ; they occupying the gallery, wives on the right-hand, sweethearts and sisters on the left. We give little hints on Monday, at the "Women's At-Home," how the women should make the home-coming memorable and happy for the men ; and on Sunday how the men should show their appreciation of the preparations of their wives. Everything that can be done should be attempted to knit together the home-bonds which are so likely to help in keeping men true.

It should not be forgotten that, as the men go out, they contribute, in the collecting boxes held at the doors to receive their gifts, to the Benevolent Fund, which is administered by vote of a Special Committee to those who are sick or out of work. It is well understood that no money is given in the church, and that no loafers need apply. The more respectable of our working classes will avoid going to meetings where money is known to be freely given away, as they will not subject themselves to the imputation of going for what they can get. They believe in giving more than in receiving. "May I have a word with you private?" said a brother. "What is it?" "I want to give you 5s. for the Institute; and I want to know if I can, instead of having a prize, turn the money over to the Institute Fund." "But why do you wish to do it?" "Ah," said

he, "I have been repaid a thousand times by the teachings of those Sunday Afternoons : they have remade me."

"Please, sir," said another, "will you accept this box" (a box for blacking brushes); "I have got no work, so I'm making one for the President, and one for the Secretary, just to pass time away like."

The following are salient features in our P.S.A., which, under the blessing of God, have conduced to its great success and usefulness.

1. *Its Brotherhood.* We call each other "Brother"; and I believe that there is a deep and strong feeling of kinship knitting us to one another. The men have often been reminded of their obligation to the weak, erring, and fallen; to those who are in sickness and misfortune. The badge, with its clasped hands, which most of us wear, is a tiny symptom of the oneness which is not an empty name, but a vital principle.

2. *Its distinctively religious character.* It is of course conceivable that, without special watching, these meetings might become mere entertainments, or gatherings for the discussion of socialistic or political questions; and the use made by some in these directions has given the whole movement a stigma which in some quarters is very strong. But there is no necessity that this should be the case: the flow of the stream is capable of being directed into Gospel channels. These indeed are more cognate to its intention and spirit. Hence the greater necessity that it should be superintended and directed by those who are most deeply imbued with religious sentiment.

The founder of the P.S.A. movement, Mr. Blackham, is an earnest Christian man. Nothing gives him greater concern than to learn that this child of his prayers is being used for other than the loftiest religious purposes; or more pleasure than to be assured that it is being utilized to bring the Gospel of Jesus into the hearts and lives of working-men.

3. *It is for men only.* Men are attracted to such gatherings. In my judgment mixed audiences are a mistake. We have another P.S.A. for women only, conducted simultaneously in a neighbouring hall. Things need to be said to men only, which could not be uttered in a mixed gathering.

4. *It develops men.* We insist that every man should, so far as possible, join one of the various Committees, which are vital to the success of the enterprise. Each man may pick the one he prefers; and since each sends three representatives to the Council, there is no reason why any brother who gives evidence of capacity should not pass through his Committee, and be elected to serve on the Council itself. It is marvellous to see how soon men are developed by having responsibility thrust on them.

5. *It opens the door to new interests.* On Monday there is the Ambulance Class. On three nights each week there are Educational classes, under a proper certificated teacher, at the Institute, attendance at which earns a grant from the Government for the maintenance of our work. There is the Band or Singing practice for others; there are Walks and Teas on Bank Holidays; Church engagements, to which all are welcome; the free use of the Institute; the interest of managing and discussing the affairs of the Brotherhood. All has a tendency to start new shuttles weaving fresh, fair fabrics in the hearts and lives of these men.

There is too strong a flavour of egotism in this narrative, which may make it objectionable to those who do not know us; but the rapid development of this work has given rise to a sense of elation and hope which may be misinterpreted as indicating an undue self-confidence. May we be forgiven, if we have trespassed in this respect. And let us give all glory to Him, who has appointed us to a service which is so blessed and useful.

IX.

My Album.

“ The spring of the regenerate heart—
The pulse, the glow of every part—
Is the true love of Christ our Lord,
As man embraced, as God adored.”

KEBLE.



BEFORE me as I write, on my study table, lies an unobtrusive, oblong book, in very ordinary binding, the leaves of which were originally blank, but which are now covered with fifty-two autograph letters from the men of our P.S.A. Very few of these letters show marks of much education.

In some cases the irregular lines straggle across the page, without stopping or paragraphing, and in perfect indifference to all the laws of grammar and spelling. But in all my library I have no book I value more ; indeed, I almost think that that volume is the most precious possession I have, to be at least classed with the address given me by the citizens of Leicester when I left my work there for London.

The history of this book is as follows :—On three previous occasions, when I have returned from my summer vacation, I have been greeted with a present. Once it was the chair in which the President always sits ; at another time it was a cathedral clock, to replace one that was stolen from the vestry. This time I extracted a promise that the men should not be asked to spend their money in this way. With this I was content, as I never thought that a present—which would exceed in value all human wealth—could be given without money.

On my return from a Summer vacation, I discovered that considerable preparations were afoot to welcome me, but was assured that the promise had been kept, and again possessed my soul in peace. What was my astonishment, then, and

overwhelming emotion, when my friend and helper, the Secretary of the P.S.A., asked me to accept from my working-men brothers, as the expression of their love, this book containing these letters, which tell in each case of blessing received through our meetings. The stories are inexpressibly interesting and touching, full of personal expressions of love, which I dare not appropriate, but pass on to Him of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things, to whom be glory for ever.

It would be very interesting to my readers if these letters could be lithographed, that they might look on them with their own eyes. But this, for many reasons, would be inadvisable; but perhaps there will be no objection to my classifying some of these deeply-interesting experiences, partly to convince those who question the P. S. A. movement, and partly to encourage my brother ministers to devote themselves more largely to efforts on strictly Evangelical and Gospel lines, among the great mass of working men which now stand aloof from our places of worship.

The Illuminated Inscription on the frontispiece reads as follows:—

“Beloved Brother,—We, your P.S.A. brothers, desire to welcome you on your return home, with hearts full of joy. We have missed you, have longed for you, and our hearts rebound with joy as we see you again. Some few of us have herewith written how God, through your ministry, has come into our lives, and in whose life we now live anew.

“We offer you a brother’s greeting, but we can never tell you how our lives have become bound up with your life. Day by day we pray for you, our wives bless you, and our children prattle your name; and in the consciousness of your love for us, and in the strength of your life spent for us, we grow in strength, our homes are purer and sweeter, as we have caught on the spirit of the Master, reflected through you. Now we pray, as our most solemn prayer, that your life, love, and ministry may long be spared to us, and that your heart may ever know the peace of God that passeth understanding.

“We are, dear brother,

“Yours faithfully.”

(Signed on behalf of the P.S.A. Brotherhood by six of my fellow-workers).

There are some touching references to their *deliverance from the slavery of drink*.*

For instance, one says :—

“A long time ago my daughter told me that there was to be a meeting at Christ Church especially for men ; so I went on the fourth Sunday. I was sitting about half-way down the church, and Mr. Meyer, while speaking, looked straight at me and said, ‘*You*, man chained down with drink, lust, and passion, tell Jesus ! Ask Him, and He will deliver you ; sign the pledge, and be a man and live.’ I caught the speaker’s eye, and it shone like a star. I did not like to go out, and I did not want to stay in ; but I did stay until the meeting was over. I cannot even remember who else spoke. I signed the pledge as I came out—Jan. 8th, 1893. I crossed the road, and there I stopped, not knowing what to do. I thought if I went without it would kill me, and if I went on with it I should go to ruin. I turned to go back to have my name taken off the book, for I could not be a ‘sham,’ when the words rang in my ears, ‘Tell Jesus, and be a man.’ There I stood. I looked up and prayed that God, for Jesus’ sake, would deliver me, for I had no power in myself ; and from that hour I have never tasted any intoxicating drinks. I was set free, and it was a miracle to me ; but I continue to live above my old habit, and by the help of God I became a member of the Church, and I do truly from my heart thank God that I ever went to Christ Church P.S.A.”

This is an extract from another letter :—

“I had been living a very sinful life, and had not been in a church for years ; but I would not stay away for anything now, for I feel that God has done so much for me by sending His Son Jesus Christ into the world to wash away my sins with His precious blood. I can never be tired of praising Him. I must tell you that I signed the pledge on the first Sunday that I attended the P.S.A., four months ago.

“But although I began to be very miserable about my soul, I did not accept Christ Jesus for my Saviour till a month afterwards. Thank God, a brother had a very earnest talk with me, and decided me to settle the point at once. Hoping that many more brothers will be brought to the foot of the Cross through the instrumentality of the P.S.A.”

One of the most interesting experiences is as follows :—

“It is with extreme thankfulness to you and deep gratitude to Almighty God that He has, through your administration, saved me

* I have amended the spelling and punctuation in each case.

from a life of sin. It is now just over two years ago that I joined the P.S.A. God be praised that ever He gave me the desire to come to Christ Church. Previous to coming I had been a great drunkard, having had experience in public-houses as barman, &c. It was there I matured the taste and liking for alcoholic drink, and it is beyond dispute that I have worked in twenty-two taverns, and was discharged solely through drunkenness from them all, except one. I lost my good name, I lost all self-respect, I lost all sympathy from all my own people, and was a source of great anxiety to those near and dear to me.

"But now, praise God for all His goodness, that is all past and blotted out by His precious blood. Glory be to God! 'Behold, the old things have passed away, and all things have become new.' I am pleased to tell you that I am a pledged abstainer ever since I joined the P.S.A., and thank God that He has enabled me to keep it; and I trust He will as long as 'He giveth me breath.'

"I am thankful to say that I have now regained my lost character, and have been restored to the love and kindness of my own people. My faith is that, although at present my condition is not all I could desire, so far as this world is concerned, I believe that in God's own time all things will come right."

Some of them refer to *deliverance from gambling*. For instance, one says:—

"I never entered any Church in my life till I came to your—or my—P.S.A., where, thank God, I learnt what it was to have a clean heart; not only that, but it has cured me of that curse of curses—gambling both with money on cards and the turf."

This is the testimony of another:—

"I thank God that He sent you to Christ Church. I was a great gambler before you came there; but, thank God, I am not one now, for I am travelling the right road."

The following is very interesting:—

"I thank God for sending you to South London to help such a sinner as me to pray. It was through you giving the invitation for one minute's silent prayer that one of the brothers was converted. Through him I gave my heart to God, and now I mean to do the best for Him in winning souls. I was not an out-and-out drunkard, but was brought up by drunkard parents, and I wandered far in sin. I used to play draughts for beer all Sunday, until I came to the P.S.A. and signed the pledge; but now I have a peace that passes all understanding: a peace that makes me happy all the time."

In many of the letters there are *tender references to the home-life*. I cull a handful of the following :—

“I have been blessed myself, and my wife has been blessed and helped, and made happy ; in our home there is joy and peace.”

“There is no one more honoured and blessed in our home than you. It was a happy night for me the night I signed the pledge ; everything is changed now through God’s grace. You have been the means of bringing me from darkness to light, and now God is holding my hand and is strengthening me. Pray for my wife and me and my little girl. We all three pray for you every night and morning.”

“It has brought happiness to my wife and family.”

“I was a backslider and a black sinner ; I had wandered far in sin through my impure actions. Many a time I have prayed for deliverance from that habit, but my prayers never seemed to be answered ; so I got on doubting, and at last I was running the drunkard’s and gambler’s path. Often I was playing cards all day on Sunday ; and then if any one asked about my soul, I would tell them I had not got one, till I came to the P.S.A., and then someone asked me to come to the P.S.E. A long time after that I gave up drink, and two months later I gave my heart to God in the P.S.A., twelve months last July. Now, instead of taking my wife in ‘the pubs,’ we both get on our knees every night by our bedside together and live happy, prayerful lives. With His love I abide very close to my Saviour’s side.”

“It has not only made me happy, it has made my wife and child happy ; my home is happier.”

“I must tell you that I am a Christian, and it was a message from Jesus through you that I gave my whole soul to Christ, our Redeemer. You do not know how happy I have been since I laid my burden at the foot of the Cross. I must tell you that my wife and children are all Christians, and we have made Jesus the centre of our home, and thank God for His blessings in our home.”

But, above all, their *references to our Lord, and to the Church life*, show how deep the work is.

One writes :—

“It was through the instrumentality of the P.S.A. that I was induced and constrained to surrender myself to Christ. For years I had given assent to the doctrine of the atonement, but the heart was held back. Over two years have passed since the final step was taken, and my one desire now is that He may use what talents I may have for His glory until He sees fit to call me home.”

Mr. W. R. Lane held a very successful Mission at Christ Church. The following are references to blessing received :—

“I trust my experience may help someone to come to Jesus Christ just as they are ; and Jesus Christ will wash all their sins away for them as He did for me. Mr. Lane’s Mission did me good. It was there that I gave my heart to Jesus Christ for cleansing power ; and, thanks be to God, He has given me power to pray, and I love Him every hour and every day.”

“I have been a total abstainer sixteen years ; but that is not all. Since I joined the P.S.A. I began to think and see I was not going the right path ; so I determined, through Mr. Lane’s Mission and God’s help, to lead a new life. Therefore, I have given up gambling and everything that was bad, and given my heart to God ; and now I am in the right path.”

Several of the men joined the Church.

“I am thankful to say I joined your P.S.A. January 8th, 1893 ; and thank God that four Sundays afterwards I came in the evening to hear you preach, and in the after meeting I was converted under you. I thank God since that time I have joined your Church, and was amongst the first of the P.S.A. members to be received into fellowship.”

“At Belvedere Road the evangelist said these words :—‘He that believeth on the Lord has everlasting life.’ I laughed at it all the way home. In the afternoon, at the P.S.A., I cried when we were singing, ‘Where is my boy to-night?’ and then I came to the church in the evening to 19 pew, where I pay for three seats, and there I asked the Lord to pardon all my sins and for forgiveness, and when I opened my eyes I thought the church was in illumination ; I had to look the second time before I could believe it.”

“I give you my testimony in a few verses, if you think they would please Mr. Meyer. I know our dear President is too kind-hearted to criticise the poetry ; and it has this merit, that every word is true :—

“God bless the P.S.A., sir,
I’m speaking straight from the heart ;
It must be quite a twelve month now,
Since first I made a start.

Would you like to hear the story, sir ?

Well, it won’t take long to tell,
My heart was full of trouble :
God had taken our only girl !

My Album.

And my wife, she tried to cheer me,
 While the tears fell from her eyes,
 ' Don't you ever fret about her, dad,
 She's an angel in the skies !

But come with me to the Mission Hall,'
 Well, I went, but not to pray ;
 And there it was that first I heard
 About this P.S.A.

Well, I came, I heard, was conquered !
 Oh, it set my heart aglow !
 And I've never missed but once since then,
 That's twelvemonths now ago !

But, best of all, God reached my heart,
 I'm a sinner, saved, to-day,
 And can say, with a heart that's full of joy,
 God bless our P.S.A."

Many of the men are witnessing for Christ among their companions, and seeking their conversion.

"I feel truly grateful that ever I joined the P.S.A., seeing what it has done for me. It has caused me to prosper in my business, and has made a happy change in my life, both in body and spirit, and likewise made me anxious to win souls for Christ."

"One Sunday, the beginning of the year, I joined the P.S.A. In the evening I went to church. Your text was, 'Is the young man Absalom safe?' I adjourned to the vestry after the service, and there gave my heart to God, and signed the pledge, and God has kept me since. I also rejoined my old Phoenix and Good Templar Lodge, and have through the summer engaged in out-door work for the Master. Your text daily rings in my ears, and compels me to apply it to my own heart ; but, thank God, the answer is clear now—'Safe, safe at last !'"

"My one desire is to get nine members to join the P.S.A. ; I have got four new members to join."

"You pointed out the truth so plainly to me that I became convicted of sin, and then and there gave my heart to God. Since then my life has been altogether different. Knowing, by the grace of God, I was saved, I cannot do less than go and tell my fellow-men that what was good for me must be good for them. I intend to go and try to win souls for my Master, Jesus Christ."

"I take this liberty of writing to you to let you know that God answered prayer at the P.S.A. last Sunday. I have been attending for a few Sundays, and I am happy to say I have been greatly helped on

the road to Christ. My prayers were answered last Sunday, when my father signed the pledge. He has been a drunkard for many years; and I want you to ask God in your prayers to help him and all those who signed to keep it. And what I am still more thankful for is, through my father signing, an aunt of mine, who has also been a great drunkard, decided to do the same. Our prayers are greatly needed, as my father and aunt are in great temptations during their work-time.

"Four in our family have signed in a fortnight, including myself, and now my mother and aunt are waiting to do so. I do thank God for these blessings. There are many more in our family who need such help, and I am trusting in Christ that our example may be followed by others."

"It is with feelings of great gratitude I sit down to write my humble testimony of the benefits received from attending the P.S.A. Two years ago last February I was strolling past the church, and was struck with the earnest personal invitations given to working men to come inside. I stood some little distance off, and watched for some time. At last I determined to go in, and that afternoon the whole of my past career from sixteen years of age came up before me.

"Mr. Richards was singing, and it was such as I had never heard before, although well up in music-halls and theatres, and it went right home to me, and thank God it is all changed now. Drink gone, swearing gone, betting gone, going to races all gone and done with, and; thank God, the desire for it gone too. Instead of the *Sportsman*, the *Christian Herald* now. I used to think it pleasure going to Kempton, Epsom, and Ascot, and spending my Sundays with the Sunday League excursions; but it is nothing compared with the real pleasure now; so I have much to be thankful for."

The following is a reminiscence of an address given by my friend, Mr. Fullerton, one Sunday afternoon, and its results:—

"There was an old tug which ran between London and Portsmouth, a queer-shaped, ugly old craft, more like a badly-built tub than a boat, and her name painted on her bows was—well, I'll not tell you that, but she was nicknamed 'Old Bust-Me-Up'; for, whenever she came into port, she always collided with some vessel and did it some damage, or by bumping against a vessel injured herself. If by any chance she managed to get clear of the craft when coming into dock, she was bound to damage either the dock or herself, so clumsily handled was she. But one day, to the wonderment of all who were gathered on shore, 'Old Bust-Me-Up' was seen coming in straight as a die, keeping clear of all vessels. She seemed to glide like a swan to her

place in the dock, where she dropped anchor. An old salt who stood by could not hold his peace when he saw this, and shouted, 'What me ! "Old Bust-Me-up" ! what's up ? 'Tis you, ain't it ? what's come to yer ?' and back from the boat there came the reply, 'Yes, 'tis "Old Bust-Me-Up," but she's got a new skipper aboard, d'ye see, and that explains it all.'

"'Ah, man,' said Mr. Fullerton, 'you may have been an "Old Bust-Me-Up" yourself, damaging yourself and others in your life's journey ; but if you will take the new Skipper—the Lord Jesus Christ—aboard, and let Him pilot your life, you shall sail perfectly straight henceforth.'"

In that audience was a man who had just come out of jail for drunkenness and other offences ; and, as he said afterwards, he "sat and listened and drank it all in." He had damaged, almost blasted, his own life, besides being guilty of damaging the lives of others. It seemed as if the devil had taken possession of him, but the man took the new Skipper aboard that afternoon ; and ever since he did that, he has been a different man.

The story of this man's conversion was told to me by the missionary of the police-court where he had been convicted. The missionary had been trying hard to get the man to decide for Christ ; but up till then the services of the new Skipper had been refused. But now, thanks be to God ! he is humbly rejoicing in his newly-found Saviour, and his happy restoration to his wife and children. In addition to this, an old employer promised to give him work ; and this man is now working at his old trade under him.

These incidents and letters speak for themselves ; there are many others of the same character. In fact, I should like to have printed the whole of them, had space permitted. Those that I have quoted are not more interesting than many which are left within the pages of my book, to speak ever to God and, may I add, to me. There is room yet—many unfilled pages wait for their precious burden ; but I trust that each Sunday work is being done, though I know it not,

which will appear after many days, and the record of which will come to me in this book of life.

More than once there is a loving reference to Mr. Turner, the indefatigable and devoted secretary, who undertook the post on the day when a few of us met, one Sunday afternoon, to consider the best method of reaching the working men of the neighbourhood, and who has fulfilled the office in a way that left nothing to be desired.

It is a matter of great thankfulness, however, that the work does not depend on one or two of us. Scores of men are continually giving their very best time, energy, and thought to the several departments, which the necessities of the work have called into existence. And I think we are learning that where there is true love to God, there comes a genuine love to man, which makes the wheels of a great human machine move without friction or noise. Not unto us! not unto us! but unto Thy name be the glory, O Divine Master, Whose work this is, through Thy unworthy servants.

This is the keynote of our work; and it is blessed to feel that it is so thoroughly reciprocated in the innermost circle of the men who gather each Sunday morning for the study of the Bible in the Adult School, and in the weekly P.S.A. Prayer Meeting. Their aspirations, and prayers, and the conversations arising afterwards, show how true and deep their religious life has become. Things which are hidden from the wise and prudent have been revealed to babes. “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

X.

Back in the Sea of Ink.

ONE OF OUR FAILURES.

“ We are much bound to them that do succeed,
But in a more pathetic sense are bound
To such as fail.”

JEAN INGELOW.



YOU ask me if I have met with no failures in my work. Certainly I have had my full share. It has seemed as if I was picking up the nine-pins, and setting them in order for the devil to bowl down ; but I thank God I have never lost hope or heart. As long as a man will make a new start and turn over a new leaf, I am more than glad to give him a helping hand, on the one condition of his resolution being, so far as I can see, sincere. Of course men will profess anything in the way of amendment to get their night's lodging ; but it is not difficult to detect the absence of the tone of contrition in their appeal for help.

It is one of my favourite sayings that if nine out of ten whom I have helped turn out indifferently, I should be more than repaid if the tenth went straight. In doing this kind of work we need to remember the exhortation not to be weary in well-doing, and to feed the fountains of our perseverance from His inexhaustible patience. It is, after all, not only the good we do to others, but the virtues we are building up in our own character, that we are to consider in philanthropic endeavour. Even if the Son of Peace be not in the heart to which we minister, to welcome the peace we transmit, our peace will come back to us again. Though our blessing has found no likely soil in which to bear fruit, the effort to bless has blessed us. Besides, if our prayers and tears and words

do fail of their mark, like spent arrows, we are dealt with much more lightly than we have dealt with Christ. How often have we rebuked His tender advances, and hardened ourselves against His love, and borne thorns and thistles in return for the rain of His tender grace! Shall not we forgive seventy times, who have been forgiven seventy times seven? Shall we despair of any, when we have given Christ so much more reason to despair of us? When next you are on the point of discouragement, remember how often you have received mercy, and faint not.

One day I received a letter from a neighbouring town, asking me to make search for an only son, whose mother was well-to-do, and very anxious about him, as she had not received tidings for several months. His last address was sent me, from which I was able to trace him. I shall not forget that morning when I made my way into the little court at the right-hand corner of which was the door of the house at which he was lodging. A tidy woman answered my knock, and told me that her lodger had been in bed for several days because he was drinking too heavily to stand, and she pointed up the dark, steep wooden stairs, and told me that the door right in front was his.

I stumbled up, knocked, and entered. As I write I can remember the stench of that awful atmosphere, laden with impurity, fumes of drink, and tobacco smoke. There was not a crack of ventilation, and the poor imprisoned air seemed heavy with protest at its stagnation. I made a rush to the window and let down the upper sash, and stood as near it as possible as I spoke to the young man whose bloated face appeared above the dirty counterpane; whilst under his bed, as thick as they could stand, were empty bottles that had held raw spirit.

"You will excuse me coming in like this, but your mother is awfully anxious about you, and she got me to seek you out."

He looked at me in a dazed sort of way. "You have got to stop off this drinking. You'll drink yourself to the devil if you go on like this. Come, let's have a fight together against the cursed drink."

Again he stared at me, and said in a thick voice, "It's no use you talking like that; I can't stop. My uncle has tried to stop me, but he can't. My lawyer has tried it, but he can't. My mother, bless her, has tried her hand, but she can't. And I can't, and nobody can help me, and I shall go on drinking till I kill myself. I can't help it."

"Well," said I, "anyhow, Christ can help it. And if He can't stop you drinking, I'll give up being a parson, and start rivetting shoes; for I won't be party to upholding Christianity which undertakes to save chaps like you, if it can't do what it professes."

These remarks had tended to steady him; for though the drink had powerfully affected his body, his mind was fairly clear.

"Now," said I, "you must get up. I am going to take you out of this filthy place, whilst your landlady makes your bed, and cleans the room."

"Where are you going to take me to?" said he.

This question quite posed me, as I had not considered up to that moment all that my proposition involved. But on the spur of the moment, and knowing that the fresh air of that exquisite spring morning would probably do more to restore him than anything else, I replied, "I am going to take you for a drive with me in a hansom. It's such a beautiful morning, I want to get into the country, and to take you with me."

So I helped him to dress, because he was not steady enough to do for himself. At last he was sitting on the side of the bed, fairly altered, for his clothes were those of a gentleman. Meanwhile, I ran out, got a cab, and a pound of grapes to stay his cravings, returned for my poor

friend, brought him downstairs at the imminent risk of our two necks, and we started, much to the amazement of the cabman, for our drive into the country.

By the time we got back I had got him in the mind to sign the pledge. Here let me advise any friend who has to deal with a similar case to try the hansom cab cure. First, it gives fresh air; second, it enables you to have an uninterrupted tête-à-tête; third, your congregation is not able to escape you; fourth, there is no one to overhear what you say. He also gave me his last bottle of spirits, which, when I arrived home, I poured down the drain.

He went on fairly well for a little, and then fell. Again we picked him up. He was heir to a considerable property, and his money was his curse. At last, at my suggestion, one of my working men, who was out of work, and whose wife and child were away from his home, shut himself up with our poor friend in his house, locking the door so that neither of them could get out—whilst their food was handed in. This went on for several days, until the drink had passed out, and the poor devil-possessed lad became calmer and stronger. I believe that he did grasp the hand of Christ, and for a little time he walked in the light of His face, saying the words which I taught him to repeat in the hour of temptation, “Jesus saves me!”


After this he went abroad, and at first we heard good accounts of him; but, I am sorry to say, he again yielded to the old passion, which rapidly undermined his health. Ultimately he went home to his mother’s house to die, and there became truly penitent, and gave good evidence, before he passed away, of true conversion. Wounded, draggled, almost devoured by the lion, the sheep was yet rescued by the Good Shepherd, and we have no doubt that he is now numbered with the great host of weak and helpless ones whom the right arm of Jehovah has rescued from the very jaws of hell.

XI.

Our Monday Tea-Party.

“And the power that helps,
Enters the individual, and extends
Thence in a thousand gentle influences
To other hearts.”

MACDONALD.

OME time after our P.S.A. for men was in full operation, and many of the men had been led to give up drink and betting and to give themselves to Christ, some of them began to be anxious about their wives, and to ask if something could not be set on foot, to do for the women what the Sunday afternoon meetings had done for the men. They said that when they came home from their meeting their wives did not seem to understand what had filled them with such joy, or to be able to give them sympathy and help; that their homes were not in all cases what they might be, and that their wives were beginning to enquire after the secret which had filled their own hearts with so much blessedness, and had made their lives so much nobler and purer.

This request set me thinking, and I began to canvass the various methods by which I could meet the new demand which was thus placed upon me. An evening meeting suggested itself, and I had a vision of a great audience of women gathered in the church, of something of the same nature as the P.S.A.; but the difficulty of prevailing on women to leave their homes, and the unwisdom of inviting them to do so at so late an hour, when they might be most helpful to their husbands and children, made me feel that that was out of the question. After considerable cogitation, it seemed best to take hold of a Mothers' Meeting, which for long had been associated with the church, and to let that

be the nucleus around which the new movement should revolve. The lady who had managed it was prepared to co-operate with me; no objection was raised by the excellent society which assisted in the maintenance of the Bible Woman; and I felt that there was nothing to prevent me from at once assuming the management of a meeting for women, under somewhat altered conditions.

We began by altering the title. For “Mothers’ Meeting” we substituted the fresher and more imposing name of “The Women’s At-Home.” Instead of the gathering being held in a small and rather gloomy hall, it was removed to our largest, most spacious, and most beautiful building—the Hawkstone Hall—which has seating capacity for some 700 or 800 people. Further, it seemed wise to introduce more of the social element into the gathering, and to banish all babies, besides making every effort to beautify the Hall for the occasion, by palms and flowers, and canary birds, and other accessories, which, so far as was possible, would give a home-like air to our gatherings and make the women see that pains had been taken to bid them welcome.

The general idea of our meeting is as follows: The seats in the Hall are arranged in something of the form of Sunday school classes, that is, in a number of squares which cover the floor of the Hall. In the centre of each square is placed a little three-legged table covered by a cloth, on which stands a vase of flowers. At the table a lady sits who is called the “Elder Sister,” though I think the term “Ministering Sister” would be preferable. It is her business to welcome each of the women of her group; know something of the home life of each; and to wait upon these working sisters of ours with the utmost attention and courtesy. I have said that, after three or four months of apprenticeship, I shall hold an examination in their knowledge of the number and christian names of the children of the families represented in the circle that gathers

around them upon Monday. These "Ministering Sisters" are the link between myself and the great gathering of women, so that none are overlooked, and any special cases of need or sorrow are made known to me by their friend and mine.

We will now consider that it is nearing 2.30 on Monday afternoon. Kind and willing hands are placing the last touches upon the Hall; palms are being carried from the chancel steps; the canaries are being brought to perform their useful ministry of chirping and singing, and reminding perhaps of sunnier climes and happier days. Little tables with their vases are waiting in the centre of the seats; tables with cups and saucers are standing at each end of the room; and downstairs, near the entrance door, the infant schoolroom is prepared as a crèche, with mattresses for the children to roll upon, bassinets for them to sleep in; dolls and other toys, especially Noah's ark, which has a religious association that is in keeping with the church, and tends to connect the infantine ideas with Scripture history—a judicious preparation for further initiation into its fascinating stories. Milk is there in cans and bottles, and some nine or ten devoted women are prepared to receive and nurse the forty or fifty babes and infants who are to be deposited by the mothers, much to their own relief, who thus obtain a respite from the constant handful which a babe entails.

Now my lady helpers arrive and take their seats—one at the piano, two or three at the tea tables, one at the door—whose business it is to shake hands with and give a smile to every woman as she enters. Now the first arrivals come in little groups of two and three, evidently intending to make the most of the one bright brief time which they look forward to and count on during the week, and which gives a welcome change to the current of their thought, and the confinement of their narrow rooms. Frequently the women say that we can form no conception of how great

the change is—from the narrow court or street and the tiny room, to the beautiful hall with its air and light, and the little touches of nature and of human love; the sense that they who are always caring for others, are now to come in for a share of love for themselves; the sense of freedom from the pressure that rests so heavily upon the wife of many a working man.

At 2.45 when our company has largely assembled, I go in, and we spend the first half-hour variously. Sometimes we teach them Salvation Army choruses or other songs which they can sing over their wash-tub, or when the children are querulous, or when their husbands come home out of sorts. I always tell them that when they feel least like singing they should start singing; nothing cures the sad heart, or keeps the tempted heart so well, as notes of praise and song. There is nothing the devil hates so much as singing. "Let us sing a hymn," Luther was wont to say, "and shame the devil."

Sometimes I have a talk about what men like in the home, and urge each wife to make a pair of slippers, and have them warming before the fire; once get a man to take his boots off, he is less likely to want to go out. Then I descant upon the proprieties of a singing kettle; a tablecloth on the table and every preparation, including a kiss to welcome him on his return from work. Sometimes our conversation turns on the value of wholemeal bread, and the shops in the neighbourhood are named where it can be obtained; or we wax eloquent on oatmeal porridge, and give recipes for its preparation. At other times a lady comes to speak—now on total abstinence; again on vegetarianism; as to preparing soup, etc., of simple materials. Or perhaps a friendly doctor will explain what to do in the case of burns and scalds, and other household catastrophes. At other times, one of my lady-helps reads some bright and interesting incident; and it is most gratifying to notice the

fixed attention of the women, and their response in a ripple of laughter, or their hastily brushed-away tears. We are greatly indebted also to ladies who come to sing solos and duets. In any of these ways the first half-hour passes brightly enough; and I never feel that I have done my share until, sometimes by my own brightness and good humour, I have succeeded in sending a ripple of laughter over the faces of my friends. To me it is an inexpressible joy to see those worn and tired features lit up by a smile; even though it so soon fades away into the fixed look of depression, which long years of poverty and sorrow have fixed upon the face. I cannot but feel also that those moments do much to break down the barriers and to open the heart to receive the Gospel; they at least establish a homely, friendly feeling between us all, for there is nothing that so soon breaks down prejudice and unites all hearts as the touch of nature, be it a hearty laugh, or a rain of tears, or a common interest.

During the last few minutes of this, the first part of our gathering, large cans of tea, our best home-brewed, have been quietly brought into the hall, from which jugs and teapots have been filled. At a given signal the ladies now leave their groups and come to the tables to fetch cups and saucers, with which they supply the waiting women. Then again they take round the tea, giving each woman a cupful and two biscuits, for which we charge one halfpenny, which covers the cost. We all have tea at this time; I expect that my helpers should take tea, as I always do myself, because it produces a sense of fellowship and companionship. During tea-time the piano goes merrily.

At 3.30 the crockery is cleared away, and the audience, which by this time will number about two hundred and seventy women, will settle down to listen to Bible talk. We are great in singing, and before I speak we sing some favourite hymns, or learn new ones. Then the

Word of God is opened and read, with a running commentary of application to the spiritual needs of those who have but little other opportunity of drinking of the water of the Fountain of Life. It is very wonderful how the old-world narratives of the Bible come home to the working women of to-day, reflecting their experiences, and shedding a ray of heavenly light upon many a dark cloud that broods over them. Often tears stand in their eyes, or deepening silence betrays the intensity of the interest. We are conscious that a work of grace is proceeding quietly but irresistibly, and that many a heart is becoming aglow with fresh love and hope and desire after God. What may not these women effect? Our talk constantly turns upon the children. I have convictions about the relation of mother and child, which I cannot well explain upon this page, because they touch upon the earliest dawn of existence. If only we can turn the thoughts of mothers towards God, and heaven, and purity; the star that shines over Bethlehem; we are insensibly influencing generations yet unborn, as well as exerting a mighty power over the children of their care. Too often the minister avoids the Mothers' Meeting, and delegates the responsibility of its management to others, hardly realising that his influence there will re-act, if properly used, upon men and children and homes, right through the district where he works. Many of my working sisters are now finding their way to the galleries of Christ Church, bringing their husbands, and taking an intelligent interest in our work; and nothing is lovelier in my opinion than that the church of God should become dear to working people who think of it, pray for it, and give time and thought to its development, which are proportionately greater than is often yielded by those better able to make sacrifice. Prayer, and the Benediction, close our meeting. Sometimes I say, as we conclude—"Let us shake hands all round, and say

‘Welcome’ or ‘Farewell, sister.’” The effect is very strange, to see each woman turning first to the right and then to the left, with the words of greeting on her lips. So, at four precisely, they pour out, though a few always linger for further talk, and especially to tell my helpers some story which will quickly touch their sympathies.

The most remarkable thing about this gathering of women has been their attitude towards Total Abstinence. One of my lady workers is deeply interested in the British Women’s Temperance Association, and one afternoon spoke about it. The result of that address, the interest it excited, and the movement to which it led, was that about 130 joined our branch; many of them, of course, had been abstainers before, but a very considerable proportion started for the first time. They are immensely proud of their badge of white ribbon, their pledge books, and their right to consider themselves workers in the great cause.

In my judgment nothing has happened of more interest than the incident with which I close this narrative. One of the ladies of my church, the wife of a leading official, who up till then had not seen it her duty to be a professed total abstainer, was visiting a poor woman in this district, discovered that her snare was intemperance, and urged her to sign the pledge. She was startled by the enquiry:—

“Are you a teetotaller?”

“No,” was her reply.

“Then,” said the woman, “I will sign the pledge if you will.”

My friend had no alternative than to assent. On her arrival home she told her husband what had happened, a little wondering what he would think of her action. He, however, immediately told her that he would do the same. When I heard of this resolve on the part of my friend and his wife, I said that, as Samson refused to die unless he could cause the death of as many as possible, so it would be

a mistake for them to sign the pledge without securing the adhesion of at least twenty men and women for the same good cause. He challenged the P.S.A. Brotherhood on Sunday afternoon, and succeeded in getting twenty responses; but the greatest excitement was to perform a similar attempt with the women on the Monday afternoon. When my friend's wife had told her story, I rose, and informed the women that I must have twenty signatories to the pledge before the meeting closed; but that we would have a cup of strong tea first to prepare us for the effort. After tea I stood on the platform to count the hands, as, one after another they were uplifted. Without much difficulty we reached ten; then came a pause; then another hand uplifted, and another; and, rather slowly, another; then a long break. If there had been difficulty in getting twenty men out of 800, how much more difficulty would there be in obtaining twenty women out of 250, of which 130 were already pledged. The tension of expectation was pretty severe; I kept encouraging the faltering resolution as well as I could. Presently two or three hands were uplifted in succession, and finally we reached the total of twenty-one, who, for the first time, were prepared to sign the pledge. The women were highly delighted. They laughed and clapped, and presently rose to sing, "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow." And now, as the result of that visit to save a fallen sister, some 100 men and women have put their hands to the pledge, which is in so many cases a stepping-stone to the reception of Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, let me say that I look upon that afternoon meeting as the happiest bit of sunshine in the week. It is a parenthesis of almost unsullied joy. The Spirit of God is near; and whether we laugh, or cry, or sing, or talk, or listen, or have our tea, the Spirit of heaven is infused into all hearts, shines upon all faces, and begins to steal into darkened and sunless lives.

XII.

A Monday Afternoon Talk.

TENDERNESS.

“ Ofttimes a word or kindly deed
Bestowed upon some soul in need,—
Some soul where Love is never guest,—
Transforms the heart by hate opprest,
Till flowers the noisome weeds succeed.
Call you this Chance ? ”

ANON.



IN the Mothers' At-Home on a recent occasion, I had a rather special talk with the three hundred women who were present. And it came about in this way. I had noticed a specially worn, I would almost say hard look, on several of those faces. Whenever I have seen that, it has made me suffer, because it seems the reflection of the awful struggle for existence, the utter absence of comfort in the present or hope for the future.

The chief endeavour of those Monday afternoons is to soften the lines on the women's faces. For this we have the palms and flowers and music, and specially the hearty laugh. I always feel that a good laugh is a godsend, whether it arises from some specially sapient advice I give on household management, or some small sally at their expense. It is of the greatest importance that a good laugh should go round ; not suggested by a double allusion, or taint of the forbidden fruit. Sometimes I let everyone grumble for two minutes to her next-door neighbour—and the topics are always plentiful enough for this exercise. But though these methods give a little relief, the effect is not abiding ; and it occurred to me that perhaps the cause of much of the misery which accosted me might lie in the

disappointment of their hearts and the absence of love. So I adopted a somewhat novel expedient.

Our meetings are so unconventional that I do not hesitate to adopt the straightest and simplest method of ascertaining and doing what is necessary. So I asked all who had kissed their husbands that morning to hold up their hands. And the response was quite as I expected, from frequent observation. Only half of the women present, who, with very few exceptions, are married, had given their husbands this tender morning salute. Of course there was a great deal of laughing, and one woman held up two hands, to indicate that there had been more than the one.

But this gave me my text, and I began to talk a little of the absence of the expression of love. Of course it will be said that there may be true love without its expression, and that natures differ in this respect. A man is specially liable to assert that he loves his wife not less, but more, when the love loses the sparkle and rush of earlier days, and settles into a deep and quiet current. No doubt there is truth in this. The character of love changes; and it is likely enough that the wooer's arts, the coyness of the wooed, the poetry and passion, the languishing glance, the yearning for physical contact, are exchanged, as years pass, for the spiritual oneness, the deep understanding, the absolute trust and rest which neither presence nor absence can alter. But, for all that, true love must express itself in the outward caress; and when this is foregone, it is to the great detriment and endangering of the love it once expressed.

It is good advice to give to married folks, “Be lovers still.” Whenever anything occurs to break the old expressions of courtship, each partner in the marriage tie should set anxiously to discover the cause, and to re-splice the broken ends of the wire along which the deepest emotions of man's heart pass and repass. The reason which makes

the expressions of tenderness less should be searched to the root, lest a worm may be secretly gnawing at the vitals of the tree.

I told the women that it was their business to nurture the tenderness of the home. Before marriage the man takes the initiative; after marriage, if he does not, the woman must. In courting days the man takes the woman's arm; when they are done, the woman takes the man's. Ah, we men are too apt to be thoughtless of the sensitiveness and delicacy of a woman's love; we teach it to entwine around us, and are too absorbed and indifferent to the yearnings which we have ourselves created! But it lies very much with the women to make it easy for men to show them tenderness.

A woman should have a clean face, to start with. A little extra scrubbing with soap and water before the husband comes home at night would not be amiss in some cases that I have observed, and might bring some roses to the cheeks. A bow in the hair, a clean frill round the neck, perhaps a flower in the dress, has an attractive effect. I tell the women that men's affections will sometimes wander after other women because their wives are untidy and slatternly, their hair unkempt, their appearance unattractive. All women are not equally pretty; but it is not prettiness that holds a man's affection, but sweetness, neatness, nattiness—and these are possible to all women.

A woman makes a profound mistake, who frets and pouts and puts herself into a bad temper, that she may be petted into a good one. It is a bad policy. A man will be tempted to coax her back once or twice, but he loses his respect for her each time. It really alienates him in his deepest nature, and brings division between them.

She is no longer his equal, one with him in his spirit, heart, and life, but his toy and plaything. After awhile, he will live in perpetual fear that one of these fits of caprice may be coming on, and will hide anything likely to induce

them: and so begins a course of insincerity which is the grave of love.

No; when a woman perceives the expressions of tenderness waning, let her keep her secret, uttering never a word. Like Enid, she must possess herself in patience. Never altering her own behaviour; never less but more attentive to every spoken and unspoken wish; light, gentle, sympathetic, patient; expressing her tenderness by those little arts that women learn without going to school—and the love will emerge from its winter and sow the soil again with flowerets.

But let men be more thoughtful and tender. When they feel most put out and irritated, either with or without cause, it would be well to force themselves to bridge the yawning chasm at once by a caress. "Kiss and be friends," they used to say when we were children. Let us be careful to maintain the outward forms, and the inner spirit will not be far away. We should not be less courteous to our wives than to our friends. A wife's feelings are more susceptible. To leave the house for our daily work, or to return to it after hours of absence, without some recognition, is a mistake, and worse. Let us not forget the fret and worry, the perpetual burden of the children at home, the scheming and planning, the daily provision of dinner, the letting out of frocks for growing children, the darning and patching of boys' clothes, the tidying and cleaning and washing; and, if there are servants, the even greater anxiety involved in managing these. No woman would do for pay what thousands are doing for love. They ask no other wage than tenderness, which is the expression of a true and honest affection. And a woman can tell in an instant if it is that, or a mere subterfuge for infidelity. This tenderness should pass through the family-life.

We should never speak to each other, other than tenderly. Oh, how awful is it to hear the grating tones of a woman's

voice scolding her little child ! The yet greater horror is, that little ones learn to repeat them in turn to their younger brothers and sisters ; and so the rude, rough speech goes circling outwards to cover the world. Thus we do the devil's work, and scatter thistle-down, which must breed thorns wherever it alights.

Tenderness does not mean weakness, softness, effeminateness. It is consistent with strength, manliness, truth, and bravery. It does not show itself alone in the touch, but in unselfishness, thoughtfulness, considerateness, forbearance, patience, long-suffering. But however it shows itself, it is as the bloom on the peach, as spring showers on the earth, as the music of the angels stealing down on the plains of Bethlehem. You may not have much of this world's wealth to distribute ; but you may give something better, and spend a useful and beneficent life, if you will practise this lesson of shedding around you the grace of human tenderness, in word and act, and by the spirit of your life.

The longer I live and think about the deepest things, the more sure I am that the heart of religion is in unselfish, disinterested love. The forgiveness of sins, the cleansing of the soul, the practice of prayer, the knowledge of God, are all means to this great end of love : loving God, and loving man in the image of God.

But we must be careful to understand that love is not as is so generally supposed—a tender feeling, or weak sentimental emotion ; but a strong and heroic principle, always bent on putting the interests of others first. It is the product, in the beginning, not of the feelings, but of the will ; not of the emotions, but of the moral nature. We are therefore told to love God with our mind and strength ; and Jesus taught His disciples that the test of love was not feeling, but doing.

This makes it possible to love people we cannot like.

There are some people who irritate and worry us ; we cannot get on with them ; there is much the same antipathy between them and us as between dogs and cats. There is no need to rebuke ourselves for this. It is natural. But we may love them ; we may put their interests before our own, we may be always considering how to promote their comfort and well-being ; we may watch our opportunities of ministering to them—this is love. And in time such a line of comfort will promote a real liking as well as loving. If you feel jealous of any one, you must learn to love them. The only way of killing the fire of jealousy is by kindling the fire of love, as they fight prairie fires with fire. Try and consider something in the person of whom you are jealous, which appeals to your sympathy and pity. Always look on the kindest side of their conduct and words. Never join in any depreciatory or unkind remarks. Make yourself speak generously and nobly about them. If there is only one spot of blue in their sky, pick it out and tell others of it. Take any opportunity that may present itself of doing them a kind turn. And you will be surprised to find how completely you are delivered from your foe.

If any one has slighted you, or done you a wrong, be quick to follow the example of the great ecclesiastic, of whom it was once said, that the surest way to bind him to you in the bonds of a lasting friendship was to do him an injury. The Lord said, "Pray for and bless" such ; the apostle said, "Heap coals of fire on his head." There is nothing like feeding your enemy, if he is hungry ; and giving him drink, if he is athirst, if you want to transform him, and take all feeling of animosity out of your own heart. It is also a remarkable fact that we are almost sure to have an opportunity of doing a kindness to those who have wronged us, if we will but wait our time.

If you are obliged to live with people whom you dislike,

you will find nothing so helpful as to look out for chances of being kind to them. Do not wait till you feel kindly disposed towards them ; but act to them as you would do if you felt most warmly. There is no hypocrisy in this, because you need not profess what you do not feel. You need say nothing in one way or the other, but just go on doing daily what is sweet and kind and unselfish. This is the sure way of breaking down the middle wall of partition between you ; and of turning the wilderness into a garden with its water-springs. The drunkard may be saved from his thirst, the gambler from his selfish squandering of money, the miser from his greed, by the love that will not let him go. God is going to save the world by loving it : and we must do the same. Love is the almighty solvent of hard hearts. I do not suppose that there is a heart anywhere that would not ultimately yield to love ; but life is not long enough for any of us to try the experiment perfectly.

This love is very rare, even in Christian hearts ; and it can be gained only in fellowship with God through the Lord Jesus. Love of the temper and quality which I am describing is to be had only straight from the heart of God. Therefore the apostle says, "Love is of God ; and he that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." There are many imitations and counterfeits ; but the love that beareth, believeth, hopeth, endureth all things, is to be had only when we abide in God, and His nature passes through us as the sap of the tree through its branches.

Some one said the other day, that it is so hard, when travelling abroad, to show you are a Christian. I am at a loss to understand the remark. It seems to me that amid the utter selfishness of the world it is abundantly easy to show that the love of God is within. There is nothing like it among ordinary men. Politeness is but the veil that pride wears. Men are too proud not to seem as courteous

and unselfish as the rest ; but when their real interests are touched, how keen they are for their place, their well-being, their party or clan. The care we take of wives and children and friends is sometimes due to the fact that they belong to us, and we may suffer loss through them. There is thus so little real love in the world, that we have abundant chances of showing it, if it really fills our hearts.

Let us begin by showing it in little things. Helping perplexed and laden fellow-travellers ; sharing our comforts or provisions with them ; women helping tired mothers with troublesome children ; sheltering young girls ; inviting young men and women to our homes, who are strange in London ; noticing the hungry little faces that gaze into bakers' shops, and giving them wholesome food (not tarts or sweets !) ; moving up our pew to accommodate strangers, and saying a kind word to them when the service is over ; being willing to be dispossessed of our chosen seat or privilege or opportunity if another can be better helped ; in honour preferring others ; being willing to bear slights and injury without retaliating, or telling every one how badly we have been treated ; washing the face and anointing the head when we have been hurt. We may not be able to speak much for Christ, but here are ways in which we may reveal and honour Him ; and in acting thus, we are doing more than we know to sweeten the world, and make it a brighter, holier, better place to live in. This is the love of God, this is pure and undefiled religion.

XIII.

Work with Girls, and for Girls.

“Be good, sweet maid, and let who can be clever;
Do lovely things, not dream them, all day long;
And so make Life, and Death, and that For Ever,
One grand, sweet song.”

CHARLES KINGSLEY.



THAT marvellous possibilities lie deep in a girl's nature—of love that is prodigal of its best; of patience that can keep its secret through long years; of fortitude in trouble; quick sympathy for sorrow; inventiveness of expedients for making the best of things; and religious devotion that clings to the person of the Lord. A band of pure and earnest girls, a very sisterhood, is of priceless value to a Church; and happy is the minister who is able to count on their willing co-operation, and who can almost unconsciously develop their noblest powers by directing the priceless wealth of faculty with which their Creator has stored their natures.

On leaving school, a girl's life is apt to become desultory and aimless. A few lessons in music and singing, a round of society engagements, radiant days of outdoor exercise, lawn-tennis, novels, and occasional spells of household duty, seem to engross the energies and time of too many. All these have their place. Home, certainly, has the first claim. To be winsome and sweet in the household circle is in itself an education. It is unpardonable for a girl to neglect the buttons on her brother's things for Dorcas Meetings; and the care of the young children of her home for gutter children, however wild their habits or ragged their clothes. Many a young man has been driven to questionable places of amusement because his sisters were

at Ragged Schools and Mothers' Meetings when they ought to have been at home, looking their sweetest and prettiest, and making the drawing-room attractive with their laugh, and song, and accompaniments. Many a man would be saved from making a mistake in his choice for life if the women of his home did more to elevate his tastes and heighten his ideals by their love, and brightness, and sympathy. By-the-by, my private and confidential advice to a young man is, not to make an offer to a woman, though she seems to combine in herself all possible excellence, till she has been introduced to his sisters and they have seen her in the morning, just after breakfast, and have invited her to join in the simple life of their home-circle, the spirit of which will probably be the key of his own after-life.

But when the demands of the home have been met, and when ample leisure has been secured for the glad enjoyment of the worlds of nature and of thought, there is generally time for the service of such as are in poverty and sorrow ; and there is nothing that so develops or enriches a woman's nature as to learn that the charm of life is not in seeking love, but giving it. The sigh of many a woman's heart is to be loved ; for this she waits, sometimes with a great sob instantly stifled back, as one after another of her school-companions passes into the golden circle where every story-book breaks off. What a discovery it is that it is more blessed to love than to be loved, and that occasions for a perfect love—a love in which there can be no thought of a return—abound on every side, reaching our eager hands and lifting tear-stained faces as they cry, Love us !

I have always tried to be a big brother to the girls of my charge, and have never found the least tendency on their side to abuse the relationship. For this I do thank the keeping power of Christ. And as I look back on a fairly large experience, I feel sure that in numberless cases I have

saved my young sisters from making irretrievable mistakes. I have helped with counsel, rejoiced in the first tidings of their gladness, strengthened them to bear heart-breaking disappointment; and in return for such brotherly sympathy I have had untold devotion, which has never obtruded itself or acted unseemly, nor attempted to cross the border-line of perfect purity. Let every minister have a weekly or monthly meeting for the young women of his church, teaching them the deepest truths he knows, and banding them together for holy service. The Salvation Army sets all the churches an example in its use of women as officers, workers, and sisters of the poor. There is the same material for us all to work upon; but in too many instances it is allowed to lie like an unworked seam of very precious ore.

The young girls of Christ Church are banded together on the basis of Devotion to our Saviour, Total Abstinence, Modesty, Self-sacrifice, and Sisterliness. We meet once a month at the Lord's Table to repeat our vows, and have originated many societies and meetings of one sort and another for mutual help, benefit, and service. This is a real Sisterhood; and out of it all kinds of good things have come, are coming, and will come. It is not a mere form which leads us at the end of our meetings to stand round the room with hands linked, and sing:—

“Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love.”

One of the best results of that Sisterhood has been the establishment of an Evening Home for Girls in the thickly-populated neighbourhood hard by—just a shop, with a long workshop in the rear, and the usual equipment of rooms. We adapted and furnished it. By the good hand of God on us a friend gave us the necessary funds for the initial outlay, and the annual sum needed for the maintenance is secured by the proceeds of a sale of work held each

December. The articles for this are made by the girls of the Church, who meet on two evenings a month in what we call the "Girls' At-Home." They sit round little tables, chat, work, listen to the music, and make strangers welcome. How pleasant that hall looks, with those sweet, earnest faces and busy fingers! That is one of the ways in which the Kingdom comes!

Ah, those first days of the new Home! It gives me a shudder to recall them; though always open for myself, discretion was my only claim to valour, for I kept judiciously out of it. We certainly had the rudest, rowdiest, maddest lot that I ever had to do with. That all should speak at once in the loudest tones, and conduct themselves in the freest and least conventional style, and freely criticise the appearance and peculiarities and infirmities of the good women who sought to keep the straying torrent in legitimate bounds, and discuss the most recent developments of their intimacy with their young men—were some of the currents on that expanse of boiling, turbulent waters.

Shall we ever forget that excursion, when we took our young protégées for the first Bank Holiday outing, with the rest of my friends. That breezy afternoon on the Common, though no wind was so free and gay as our party! Those male *cousins* which suddenly appeared on the scene, and with one of which each girl took up! That scuffle on the behalf of a man who was being pummelled by another, unjustly, as my friends conceived, and therefore requiring their intervention, much after the first essay of Moses to deliver his brethren! That organ-grinder who insisted on playing dance-music beside an inviting piece of sward, and would not cease! That ride home in the crowded train, when each compartment was so full that an equal number sat on knees as on seats! These are moments in which one lives through years, and from which you go through after-days with a graver aspect and sadder step. Ah me!

and who of our workers will forget the Bank Holiday, when our most hopeful cases seemed submerged and gone for ever in a sea of drink !

But old things are passed away, and all things are becoming new. This is due to a variety of influences. The singing-class, the gymnasium, the cooking, sewing, educational and other classes have each yielded something towards the result, which fills our hearts with joy. But the crowning result has come through the loving personal influences of the young workers, and especially of the devoted Sister in charge, whose personal character has been of even greater benefit than her Bible-classes and direct religious teaching. It is delightful to know that her meeting each Sunday afternoon is crowded ; to find the girls coming to the Church two or three times each week ; to note the girls' behaviour when they give a Service of Song, or a Gymnastic Display at our Saturday Evening People's Meeting.

There is splendid stuff in these girls. No one can work amongst them without sympathizing with the great sculptor, who saw angels and heroes in shapeless blocks of stone. One girl, a very terror to the street in which she lived, has not missed a single night since the opening. Her home is a very den of evil, her parents drink heavily, and are unkind to her ; and yet she served a term of imprisonment on a charge of theft, of which she knew her father was guilty.

Another came in one evening with a shawl wrapped about the lower part of her face. She gave a very abrupt "No" to the enquiry whether she had toothache ; but when the other girls had left, she showed the Sister a face so bruised, and cut, and swollen, that the sight brought tears :

"Sister," she said, "my father did it ; but I don't want the girls to know."

It is not in the child of the cultured and refined home alone that you find the noblest qualities of womanhood ; but

there in the dark and squalid streets. It is always the same wonderful woman's heart; as well in the weaknesses and failings of a Sarah, a Rebekah, or a Rachel, as in the strength of a Deborah, the devotion of a Rizpah, the resource of an Abigail, the prodigal love of a Magdalene. In the make-up of every woman there is a trace of each of these; because all alike partake of the nature of their mother Eve. But, through Christ, both a new conception and power enter, which prune away the wild growth, and chip off all marring defects; so that the Divine ideal steps forth in perfect symmetry and unsullied grace, realizing more than natural beauty, and fulfilling in actual flesh and blood visions of the Madonna, which, in every age, have beckoned but eluded the loftiest art.

The touch of Christ on the hearts of these rough girls has brought refinement into their manners, and an expression of rest and peace into their faces, which tell their own story. This is how they pray:—

“Lord Jesus, I thank you for loving me when I was nasty and disagreeable, and for saving me; and now will you please save my mother, because she is getting old?”

“I do thank you, Lord, for helping me to say I was a Christian to-day; I was nervous, but you did help me.”

These are among their artless confessions to the Sister, to whom they confide the story of their temptations and victories:—

“My mother asked me to turn the mangle for her to-day, and I didn't want to; but I thought how, if Jesus stood there and asked me, I should be so glad to do it for Him: and so I really did turn it to please Him.”

“My sister struck me to-day, and I did want to *bang* her back; but that text came into my mind, ‘Overcome evil with good’: so I made her three slices of toast.”

Their influence on the other girls is also very real. One of the wildest said:—

“Sister, I was going to take something that was n't mine to-day; but — told me last week this text, ‘Thou, God, seest me’: and I did n't take it.”

Twice each week—earlier in the evening, so as not to disturb the elder ones—the Home is opened for younger girls. How they enjoy themselves ! Dear children ! not perhaps so lithe or graceful as they of Galilee and Jerusalem, whose dark eyes flashed love into the eyes of the Son of Man, and who followed Him with songs to His cross ; but yet He loves them, and says to us, “To receive one such little child in My name, is to receive Me.”

We have now formed a Sunday School out of these, which is organized and manned by the young people of our Christian Endeavour, most of whom are under eighteen years of age. This is the advantage of a large church—that one organization may help another ; and, in helping, help itself most of all.

We are looking for a great new joy in our Sisterhood ; for one has been sent to us, whom we supported during her training, and afterwards sent to India, to carry the tidings of Him, to whom, as Son of Man, woman owes most. For girls to support a young girl in her work amid the Zenanas and villages of India, is full of the charity which is twice blest. It is thus that in the days of His flesh women ministered to the Lord. And so the Gospels repeat themselves ; they are the story of yesterday, and of to-day. And Paradise is also here ; only Eve plucks not now the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, but the Fruit of the Tree of Life, and hands it to others that they may eat also, and live the only life worth living, which is Love. Love is the perfect tense of life.

XIV.

How we Worked our Lads' Institute.

“Follow the Christ—the King !
Live pure ! Speak true ! Right wrong !
Follow the King !
Else, wherefore born ?”

TENNYSON.



FOR a long time my heart had gone out towards the lads in the neighbourhood of Christ Church, who hang about the streets on Sunday afternoon playing pitch-and-toss ; also for the newspaper boys, of which there are scores in the vicinity of Waterloo Station. They have their faults, which are on the surface, but there is a look in the faces of many of them which reveals possibilities of a noble manhood which I heartily desire to take advantage of ; above all, there is in each of them a capacity for receiving the life of God. Our work amongst the girls has been so successful, and we have been the means of bringing so many to a saving knowledge of Christ, that it is really necessary to think of providing husbands for some of them ; else I cannot see how we are to prevent them being exposed to the great temptation of marrying those who have not yielded to the claims of Christ. It may be that our methods may not meet the approval of some of our readers ; but such must remember that in fishing you must suit your bait to your fish, and adapt yourself to the conditions of the ground on which they lie.

Very little could have been accomplished, however, if I had not been surrounded by a devoted body of young men. The space at my command in this book is too limited to allow of detailed description of our Young Men's Union.

It is enough to say, that we are bound together by agreement on the five-fold basis of Devotion to Christ, Purity, Total Abstinence, Self-sacrifice, and Brotherly Love. We meet at 7.30 on the last Sunday morning of the month for breakfast, followed by one of the sweetest, strongest seasons of consecration and prayer that we ever enjoy at Christ Church. We listen to an address, welcome new members, renew our loyalty to our basis, and partake together of the Lord's Supper. Then, with linked hands, we stand around the room, and sing :

"Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love."

This young men's band is constantly being recruited from the Service for Young Men, held on the first Sunday evening of the month. I always preach specially to such, and invite them afterwards to partake of light refreshments in one of the adjacent rooms. On these occasions, we become introduced to many who have come fresh to the great city, and are constantly rejoiced by leading some praying mother's son to the feet of Christ. Thus I had no difficulty in securing helpers for our work among the lads.

Our first effort for these wild young spirits was made, after thought and prayer, by the issue of a nicely-printed card, inviting all youths between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one to meet at the Lambeth Baths on Sunday afternoon ; some seventy or eighty of the very class we desired to reach accepted the invitation, and I told them of my desire for them to become noble men ; above all, that they might become Christians. After this we gave each of them a cup of coffee and a bun. This was continued for several weeks.

As long as we were able to use the Lambeth Baths, all went well ; but when the summer season returned, and they were filled with water for swimming purposes, we

had to move, and found it practically impossible to obtain a suitable place. First we went to a music-hall, but the place was dark and stuffy; then to a rink, which was burnt down before the second Sunday of our occupation; finally to the playground of a Board School. But as this was surrounded by houses, the windows were speedily filled with all the beauty and fashion of the neighbourhood; and the girls, who aspired to be the sweethearts of my lads, sat around passing admiring comments on their favourites, and sarcastic remarks on those who were out of their good books. It was an ordeal that thinned our ranks as quickly as a raking flank fire. The slain were many, the rout complete, and in despair we had to relinquish the project for the summer.

One purpose, however, had been served. We had become known to the lads as sincerely desirous to help them, and had gathered some lists of names. Throughout the autumn one could hardly pass through a street without being accosted by some of these hulking lads with the question, "When are you going to begin again, sir?" And the newspaper boys would always contrive to espy me coming along with the strong likelihood that one of their papers would find a customer.

Finally we discovered a factory, which seemed to be in the last stages of dilapidation. At that time it was being used by scene-painters; but I saw in a moment it was the very thing we needed, and by arrangement we succeeded to these tenants when they had completed their work for the winter pantomimes. The advantages were numerous. First, there were four rooms on the level of the street, opening from the little entrance lobby. The one on the left, with a good fire-place, was exactly what we needed for a refreshment bar. My heart, from the first, had been set on providing good food at cost price, especially sausages and potatoes, which, as I know by experience, have a

fascination for lads at that age ; in fact, there are very few men who are not susceptible to the charms of well-cooked sausages, though the potatoes are an addition not always met with in the higher ranks of society. It may be that some of those who read this may be encouraged to adopt this combination, which is immensely popular in North Lambeth. Behind this was a spacious room, peculiarly adapted for a gymnasium and meeting hall ; and on the right another large room to be filled with tables for games and papers. The other room could be reserved for the use of the young men who assisted in the work. There was also a large stable, splendidly suitable for band practice, where the drums and fifes could make excruciating noises without greatly disturbing anybody ; and upstairs there was yet another room which offered good accommodation for educational classes. Few things are more interesting than adapting a place of this description for Christian work. We all had a good time in getting it into ship-shape ; spending as little as possible on necessary alterations. We also resolved that we would not overcrowd our space, but only accept fifty members in the order of application, filling up the number from week to week out of the long tail, or *queue*, that stood waiting for admission. This is an admirable plan, and one that I earnestly recommend—first, because it brings the same fellows perpetually under your notice ; and secondly, because it puts a premium on good behaviour. Men and lads always care for that which they must compete for ; and the fact that any lad may forfeit his position amongst the fifty by bad behaviour, or by failing to take up his weekly ticket by the payment of a penny, leads them to make every effort to keep their footing. If, on the other hand, our number is incomplete, we have always a list on which we can draw, sending a notice by post to as many as we have room for.

Our committee of young men, which comprises all those

who are willing to help, numbers about twenty, with an average attendance each night of seven or eight, who take part in various branches of the work; and to this committee is largely due, under the blessing of God, the great success with which we have so far met. It is very gratifying to go into the Lads' Institute on any night. At the bar, there are generally four or five having refreshment; on four nights of the week some twenty or thirty are being drilled in the room at the rear of the building; and often the band is practising in the stable. On three nights a week the lads upstairs are being taught to read and write; whilst the recreation room is sure to have several noisy groups gathered at the little tables, wrangling over dominoes and other games. Meanwhile the officers are going to and fro showing the lads comradeship and brotherhood. On Sunday afternoon a Lads' P.S.A. is held in one of the larger rooms, at which forty-three were present on the second occasion. This meeting is conducted on the same principles as that for men, and we have every hope that it will grow largely, and be the flower of our work amongst the lads of this teeming neighbourhood; all our work in this direction being subsidiary to the main purpose which we have had in our heart from the start, of bringing them to a saving knowledge of Christ.

It seems to me as if money is hardly to be thought of when one sees how a few pounds carefully expended may provide the platform on which consecrated young men may expend their energies for the salvation of the poor lads of our streets; who for want of a shelter like the one I have described, are exposed to the needless temptations of the public-house, the book-maker, the criminal, and vicious associations. I am hoping that we shall yet see many of these dear lads rise up to be apostles to their comrades. The police already confess that the streets are in a healthier state than before we commenced our work.

XV.

Thursday Evening—Nine till Ten.

“Arouse him, then !—This is thy part !
Show him the claim ! point out the need !
And nerve his arm, and cheer his heart ;
Then stand aside, and say ‘ God speed ! ’ ”

A. PROCTOR.



WE keep late hours at Christ Church ! But why complain ? The young people, for the most part, get out so late from their business-places, that it is impossible to expect them when the evening is yet young. The children of this world are certainly wiser in these respects than we are. The public-houses are kept at full blast till midnight. The music-halls and theatres do not close till past eleven. The streets are thronged with people long after most respectable householders have retired to rest. It is indispensable, therefore, that churches situated in the midst of a business population should have at least one service in the week at such an hour that the young people can attend. For this reason we hold our P.T.E. from nine till ten.

And we hold it in the church. It would of course be possible to throw open the Hawkstone Hall with its spacious accommodation, and its beautiful incandescent light. It might save trouble and expense to do so ; but we should lose the immense benefit of accustoming hosts of young people to look upon the church as associated with some of the gladdest, happiest experiences of their lives. It is surely a sin that our places of worship are open so seldom in the week ; that for the most part they stand enwrapped in gloom in the most conspicuous spots of our public thoroughfares ; that no kindly welcoming ray shines

within, and that no open doorway says to the passer-by, “This is God’s House amid the houses of men: you are welcome to enter and rest.”

If I were able, I would most certainly adopt the policy of the Salvation Army, and have a service in the church every night in the week. There is nothing, indeed, that I should like better than to have a large, well-appointed choir, a splendid organ, and a regular service—not unlike that which I am now about to describe—always at work.

The fisherman counts that night lost in which he does not raise his brown sail to the evening breeze, and make for the ocean tracks where experience has taught him to look for shoals of fish. And surely we are all losing immense opportunities of catching men for Christ, by so perpetually intermitting our efforts for their salvation.

But, it may be asked, What is this P.T.E.? And ingenious minds have been trying to complete the words for which these initial letters stand. If they stood for Please To Enter, it would be no more than we fervently wish the people to do. They do not, however, stand for these words; but for Pleasant Thursday Evening. It is certain that if these words are read by some of our church leaders, they will smile sardonically, and find fault with us for intermingling Pleasant and the Religious. For my part I cannot understand why religion should not be a pleasant thing, or why we should fear to encourage our people to look upon our church services as being replete with all that makes for the refreshment and gladdening of the soul. Why should people look melancholy in the House of God, and put on an expression of unnatural seriousness, and feel that it is permissible to weep but not to smile, to sing but not to laugh? If our sins are forgiven and our hearts right with God; if we are happy to exchange the uncongenial associations of the world for the blessed companionships of the church; if we are relieved in laying

down for a moment the burden of heavy toil and care, and singing the songs of our home-land, why should there not be an exuberance of joy? Is all the festivity to await us in the Marriage Supper, and at the Wedding Feast, and are we to have no foretastes on our way? In the noble hymn which begins,

“All people that on earth do dwell,”

the third line in most hymn books appears as,

“Him serve with *fear*, His praise foretell”;

but in the original, as Dr. Watts left it, it runs,

“Him serve with *mirth*.”

The alteration certainly has not been for the better.

How stirring is the Prayer Book rendering of Psalm xlvii. 5: “God is gone up with a merry noise, and the Lord with the sound of the trump: Oh, sing praises, sing praises unto our God; Oh, sing praises, sing praises unto our King!” Of course, reverence becometh God’s House; unseemly trifling and indecorous levity should have no place there. It is the mark of infinite folly to come into the presence of such mysteries as gather around the House of God, the mysteries of eternity, without being impressed. But all this is consistent with a gladness which resembles the everlasting song of nature, the laughter of the brook, the happy outbursts of the birds, the murmur of the myriad life of a summer’s day. Surely a great deal is gained where you lead people even by the use of such a word as *Pleasant*, to view the worship and service of God’s House as attractive and delightful.

Our Thursday evening meetings are pleasant. Of that there is no mistake. Not unfrequently a bright laugh passes across the church; but, as likely as not, it will be followed by the moistened eye and the tender feeling. The hymns selected are the gladdest in Mr. Sankey’s book, and are sung with spirit and swing. The addresses and prayers are short, and to the point. From first to last

the service moves with a celerity of motion to which our modern life is accustomed, and the lack of which is strange to the children of the last decade of the nineteenth century.

In many of its features the P.T.E. is worked on the same lines as the P.S.A. The doors are opened a quarter of an hour before the meeting begins. In the lobby sit the markers to receive the pennies of those who are subscribing for books, and to mark the attendance of all who come regularly, and are counted as members. Inside the church, the stewards, young men and women, wait to marshal the audience to their seats. It is not easy to give the reason, but it is nevertheless a fact, that the young women sit on one side of the great central aisle, and the young men on the other side. There are exceptions of course, when happy couples protest against being parted, and insist on sitting together. This, too, is quite to my mind. It seems to me that their young love will be cemented and rightly founded, if it is based on mutual enjoyment of that holy Love of God, to which all human love tends, as rivers to the ocean from which they originally came.

Sometimes there will be from 250 to 300 young women to my right, and as many men to my left, as I stand upon the temporary platform which is always put up around the Lectern. On that platform three or four young men sit with me, and the following is the order :—

- 9.0. *Hymn.*
- 9.3. *Reading of Scripture* by a young man.
- 9.6. *Hymn* sung as a *Solo*, the audience sitting and joining in the chorus.
- 9.10. *Prayer* by a young man, followed by the Lord's Prayer.
- 9.15. *Sacred Solo.*
- 9.23. *Announcements.*
- 9.26. *Hymn.*
- 9.30. *Address.*
- 9.50. *Sacred Solo.*
- 9.55. *Closing Hymn and Benediction.*

It may perhaps be interesting if I give here a sketch of one or two of the addresses which I have given lately. For instance, I was asked by a young man to describe the girl who would make a good wife. These were my points—

I. **NEGATIVELY**, *i.e.*, the traits in a woman which would make it undesirable to select her as a wife :—

(a) That she will give up her Sunday evening service to go for a walk in the country.

(b) That she will forsake home claims, especially in times of sickness, to spend her time with her lover.

(c) That she has no objection to entering a public-house.

(d) That she is always picking holes in other people's character.

(e) That she easily gets put out, and needs much coaxing to win her back to good temper.

(f) That she is not dutiful to her parents or kind to the younger children of her home.

(g) That she is disliked by other women.

(h) That she only looks nice when she is dressed in her best things, and will not bear the inspection of the early morning amidst the ordinary surroundings of home and work.

II. **POSITIVELY** :—

(a) She should be a Christian, placing Christ first.

(b) A total abstainer.

(c) Perfectly modest and pure.

(d) Able to inspire the respect on which true love is formed, so that she elicits the best side of the man who loves her and makes him long to be more worthy of her.

(e) She should be gentle and loving to those at home.

(f) She should be animated by a love which is the supreme gift of a woman's heart.

(g) She ought to be a good cook, and acquainted with the housewifely details which in a working-man's home are so utterly essential to comfort.

On the following Thursday I spoke on the elements of character in a man calculated to make him a good husband. These two talks had an excellent effect in lifting the idea of the marriage relationship, and it was quite amusing to see the efforts made on various sides to take notes ; though, I said, I feared it was a hopeless task to get them to act upon my recommendations, as probably each, after all, would follow the path in which they were most strongly attracted.

Not to weary my readers, and yet to indicate the kind of address which I have found helpful on these Thursday evenings, I would give the following hints :—One evening the theme was the Unbelief of Thomas, and the efforts which were probably made by the apostles and holy women, between the Lord's first and second appearance, to convince him that He was really risen. We seemed back in that upper room, hearing the arguments adduced, first by Peter, then by John, and others, till suddenly the Lord Himself entered, dispelling all misgiving. Another evening, the text was suggested by a hansom cab ; my sermon on which shall close this chapter. On another occasion, the Saviour's power to keep the door of the soul against sin was the theme.

The advertisements on hoardings furnished another evening, and enabled my congregation to learn how to rise from everything around them to those eternal things which are never far away ; that a certain remedy cures because "it touches the spot" ; that certain articles of diet are best because "absolutely pure" ; that the germs of disease are best resisted when the constitution is fortified by strengthening food ; that "earth's grandest show" passes in two hours, leaving nothing but bare boards behind ; that certain methods are commended for household use, because they have been "tested" and "found reliable"—each of these suggested spiritual applications which probably were all the more forcible because of their unusual setting.

It must not be thought that I advertise these subjects with the view of drawing a crowd. It is rarely known what the subject of the address will be. As often as not it is a text from Scripture, with the ordinary teaching it may suggest. But, surely, there can be no harm in following humbly in the footsteps of the Great Master, who derived spiritual lessons from the late arrival of a few girls at a wedding, the patching of a poor man's coat, a woman's search for a bit of ornament. The apostle Paul did not hesitate to attach his deepest teaching to the stadium, the training of the athlete, the fading crown of parsley.

The result of these meetings has been very satisfactory. So many have told me that they have been kept from drifting, have been comforted, helped and saved, that they have brought young friends who have been induced afterwards to attend our Sunday services ; whilst many of my P.S.A. men occupy the seats specially reserved for them, or sit with their wives and children.

It would be wrong to forget the benefit that this movement confers in bringing out the talent of young men and women to help me in various ways, a discipline which prepares them for wider service hereafter. It is imperative also to remember the futility of the best concerted schemes, unless baptized in the spirit of earnest prayer, and blessed by the co-operation of that Holy Spirit who alone can bid dry bones live.

* * * * *

THE MYSTERY OF A HANSOM CAB.

There are hansoms *and* hansoms. What have I not suffered in sitting behind a jaded horse, which needed all the encouragement and stimulus that its driver could administer, by voice and whip ! It was only the other day, that, after meekly enduring this for about a quarter of an

hour, I could stand it no more; and asked the driver to stop far short of my destination. As soon as I was well out of the cab, he said, "I'm always glad to get rid of discontented fares." A gratuitous remark, which very much wounded me, as I had simply asked to be set down, and had passed no comment on his driving or beast. I suppose he was accustomed to a storm of abuse; and in this way got the first word, which was also the last—as I gave him sixpence more than his fare, and left him. By-the-by, I am sure that we Christian people should be specially careful about that extra *sixpence*. In a cabby's eye, it is the gauge of our religion.

The driver is unseen. In front of you is a little piece of the road, and your view is generally blocked by an omnibus or two, a railway van, three or four more hansoms, or a brewer's dray. You cannot imagine how you will ever get through the crowd of vehicles for your train or engagement. But there is an eye which from a higher plane is keenly watching every change in the crowded traffic, each opening, each chance of saving a few yards, or of getting through some straight place into the wider space just beyond. Now there's a break; he sees it, he has taken it; he will just manage it. There, that's cleverly done! Now, good horse, make the most of this clear piece of road. Or, it may be, what seems an open channel is not taken advantage of. You wonder why your driver has not done what seemed so obviously easy. You will, however, discover the reason in a moment. He saw an obstacle in front, which your less practised eye had not taken into account, and which made your scheme impracticable. But always you have to rely on one whom you cannot see; who sits above you surveying the track as you cannot; and carrying out schemes of his own which you cannot anticipate, and can only judge of when they are matured.

How constantly this reminds one of the text, "I have

girded thee, though thou hast not known Me"; with, perhaps, the alteration of *girded* into *guided*. How absolutely is life at the disposal of God, whom, having not seen, we trust; in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. He sees the complications that we see, and beyond to the clear space to which He is bringing us. He foregoes some temporary advantage for a gain farther along the road of life. He steers a path through a perfect block of interests, and threads His way through a tangle of perplexities. Who shall dare to suggest that He will ever run us into a collision, or fail to set us down at the door of our eternal home?

We have to trust. Some of us are getting to know the short cuts about the labyrinth of London streets, but few can compare with the general knowledge of the drivers. You tell your destination, and immediately resign yourself to your whip, sure that he will bring you thither by the most expeditious route. It is rather interesting to watch the dexterous way in which street after street is traversed—the corners turned, the pace never slackened—until you begin to discover your whereabouts by the familiar aspect of the streets. So we have to trust God. Sometimes our route seems to wind and twist and turn; now it threads dark narrow streets, and again breaks into wide, broad thoroughfares; now it jolts over stones, and presently bowls over bits of wood paving or asphalte. What sharp corners! What intricate mazes! What shakings and joltings! But we cannot doubt that we are being driven the easiest and swiftest way home. We shall soon see the lights gleaming out their welcome; and as we consult the map of the road, we shall see how every turn was really part of the straightest course.

We can communicate with the Driver. Not unseldom the "fare" lifts up the little door above the head and gives

directions to the driver. In some cases I have suggested what seemed a better route ; but latterly I found it was on the whole better to let my driver take his own way. As often as I turn to that method of communicating with my unseen driver, I am reminded of the suggestions and ejaculations which, as Christians, we are so prone to make to God. "Not this way! Not so slow! Take care of yonder block! Beware of that sharp curve!" God listens to the cry and weighs it; but, because He loves us, He must let it seem to be unheeded. He is doing His best for us. It is better to sit still and leave Him to accomplish His purpose in His own way. He is bringing us the nearest way to the throne, though it seems sometimes as if we had lost our way.

We can shelter behind the glasses. "Let the glasses down, driver," we say, as on some stormy day we step into our hansom. And immediately they unfold and fall, so that a transparent medium is interposed between us and the cold blast or the driving rain. How warm and snug we are within, as the storm sweeps the streets! So God lets fall His gracious shielding care between us and dreaded evil. He shelters us beneath His outspread pinions, and hides us in the secret of His pavilion. We may hear the pelt of the shower and the gusts of the storm, but we are beyond the reach of either.

There is one exception. At the end of our journey we must pay our fare. So much money for so much distance or time. But there is no reckoning at the end of this life of ours but thanks. It is pleasant when one's cab is pre-paid, and there is nothing to do but alight, saying, "Thank you, cabby. Good-night." So, by the grace of God, we shall be brought at last to the alighting-place. Then only a hurried run across to the open doorway, whence the light and warmth of heaven will stream to greet us.

XVI.

The Christian Endeavour.

“ I am young, happy, and free !
I can devote myself, I have a life
To give.”

BROWNING.



TEN months after I had settled at Christ Church, I felt that I must do something for young people below the age of eighteen. The seniors have been already provided for in the societies for young men and women respectively. And nothing seemed to meet the case so entirely as the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavour.

It is not necessary to advert to that movement at any length; it already carries the seal of God upon its brow, as it has gone forth like some beneficent angel to gather the young people of our own country and the United States to the help of the Lord against the mighty. It is imperative that Christian ministers should lend their countenance and assistance to the direction and extension of this crusade of loyal young hearts, in defence of Christ and His Church; and I for one, from the first, have gladly ministered both at the annual conventions and in individual societies. Indeed, I know nothing more like heaven on earth, than to see those crowds of bright faces inspired by Christian love and hope, to hear those songs of praise, and to note the spirit of unworldliness and consecration that seems to animate their gatherings. Distinctions of sect and creed and station are overborne by the force of the common enthusiastic piety and devotion. So long as these societies are kept free from the intrusion of worldliness on the one

hand, and the unmeaning use of the holiest terms on the other, it is impossible to predict the effect they will produce on the church and the world.

The feature which especially commended and commends the Christian Endeavour movement is the facility with which young people are induced to take part, discovering gifts of which they knew nothing, and affording an unrivalled education in the offering of prayer and exhortation, in administration and practical service. In another ten years, when the hosts of young men and women now in process of training throughout the land pass out into the churches, they will carry new vigour into every department of church life and work. Prayer meetings will be lifted out of their dull routine, abundance of cultivated workers will be found for the Sunday School, the Band of Hope, and other agencies; whilst the seas that surround our coasts will not be able to restrain the ardour that shall find England too small, in its yearning to win new territories for Christ.

In our own case, as the age was limited to eighteen, it seemed wise to put the Society under the charge of one of my lady helpers, in whom I had absolute confidence, and who, without infringing on the freedom and spontaneity of the young people, should, by her influence, mould and guide them. She was spoken of, from the first, as the "elder sister," not controlling or teaching as though she were the leader of a class; but mingling freely in all the gatherings, taking the initiative when necessary, but content to sink her own personality in the unseen and gentle effect of her presence and spiritual power. This arrangement has worked to my perfect satisfaction, the lads and girls alike clustering around her as their friend and helper in every good work. From the first, also, I have met the Society once a month at the consecration meeting, and have kept in touch with its committees and their work, appearing on

the scene in one or two cases of rare emergency, and always welcomed with respect and love.

Throughout the existence of our Society there has been a remarkable work of grace amongst the associates, many of whom have become active members; whilst the effect of the weekly meetings on the young Christians has been very marked, several of them have testified to the strength communicated in hours of difficulty and temptation by the thought that they had consecrated themselves publicly to Christ, and must live worthy of their obligation. We have had two largely-attended anniversary meetings in the church, and have taken a leading part in the inauguration of the local Union.

But it is of the aggressive work of our Society with which this chapter is specially intended to deal. It has assumed the following shape :—

First : *By Tract Distribution.*—Every week the young people visit five streets crowded with human life, and leave the silent messengers of Gospel Truth. Their very youthfulness secures admittance into houses which might have refused older visitors; and what must have been a considerable effort when they first started out, has become pleasant. What will not the love of Christ do in making the timid brave, the weak strong? “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God ordains strength.” They were much encouraged when first they commenced their rounds that a booklet, which one of them had left, had been used of God to the conversion of a dying woman, of whom the daughter said, that through the reading she had been able “to see her way into the Kingdom.”

Next : *By holding special meetings for children*, of which the following may be taken as an instance :—

One wet, chilly April evening, our Christian Endeavourers found their way to a narrow back street in the Borough to

help one of their number to form a society in a Ragged School. A tea had preceded the meeting, attended by about twenty children, the majority hatless. The first hour was spent in an ordinary C.E. meeting, conducted by a friend from a neighbouring Society, who was there with several of his members. At 7.30 these were obliged to leave, and the Christ Church Endeavourers were asked to conduct the meeting for another half-hour. They were twelve in number, and about fourteen children stayed. After singing, four of our members told in simple, earnest words what the Lord Jesus had done for them, and invited the children to come to Him to learn what a Saviour He could be. Short prayers followed, and those who wished to settle the matter at once were asked to remain behind. Eight girls stayed, with whom our members were soon engaged in separate conversations in different parts of the room: in some cases they were praying with their little charges; in others, pleading they should give themselves to Christ.

As two of the children rose from their knees, after talking and praying with a young Endeavourer, the lady referred to above crossed the room to speak to them. She immediately observed a great difference in the children, of whom one was radiantly glad, whilst the other was sobbing bitterly.

"What is the matter, dear?" she asked.

"I am so naughty," was the child's reply, amidst her sobs.

"Then you are just the one the Lord Jesus came to save!"

And a little talk followed, explanatory of the text, "All we like sheep have gone astray."

"You know that you have been like a silly little sheep, going astray from the Shepherd."

"Yes; I am so naughty."

"But the text says, 'The Lord laid on Jesus that sin of yours.' Now, is it on you or on Jesus?"

"On *me*," came amid fresh sobs.

Thinking she had not fully understood the meaning, the text was again explained quietly and gently, followed by the same query; only to be answered by a heart-breaking cry, "On me!"

Ah! the Holy Spirit was Himself wonderfully teaching that little earnest soul, giving deep lessons, such as no talking could convey. But they thought she did not understand!

At that moment the lady had to move away to speak to another child. When she returned at the end of a few minutes the tears were gone, whilst the face of the young Endeavourer was beaming with the new-found joy of leading a soul to the Saviour.

The story was soon told. Pointing to two slices of bread and butter lying on the table, the young helper said, "She took those out of her pocket; she stole them from the tea-table as she passed. This was why she was crying; she knew that her sin could not be on Jesus whilst she had these in her pocket. But now she has confessed and given them up, and has given herself right away to Him."

Poor little untaught, ragged child! It was probably hunger that prompted her to take the food—the thought of to-morrow's want! And yet she knew that unconfessed sin must be a barrier between her and the forgiveness she longed for.

A wonderful ideal of the Christian life, demanded from one who had been bought by the precious blood of Christ, seemed instantly imprinted on the little mind; for as she left the room she said softly, "Teacher, will you put up a prayer for me sometimes?"

"Yes, dear, willingly! What do you specially want prayer for?"

"When mother asks me to help her, *I grumbles!*"

Who teacheth like Him? Too few of us Christians, daily engaged in Christian work, count our *grumbles* as a fall in our Christian walk! May we not learn a lesson here?

And now bright, happy faces were seen all about the room, as one by one these little lambs were found by the Good Shepherd; and one little voice was heard saying, "Teacher, thank you *so* much for leading me to Jesus Christ to-night." After the singing of "Praise God," and the offering of two short prayers, they went out in the darkness, but with the Light of Life in their hearts. And as the young Endeavourers stood in a group, voice after voice was lifted in thanksgiving that they had been called to be fellow-workers with God, uniting with their praise supplications for those who had just left.

But the work of the evening was not yet over. A rap was heard at the door, and two small boys were brought in by the little girl spoken of above, with the words, "My brothers want to be Christians."

One of the teachers in the Ragged School spoke with them for some few minutes; and at the conclusion, the two professed to have given their hearts to Christ. Quite kindly and gently the teacher said, "Well, boys, I think it was a very good impulse that brought you in at that door; but I don't feel you quite understand what you are saying."

"Yes we do, sir," was the eager answer.

"Then you can kneel down right away, and thank Jesus for dying for you."

"Do n't know what to say."

"The words will come when you kneel."

And after a moment's hesitation the two boys, in quite different little prayers, were thanking the Lord Jesus.

There were ten little ones that night who seemed to come into the Kingdom; and "Thank God!" was the one expression on the lips of each Endeavourer. A strange

sense of their own weakness and insufficiency suddenly came over them, given expression to by one boy on the homeward way: "We *do* want less of *self*, and all of Christ." God grant this may be only the first-fruits of a great harvest that God will gather for Himself through the devoted lives and earnest words of our members.

Third: *Their work in a Mission School.*—The Lads' Institute has been lent to our Christian Endeavour Society on Sunday evenings from 6 to 7 o'clock; and it is really beautiful to see the eagerness with which the lads and girls gather the little ragged children to their evening meeting. Several take part in each meeting, of which some give short Gospel talks, others lead in prayer, or read a passage from the Bible, or tell some story gathered from the Bible or daily life. The rest of the young people sit about the Hall, keeping the children quiet, acting as door stewards, or helping in other ways. In my judgment this is rendering even more valuable help to those who minister, than to those who are ministered to.

In closing, let me give, as nearly as possible, one of the last stories related by a girl at a recent meeting. She was passing over Blackfriars Bridge on the last Boat-race day. Two ragged boys were leaning over the parapet; she heard one say to the other, "Which are you for?" "I am for the Lord Jesus Christ," was the unexpected answer. She stopped and asked him how he came to say that; and he said, "I went to Sunday School meaning to have a lark; but teacher told us Jesus said, 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me'; and as I was a little child I thought He meant Me; so I came to Him, and now I want to get all the other chaps."

Who can count the numbers of bright young hearts, numberless as the dew-drops on the grass, which are following the Son of God with their love and trust, to His coronation as King of all worlds?

XVII.

Railway Ministry.

“ But as we meet and touch each day
The many travellers on our way,
Let every such brief contact be
A glorious, helpful ministry ! ”

S. COOLIDGE.



VARIOUS reasons have lately led to my travelling a great deal by rail, and I have spent many happy hours in railway carriages ; so much so, that I have learnt to anticipate a long journey with considerable pleasure.

There is no fear that one's reflections will be broken in upon by the ringing of the door-bell, or the appeal for help. The rapid motion of the train quickens and exhilarates one's mind ; whilst sometimes most delightful opportunities offer for ministry to others. Many a holy hour have I spent whilst rushing through the country at express speed, and have felt the railway carriage to be the house of God and the gate of heaven.

It is also a matter for great thankfulness that never yet have I been in any kind of railway accident. This is owing to the great kindness of Him, who is prepared to fulfil literally the ninety-first Psalm, for those who trust Him in this particular. When you next go to the booking-office, lift up your heart to God, and by faith obtain from Him an insurance ticket, which shall be the security of your inviolable safety. It is a great pleasure to realize that an escort of angels is accompanying you, keeping pace with the swiftest train, as do the white-plumaged sea-gulls with the ship in mid-ocean. “ He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.”

Let me advise my readers to select good books for

their study during their railway journeys: why should we always read a newspaper from end to end during those quiet hours? For my part, I am turning with increasing distaste from the sort of stuff with which the columns of some of our leading dailies are filled; and it is a profound sadness to me to see how full the bookstalls are of trashy and worthless literature. But I suppose that, after all, the bookstall is only a faithful reflection of the tastes of the general public. We might do worse than imitate the Ethiopian statesman, centuries ago, who employed his journey home in reading the Book of Isaiah the Prophet. The Bible, after all, contains the best traveller's library. And a long journey will sometimes give us an opportunity of reading through a Gospel or an Epistle, or a book of prophecy, so as to obtain a bird's-eye view of the whole argument or chain of thought.

In many journeys I have never yet met a case of incivility on the part of the railway employés. They are certainly a picked class of men, to whom we owe more than we can express; and their character will be still further elevated by the extension of those Temperance and Christian Unions which are rooting themselves so deeply amongst them.

In other days I used to be under considerable condemnation if I did not try to speak to every one with whom I travelled. I think I feel more rightly now by lifting up my heart to the Lord Jesus for guidance and direction, and by professing myself willing to be used by Him as He may choose. We have not to be anxiously careful about doing His work, but should hand over that care, as every other one, to Him; sure that He will not fail to fulfil in us the good pleasure of His goodness, if only we are willing that His will should be done in us, and through us, as it is in heaven. It may not be His design to use us to every one; and if *He* does not open the way, it is a

profound mistake to force it. When, on the other hand, He wills to use us, He will open the way in such a manner that there will be nothing strained or awkward; but the conversation will open out as gradually and naturally as did that memorable conversation which led the Samaritan woman from Jacob's well to the living stream issuing from the throne of God and the Lamb. Remember that the results of the operation of the Spirit are described as *growth*; and growth is so spontaneous that there is no *must* or *ought* in it at all: it simply is there, because it could not help coming, and every one feels that it is just as it should be.

I had an interesting illustration of this one day. It was the early prime of an exquisite autumnal morning; the moon and stars were still holding watch in the sky, as I said good-bye to my friends on the departure platform and started for home. In the carriage with me was a young man, who was instantly laid on my heart. I sought direction as to how to approach him; and had hardly done praying when he turned to me and said, "Have you seen Jupiter this morning? I have been up half the night observing him through my telescope." It was, of course, easy to pass from the stars to Him who made the stars also, and calls them all by their names, and sustains them in their mighty rounds. "For that He is strong in power, not one faileth." And solemn words were exchanged about the necessity of seeing the Worker through the work.

Astronomy may tell us of the immutable Law and the All-glorious Lawgiver; but we must turn to another Book to learn how we may one day enter those many mansions which shall be revealed when the stars shall pale before the coming of the Son of Man.

Another illustration of the same thing occurred as I was travelling through a celebrated hunting district. The only other occupant of the carriage, for more than an hour, was a tall, well-made man, whose knees were covered by a clean

horse-cloth for a rug, and whose bearing indicated thorough respectability. He had been for forty-two years huntsman with a well-known pack of foxhounds. The wreath of flowers, carefully packed in their box, suggested that he had lost some near relative, and so it proved. He was coming to the funeral of his married daughter, and was sore broken with sorrow to think of the little children she had left.

"I trust that you will meet her again, in the land where there are no partings ; I suppose you are going there ?"

"I am not sure, sir. I pay everyone their own, and do right to my employer, and always go to church on Sunday. If that won't take me to heaven, I don't see what will."

"Have you ever seen sheep in a field in winter ? How white they look against the dark ground ! But if there comes a fall of snow, what seemed white look as black as possible. So, if you measure yourself by some men, worse than you are, you may seem white ; but if you compare yourself with the purity of God and heaven, which are whiter than snow, you see that your heart is black enough. You must have a better goodness than your own ; and you may have it, if you will but look to our Saviour and trust in Him."

"Well, sir, it may be true ; but it isn't for the likes of me. The Almighty made you to be a parson, and me to mind the pack, and the dogs to follow the fox ; every one to his own ; and we must do the best we can. Don't you think I shall be all right, sir ?"

"Have you ever had any accidents in your time ?"

"Nothing to speak of ; but I was nearly drowned one time, twenty-five years ago."

"Tell me about it."

"Well, sir, you see, it was this way. We were following up a fox pretty close ; when all of a sudden she dashed into a river, and swam across. All the pack followed her ; and I did n't intend them to have it all their own way, so I went

in after them. I soon found myself getting out of my depth ; and, worse than all, my feet began to sink in the soft mud at the bottom. I thought that I should have gone under ; when all of a sudden I saw just above me a sprig of willow, and I caught at it in the nick of time, and pulled myself up ; and then I caught some more, and then I caught some more ; and so I reached the bank, and was nothing the worse, only I was wet through. But it was a very near thing, I can tell you."

"You took very good care to catch at that willow-sprig, and hold on to it!"

"Rather!"

"Now, my friend, you could not have put it better. When you come to the river of death, and before, whenever you feel like sinking in the dark waters, under the burden of your sins, think that, instead of the sprig of willow, there is the hand of Jesus stretched out towards you ; catch hold of it—or better, let Him catch hold of you—and you will come safe to shore ; and then keep looking to Him always."

"I don't see how I can do that, sir. You see I have got the dogs to look to, and my master's interests ; and then there's the whippers-in—no one knows what a worrit they are. A man can't do everything."

"Of course, I know that. But listen ! Suppose I were going for my first day's hunting, and I were a little nervous, and came to you and asked you to show me how to go on, would n't you do it for me?"

"Certainly."

"And how would you do it?"

"You would have to keep beside me all the way, as close as possible, to keep me well in sight, and do as I do ; and I could promise you as good a day's sport as ever you could wish."

"Now, that is just the way you should deal with the Lord Jesus. Hand yourself over to Him each morning.

Ask Him to take charge of you, and show you the best way to go. Keep Him well in view, and remember that you can find time to think of Him, as you do of your wife and children, in the midst of all your other duties."

So we pleasantly beguiled our journey, till we reached our destination, nor shall we soon forget the long and interesting talk on many subjects. What human life will not present features of interest, if only we will trouble ourselves to thaw that natural reserve that makes us Anglo-Saxons so inaccessible?

Sometimes I have been able to read and enforce the Bible to a carriage full of passengers, who were willing to lay down their papers to listen. Sometimes I have been able to introduce an earnest talk, by some reference to my prison or other rescue work. Sometimes I have been led to give a book, or to be perfectly still. It is all-important to throw aside all unnatural restraint and form, and to act as the Spirit of God may prompt.

The most memorable time of all was once when a number of us were returning from a very helpful Conference, and we instituted a brief service on the platform of a junction, where we were waiting for the main-line train. My friends sang, and I gave a little address to the passengers, and porters, and officials, founded on the familiar cry, "Change here for the South." Only *my* cry was, "Change here for heaven." "We are going on a wrong line, we need to change to the right one, and we should do it quick before it is too late. You may be very snug and warm in your corner; but you must spring up, and gather your things together, and take your dear ones with you, and change into the up-train, all the tickets for which are the free gift of the Son of God."


I pen these few lines, full of shame that I have made so little of my opportunities, but in the hope that others may seek to be employed by the Master in Railway Ministry.

XVIII.

Our Saturday Evening.

"There is nothing so small but that we may honour God by asking His guidance of it, or insult Him by taking it into our own hands."

RUSKIN.

T is nearly eight o'clock ; our usual Workers' Prayer Meeting has been over about a quarter of an hour, and we can turn our thoughts to the closing meeting of our busy week. The doors of the great Hall are open, and the working people are coming in. What a delight it is to see them ! Husbands and wives, parents and children ! Those men used, in many cases, to spend their leisure hours, and especially their Saturday evenings, with boon companions in the tobacco and drink laden atmosphere of public-houses ; now they take their pleasure with their families, and like no place so well as this, where so many of them have begun to live the only life worth having.

This gathering grew out of the necessity of the case. As soon as men became saved through the P.S.A. and other agencies, I felt it incumbent upon me to provide some place of recreation to which they might come, especially on the Saturday evening, when the publicans offer their choicest attractions, and the working-classes have more leisure time as well as a larger amount of spending money. It is not enough to bring children into the world ; you must rear, shield, and teach them. The new birth is but the stepping-stone to the new life, and that life needs careful nurturing. A distaste soon shows itself to the songs and jests of the past, but the new taste requires culture, that its tendrils may entwine around whatsoever things are pure, lovely, and of

Our Saturday Evening.

good report. I do not say that the Church should cater for the amusements of the people ; but she ought to teach that the truest recreation is possible amid associations which the blind world is wont to consider dull and tiresome, and that there need be no inconsistency between the gladness of our Saturday evenings and the fervour of our Sundays.

It is my custom to spend these two hours, from eight to ten, with my friends ; first, because I want to show them that a Christian may be bright and happy, without descending to the vulgar or stupid ; secondly, because my presence tends to keep up the tone of the meeting ; and thirdly, because it furnishes an excellent opportunity of becoming familiar with many whom I could not find at home were I to call on them during the week.

We begin with hymns and prayer. The piano, organ, and a small string band, furnish our music ; then carefully-chosen recitations and songs. We have had to exercise the greatest care over these, and I would advise no one to attempt a meeting like this, who is not prepared to guide with a strong hand. You must either see the words yourself, or be able to trust the matter to some wise and prudent friend. My principle is to have only religious songs, or old English and Scotch ballads. "The Village Blacksmith," "The Children's Home," "Calvary," and such-like are my standard ; and recitations that point to Christ, or noble deeds, or Total Abstinence.

Thus an hour passes very happily, and at nine we are ready for refreshments. In that screen-enclosed space they have been preparing. The Refreshment Committee of working men has this under their care ; and about a dozen of them are never absent from their post. Tea and coffee in the winter, aerated drinks in the summer, buns, currant-cakes, tarts, constitute our standing *ménu* ; and quite a considerable amount is disposed of, bringing in a good weekly profit.

The distribution of the refreshments by the Committee-men takes about a quarter of an hour, during which I move to and fro among the audience. This is the time when husbands introduce me to their wives, and wives to their husbands ; when I am able to urge this or the other to give up drink, and start a new life ; when a kind word may be spoken to young or old, which will prepare the way for the Word of God on the morrow. How often some one says to me, "I wish you would speak to that young man, or girl, and get them to come to the service to-morrow." And how often has that Saturday evening meeting led on to the services, and ultimately to Christ !

When the refreshments are over, we sing a hymn and take a collection, and the more earnest part of the meeting begins. I often say a few words myself on anything that may have been passing through the newspapers during the week, and which may be turned to good account ; or on some incident that has happened in my own travels or experiences. Then an address on Gospel Temperance by some invited speaker, in which the claims of the best life are earnestly presented ; then some more singing ; and we draw to a close with the Doxology, Prayer, and "Good-night," spoken from the platform, and echoed back in volleys from all parts of the hall.

But even then all is not over : pledges have to be taken, arguments and appeals urged on the wavering, conflicts maintained with the devil over souls held fast in the iron grip of evil habit. And in the meanwhile a small brigade of brothers is preparing the hall for the Sunday-school on the succeeding morning. What will not men do, when they are constrained by the love of Christ !

It may be urged that all this is not the best preparation for the high and holy work of the pulpit. And there are times when one sighs for the quietude of the study and the seclusion of the home. But there are compensations. If

the mind forfeits some of its freshness and vigour, the heart is often deeply moved and touched; and one is able to pray and speak with greater tenderness and sympathy, because one has been in such close contact with the sins and sorrows and infirmities of men.

Let any brother-minister who reads these lines and feels drawn out in this direction, carefully count the cost. Better not attempt than begin and draw back. It will involve personal attendance and supervision, winter and summer, of a very exacting nature. It is comparatively rarely that the meetings will thrive under a series of chairmen; and it is highly desirable that the programme should be personally supervised. But I believe that any self-denial of this kind will be amply repaid.

A Gospel-choir, a Christian Total Abstinence Society, Benefit Societies and Sick Clubs, the federation of men in tens and twenties under captains, are good tributary streams for making the Saturday evening a success; but let it never be forgotten that the Gospel, the power of God to save and keep, the blessedness of pure and undefiled religion, the co-operation of the Spirit, forgiveness for the past and a good hope through grace must underpin and permeate any such effort for the counteraction of the evil influences that environ and poison so many lives, and for the salvation of those who are far off from God by wicked works. Man's lost condition, his inability to save himself, the grace and power of the Lord Jesus—these alone can avail for a radical and lasting work; but these are not incompatible with a meeting such as we hold on Saturday evenings.