

of those whom England loves to honour have been added the names of two noble American girls.

Self-forgetfulness, the highest quality of human nature, meets its own reward. Dearer to Jessie and Maggie Darling than any fame which their deed has brought them, more precious than the glory attached to the medal which has been awarded them, will surely be that triumph over self and selfish considerations which they so abundantly proved by their action.

It is not given to everyone to rescue the life of another, but it *is* given to us all to live in daily conquest of self. Courage is not the work of a moment; it is the outcome of previous training in thought for others, in self-control, and in noble deeds. Let us live nobly, and when occasion arises, the spirit which teaches us to forget ourselves in little things will surely aid us in any attempt which we may be called upon to make for the succour of another.

J. E. RUNTZ REES.

MY DISTRICT, AND HOW I VISIT IT.



IN these few remarks about my work amongst the poor it must be premised that they do not apply to those towns and parishes of which the visiting is organised, mapped out, and superintended by the clergyman. The visitor in such happy cases knows exactly what she has to do, and does it, and applies to the superintendent if she wants advice or help.

But in many large towns the place of such a system is taken by a band of city missionaries and Bible women, whose number is small compared to the extent over which they are spread. So that much good may be done by the individual exertions of any who are willing to help, without in any way interfering with the missionary work.

It is necessary at the outset to have a clear idea of one's object in thus visiting amongst the poor. Some people will make temperance their one aim; others will affirm that no good result can be gained till cleanliness and neatness reign in the home, cleanliness being next to godliness. But though there are many different ways of working, still all these ways should lead up towards one object, namely, the improvement, spiritual and temporal, of the poor and wretched people in our midst.

Before I began district visiting on my own account, having had no experience whatever of it, I thought it prudent to accompany a friend round her district who had been engaged in the work for some years. I knew that she was a thoroughly good woman, and was most anxious for the spiritual and temporal good of those she visited. But as we entered house after house, I noticed that her manner was as though she considered that the poor people were of a different race from herself, and that they ought to be overwhelmed with gratitude at her condescension in visiting them. She marched

into their rooms without any regard as to whether it was convenient, and the inhabitants wished it or not. I think it must have reminded them of the visit of a detective armed with a search warrant. For some inscrutable reason also, she invariably raised her voice and addressed the people in a commanding tone, which frightened the children and offended the mothers.

At last we entered a room where the father, mother, and family sat at dinner together. Without any apology for the intrusion, she began at once to cross-question the woman as to why the children had been absent from Sunday-school the previous day. I felt so ashamed of our rudeness and utter want of consideration for the feelings of the poor that my friend's attention being diverted, I made the best apology I could to the man, who sat scowling at us, for interrupting them at their meal, to which he replied:

"You see, miss, it ain't but what I'm very glad to see a lady now and again, but what with the landlord and the School Board and the district visitors, a man don't feel as if his home's his own."

I learnt a valuable lesson that day, and there and then made a resolve to treat any poor people with whom I had to deal with as much consideration and politeness as I should use towards my own friends. Nor have I ever had cause to regret my adherence to this rule. I have met with my share of rebuffs, but never with rudeness, and I am more and more convinced that by good temper, politeness, and quiet perseverance a lady may win her way anywhere with perfect safety, often in places where the city missionary would meet with a cool, if not a rough, reception. My district is a scattered one, and in order to go all round in a day it is necessary to start betimes in the morning. I always devote Monday to this work, because in London, in common I suppose with other large towns, the women seldom or never go to work on that day.

Before discovering this fact my visits were not very successful. When the house to be visited was reached I was usually confronted by a small child probably carrying a baby but one size smaller than herself, and a dialogue similar to the following would take place:—"Well, little girl, is your mother at home?" "No she ain't." "Where is she?" "Gone to work." "Well, will you open the door for me? I have a picture to leave for her." "Please 'n the door's locked, and mother took the key." This was my first experience of town life in the back slums, and I was very much shocked to find that it is the usual practice of mothers to turn the children out into the street when going to work, and leave them to their own devices till dinner-time. If it is very wet the children are locked in the room instead of out of it, an alternative the poor little things very much dislike, for without any playthings the time goes very slowly, whereas there is always entertainment of some kind in the street.

By choosing Mondays, however, I am pretty sure of finding the women at home. Another advantage of this day is that Saturday being pay-day, there is more chance of persuading them to put something into the Savings Bank than there would be towards the end of the week. It is very difficult to get them to see the advantage of laying by for a rainy day, though one would suppose the sufferings and privations of a hard winter would teach them wisdom. Unfortunately as a rule all the extra wages of the summer are squandered on expensive food and gay clothing, and no provision is made for the morrow.

I take with me a number of cards ruled for accounts, and give one to each individual willing to deposit, entering the amount they pay me on their card and in my bank book. For the children, a loop of ribbon at the back

of the card is a good plan, by which to hang it up on the wall, where it will be safe and tolerably clean.

They have to give a week's notice before drawing out their money, as a rule, but in case of necessity the regulation is allowed to be broken, and I take a few shillings with me for this emergency. Should there be more deserving applications to draw out money than I am able to meet, without the week's notice, I have a fixed hour on Tuesday, when they may come to my house for their money, but at no other time are they permitted to come. This is quite necessary, as otherwise I should be having visitors of this description the whole week through.

One piece of advice which I have proved good from my own experience I would urge upon every one who visits amongst the poor. Do not make a practice of *giving*, either money or goods, except in cases of special and urgent need. There are so many grasping people who only welcome you in proportion to your gifts, and who will always have a harrowing tale of distress ready, if they find you are likely to listen. There is no lack of real want, caused by illness, scarcity of work, and other things, which can be readily proved to be real, and where help may be well bestowed. But the thing is to know how to refuse. If your district be a large one the truly necessitous cases will tax your purse to its utmost limits; and the people will respect you all the more when they see that you are not to be imposed upon.

The habit of promiscuous alms-giving in the street has been too often denounced to need enlarging upon here; the true way of helping such beggars is to take their address, visit them at their homes, and if their tale be true you will soon find it out, and by getting them employment, or other assistance, you may benefit them for life, and perhaps help them to become respectable members of the community, instead of encouraging them to live as professional beggars.

Visitors working in connection with any church or society are usually supplied with soup, and coal tickets for distribution during the winter. These are, it is true, occasionally sold by the recipients to their neighbours; still they are, on the whole, much more satisfactory than gifts of money, because there is at least a probability that the charity will be used according to the intention of the donor.

There was one room in my district to which I had long wished in vain to gain admittance. It was over a stable, and whenever I knocked at the front door, a head would be popped out at the window and a voice would say, very decidedly "Not to-day, thank you," as though I were the baker. Now, in many, nay, most cases where one is refused admission to a room it is because the inmates have an objection to visits from any one whom they think likely to talk to them about religion or teetotalism. Sometimes, however, it is really inconvenient to them for you to go in. If the woman be at work, she feels obliged to leave off as long as her visitor remains, and when we remember that time to her means money, we cannot wonder that we are not welcomed cordially.

The case I am speaking of was one of this sort; for after a time the neighbours told me this woman always did her washing on Mondays, so, for fear of encouraging me to force an entrance, she even declined the little books I offered to leave on the doorstep. I always made a point of saying something civil in passing about the weather, or anything else that presented itself, so as to keep on good terms with the lady of the house.

At last one morning the door was standing open, so I entered, and, going upstairs, knocked at the room door. It was immediately opened by the woman whose head

I had so often seen through the window, but she looked much disappointed at seeing me, saying candidly that she thought it was the doctor, for whom she had sent, as her "old man" had the bronchitis. She evidently wished me to retire, but when I suggested that, as she was always so busy on Mondays, she might let me come in and talk to her husband a little, whilst she went on with her work, she consented. The man was very ill; after reading to him awhile, and giving him a little bunch of flowers (which I always carry when I can get them) he became confidential, and told me the doctor had ordered linseed poultices, which however, felt so cold and uncomfortable that he could not keep them on. From this I knew they must have been badly made; I went into the back room where the woman was at work, and asked to be allowed to make a poultice, as she was so busy. I took care to let her see how I did it, though I would not run the risk of offending her by hinting that hers was not properly managed. She was much amazed to see me warm the basin before beginning, and that I insisted on making the water actually boil seemed to her a very unnecessary scruple.

Hearing that I had learnt how to do this from a doctor, she became interested, and I took the opportunity of showing her some other ways in which her husband might be made more comfortable, the bed clothes put straight, his face and hands sponged with warm water, and so on. I made it quite plain to her that, so far from hindering her in her work, my only desire was to help. When she understood this she seemed really glad of a little friendly sympathy and advice, and graciously said that if I cared to call in again at any time they both would be glad to see me.

I left the house with a happy feeling that I had won a footing at last, and that it would be my own fault if I did not keep it.

I may mention here that all who wish to be really helpful to the poor whom they visit should have a practical knowledge of the rudiments of sick nursing. By this I mean that they ought to be able to make a poultice of any sort, to put on a bandage smoothly, to make a bed without disturbing the patient, and other small offices of this sort which are so necessary to the comfort of the sick, and in the performing of which most poor people are so utterly helpless and ignorant. There are innumerable district visitors who can not give a helping hand if there is sickness in the house, but I think it is very much to be regretted. The suffering poor can more easily gain comfort to their souls if at the same time you are able to allay the discomfort of their bodies.

There are now so many simple handbooks on the subject that we can have no excuse for ignorance, and as for the practice necessary to perfection it is quite possible to obtain that even though you have no sick people to experiment upon, by taking every opportunity of making a bed as smoothly as possible, changing sheets according to the directions given in all books on nursing, and I have seen a girl, anxious to learn to bandage a sprained ankle comfortably, practising, for want of a better subject, on a table leg.

I found that the same feeling, an objection to being hindered over the work, prevented my entrance at a laundry, which I was anxious above all to visit. I had seen enough of the lives of the washerwomen to know what a hard and trying one it is. During the London season many of the good hands work from seven in the morning till nine at night, or even later, standing in the hot steam the whole time. Is it a wonder that the majority of them turn to drink, to give them stimulus for their work? I know of no class of people who work harder, or under circumstances more injurious to their health.

I had heard this from a city missionary, so one of my first visits was to the laundry that was in my district. On asking to be allowed to come in and talk to the women, the mis-

was so dense that I could not see my book. I had to be content with a word or two to each washer separately. My visits to the ironing rooms were most successful. The mistress could never complain of the work being neglected, and the women themselves always welcomed me heartily, frequently asking me to visit them at their own homes.

As soon as one has a tolerably sure footing in a family, having prepared the way by reading a few verses of Scripture on previous visits, and pointing out the duty of "assembling ourselves together to worship," it is time to broach the subject of attending a place of worship regularly.

The best way to begin is through the children. The parents are usually thankful to be rid of them on Sunday afternoons, and will despatch them to the Sunday-school with alacrity. If they are interested on the first afternoon, there need be no more anxiety on their score; they are pretty sure to come regularly. The parents themselves will have plenty of excuses for not going anywhere on Sunday morning; they are both so tired after the week's work that they like an extra hour or two's sleep, and then there is the dinner to cook. These I consider reasonable excuses, and I think they may be forgiven if they go for a walk out into the country in the evenings. But they will be very hard pressed to find a valid reason against attending an hour's service in the afternoon, and that is the object I try to attain at first.

They generally will have a very decided idea whether they are "church or chapel," which is strange, considering that they never enter either edifice. But I advise the Mission Room, if there be one within reach; the service there will be more suitable to their wants, and they will prefer being with a congregation of their own class. It is well to impress upon them that they cannot expect the blessing of God to rest upon them and their families unless they, with all believers, join to do Him honour on His holy day.

The system of inducing them, by gifts, to attend one's own particular place of worship seems to me a most mistaken one, though it is sometimes done. More than once have I had it said to me by Sunday scholars "Please, teacher, mother says if you'll give her a shawl like you gave so-and-so, she'll come to your church!" What a curious idea they must have of the object of churches and chapels, and indeed of religion generally, to suppose there is a competition of this sort amongst Christian people! And yet they can but suppose it is so, when this kind of bribery is practised, therefore it is very much to be deprecated.

One of the most practical ways in which to improve the condition of the poor, I have found to be in teaching the women and girls how to cook.

Englishwomen have, only too deservedly, the reputation of being the most extravagant and wasteful of any in Europe, and one can do them no greater kindness than to learn oneself, and then teach them, how to manufacture those soups and stews which go twice as far, and cost about a third as much, as the scraps and odds and ends of meat that are their only



"WELL, LITTLE GIRL, IS YOUR MOTHER AT HOME?"

trous replied rather shortly that she paid her women such high wages that she couldn't afford to let them waste their time talking. With that she closed the door in my face, and I was left disconsolate on the doorstep. I was not to be quite so easily beaten, though, and called next on a Monday, when I knew she could not be at work, and would perhaps spare me two minutes for conversation. I told her what I wanted, asking permission to read aloud to the women, promising that if I saw one leave off work to listen, I would instantly stop too.

She next urged as excuse that they did not work on Mondays except at the busiest times. I said I would come any day she liked best, so it was finally fixed that I should go on Wednesday mornings, and read in the ironing rooms. She told me it was no use attempting it in the washing rooms; this I found to be the case, as the noise of boilers and mangles drowned all other sounds, and the steam

idea, a large portion of which are frequently wasted in the cooking.

Reforms of this kind require considerable tact, or the attempt will give great offence and do no good at all.

When I set about such an experiment I usually make it one of the rare occasions to give a small piece of meat or some bones, according to what I propose doing. I offer to provide material for that day's dinner on condition that the woman will let me show her how to cook it. This little scheme is nearly always successful; during the process I tell her how much everything has cost, and if she can read, I write down the recipe very clearly before leaving, so that she may try it again herself.

Generally their ideas of patching and mending are very vague, whilst of making clothes they are quite ignorant. It seems hopeless to begin to teach mothers with large families, as they really have not time to learn the art of cutting out; but where it is possible to instruct the girls and young women in such things, I think it is a work which should not be neglected.

Some years ago I began holding a class for this purpose on one evening a week, to which all girls over thirteen are admitted. They are eager to learn, and my class is always well attended, whilst the improved appearance of the scholars shows that the work has not been in vain.

The greatest difficulty I have encountered in my district has, of course, been the dreadful intemperance of the people. It is such a common evil and so difficult to overcome that at times one almost despairs. And yet if we can succeed in making even one family happy and one home peaceful, by the reclaiming of a drunken father or mother, the remembrance of that single work of salvation will serve to cheer and encourage through many days of weariness and disappointment.

Of course the first step is to take the pledge yourself. Nothing can be done without that, and your being able to say that you have been a teetotaler for so many years with no ill effects, but only good, will often have a considerable effect. At the same time, reasoning and persuasion are often not sufficient to work a permanent cure, and it is necessary in these cases to bring a counteracting influence to bear, which will be strong enough to overcome the longing for drink. I remember the case of a bricklayer, who was not often actually intoxicated, but was in a chronic state of semi-drunkenness. His wife was a poor, helpless drudge of a woman who, instead of trying to reclaim her husband, spent all her time in bemoaning her lot and the wretchedness of her home, until at last I really felt a good deal of sympathy for the man, and doubted whether I should not have sought refuge in the public-house if I had been in his position.

The first thing to do was to make her believe in the possibility of improvement. This was a difficult matter, as, though conscious of her husband's failing, she seemed to think it was the decree of fate, against which it would be useless to struggle. At last, however, she promised to try to make the home more clean and comfortable, to see whether that would have any effect on the husband. The ex-

periment was fixed to take place on a certain evening, and in the morning of the day I went in to see how she was getting on. I had fortunately taken a few implements with me, thinking they might be useful in repairing certain dilapidated articles of furniture, and between us we managed to patch up one or two chairs, the legs of which, by some strange chance, had *not* been used for firewood, and we also improved the condition of the table. I had taken an old short window curtain with me, which we put up, and whilst the woman was engaged in washing her scanty and miscellaneous collection of crockery and cooking utensils, I nailed up a few large coloured pictures which covered the most conspicuous of the cracks in the dirty walls, and made the room look quite bright and cheerful.



"I NAILED UP A FEW LARGE COLOURED PICTURES."

To induce the woman to make herself look neater was a more difficult matter, but with a considerable amount of argument and pleading I also succeeded in prevailing on her to mend some rents in her dress, and by plentiful application of soap and water improve her appearance very greatly.

Her husband was certainly struck by the change in his home, but drink had too decided a hold on him to be so easily shaken off. My next plan was for the woman to send her husband a can of coffee, hot and strong, just at the time for leaving off work, and to have his supper waiting by the time he reached home. This proved very efficacious; the coffee in a great measure stays the craving for alcohol, and has been found of great benefit in many cases. I lent him some illustrated papers, and promised to do so every week, and he seemed quite content to stay at home and show the pictures to his children. Happily, soon after this, a temperance club and reading

room was opened in the neighbourhood; my friend the bricklayer signed the pledge, became a frequent visitor at the reading-rooms, and now, several years after the change took place, is amongst the most staunch upholders of temperance.

I must not omit to mention a powerful agency for good which is at work in the part of London where my district lies. It is a society which offers prizes for a variety of objects—flowers, plants, needlework of all kinds, carpentering, window-gardening, neatly kept rooms, in fact, anything and everything for the improvement of the homes of the competitors. On payment of 2d. any one—man, woman, or child—receives a card of membership, and is entitled to compete and exhibit at the three shows which are held during the year in a school-room, borrowed for the purpose. We easily find friends willing to offer prizes for different objects, and also to undertake the arduous task of judging the competitions. Each district visitor in the neighbourhood persuades as many as she can to join the society, and gives any suggestions she is able as to what to make and how to make it. Special visitors have to be appointed to go at intervals to the homes of those who compete for the neat room and window gardening prizes, as, of course, the rooms are required to be *always* neat and the window-boxes always in good condition, and not merely just at the time of the show.

It is found that a society of this sort succeeds admirably in exciting amongst the poor a feeling of interest and pride in their homes. When this is obtained the public-house loses much of its fascination, and a blow is struck at the root of our great national sin.

In conclusion, let me add one caution, which will, perhaps, appear unnecessary to some workers. Do not let your thoughts and energies be so much engrossed by schemes for the improvement of the homes and way of life of your poor as to forget the higher claims of their immortal souls. The need for domestic and social reform is so glaring that it cannot fail to attract and occupy attention, and is sometimes apt to take up an undue share of care and time, to the neglect of the far more important question of eternal salvation. "The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." DORA HOPE.

OUR COUNTRY FLOWERS.

AUTUMN LEAVES—OCTOBER.

"The wind-flower and the violet, they perished long ago,
And the wild rose and the orchis died amidst the summer glow;
But on the hill the golden rod, and the aster in the wood,
And the yellow sunflower by the brook, in autumn beauty stood."

BRYANT.

THE month of October came with its chill, clear days and its fresh, bracing air. Some warmer clothes, and some brisker steps, made the breezy walks on the common, the rambles