

## CHAPTER III.



ow Blanche Trent lived through the next two weeks was a puzzle even to herself. The more she reflected on her Uncle Derwent's words, the more convinced she was that all he said was just and right. The

Dingle had never been her father's, therefore she could have no claim on it; but all the same,

it was very hard to give up considering herself the mistress, and regard herself as the dependent, for that was what it amounted to. However, there was no alternative, and she had to endeavour to reconcile her mind to the new order of things. Perhaps her uncle's wife might not be very objectionable, and if she were neither very young nor very pretty, Blanche fancied that she might be able to hold her own in the house after all. So she dressed with unusual care, and took her seat with great dignity in the drawing-room the afternoon they were expected home, resolved at least to impress her new relative with a sense of her importance at the very outset.

It was dusk when the closed carriage containing Captain Haughton and his bride drove up to the door, and though Blanche was burning with curiosity, her pride would not allow her to go into the hall to welcome them. Seated with a book in her hand in the centre of the room, she awaited their entrance with great dignity, and just advanced a step as her uncle approached.

"This is your aunt, Blanche," he said, kindly; "it will be your own fault if you are not very happy with her."

Blanche bowed and held out her hand, then suddenly drew back with an exclamation of surprise—"Uncle Derwent, this is Miss Lyster!"

"This was Miss Lyster, dear!" then seeing Blanche look indignant, he turned to his wife. "I really thought Blanche knew, Helen; indeed, I fancied everyone knew. Come, my dear, kiss your aunt, and bid her welcome home."

But Blanche was gone; she had rushed out of the drawing-room red hot, trembling with wrath and indignation, and locking herself into her room gave full vent to her feelings in the wildest manner, assuring herself tragically that she was outraged and insulted, and that she would never submit to her uncle's wife. The dressing bell rang, and the dinner bell, but she took no notice, and when a servant came to say that her uncle and aunt were waiting, she refused to go down, saying her head ached. That was true enough, and her heart ached too, for she felt very miserable and lonely, and when after dinner there came the sound of music from the drawing-room, she felt more wretched still, for they were happy enough without her. The worst part of it was, Blanche felt it was all her own fault and her own doing, but she was too proud to acknowledge it, and when later in the evening Mrs. Haughton came to her room with kind inquiries, and pressing entreaties that she would come downstairs, Blanche replied coldly and haughtily that she preferred remaining in her own room.

"We must only trust to time and kindness, Derwent," she said, when she rejoined her husband. "Blanche will be more reasonable by-and-by."

But days and weeks passed without bringing the desired improvement, and things were becoming extremely uncomfortable for everyone. Blanche kept to her own room persistently, and refused all advances from her uncle and aunt. One morning, however, she came downstairs after breakfast with an open letter in her hand, which she gave her uncle to read. It was from a Mrs. Hunter, a stepsister of her father's, who lived in London.

"If you are so very unhappy, and your position is so intolerable in your Uncle Derwent's household, you may come to me," the letter ran, "but as I am not very rich and have many demands on my purse, I must beg of you to take charge of the younger children's lessons. Florrie and Eva are very good, and will be quite an amusement to you. My stepdaughter, Katherine, assists with the elder girls, so come at once, dear Blanche, and I hope you will be very happy and comfortable with us."

"Well," Captain Haughton said, handing back the letter, "do you wish to go to Mrs. Hunter's, Blanche?"

"Yes, please."

"Do you understand that your aunt lives quite in London, and has a small house full of children; that you will miss many pleasures and enjoyments you have here?"

"Pleasures here, Uncle Derwent! I wonder what they are? I am sure I shall be much happier and more comfortable with my Aunt Hunter, and I should like to go at once."

Captain Haughton smiled, but consented, and three days after Blanche found herself in a first-class carriage on her way to London, her uncle having telegraphed to Mrs. Hunter the train she was going by.

"If no one meets you, get into a cab and go straight to Weston-square, Blanche, and if you are not comfortable, come back to us; there's always a home and a welcome for you here at the Dingle," her uncle said, as he bade her good-bye, and put a purse into her hand. "Mind, Blanche, it's your wish to leave us, not ours that you should go, and when you come to think it over, perhaps you will see that you need not have been so very unhappy with us, if you had liked."

"It's the best possible thing for her," Mrs. Haughton said, when she was gone. "Blanche will now learn the difference between romance and reality, between troubles of her own making and troubles that are made for her. I think she will come back to us very soon, a wiser, even if a sadder girl."

(To be concluded.)

## GIRLS' WORK IN THE MISSION FIELD.

### THE CONTINENT OF EUROPE.



IN previous papers we have given some thought to the claims of missions in far-distant lands. Now we must look nearer home, for though we shall not find within a short journey of our homes either savage or heathen races, there are close at hand nations who, possessing all the blessings of civilisation, are still in deepest ignorance of the gospel. There is no need to seek the unexplored regions of India, nor the zenanas of India, to find dark places where the light of truth has not penetrated. If the girls who have the great advantage of a tour on the

Continent for their summer holidays, will spare a thought from the beauty of the country to inquire about the spiritual condition of the people in many places, they will find that they are in as great need of a helping hand as the darkest nations of the earth; and these lines are written with the earnest hope and prayer that some who read them may be induced to observe the work that needs to be done on the continent of Europe, and, it may be, that some who have no special duties at home, but do not feel themselves adapted for work in uncivilised lands, may be able to devote at any rate some part of their time to the work which is hindered in every direction for want of more helpers, and in many places especially of lady helpers.

In heathen nations we have to think of plans for introducing the Christian religion amongst a people who have never heard of the gospel of Christ, and who are vainly striving to satisfy their instinctive cravings after a higher life by the worship of images, animals, or good or bad spirits.

The first and chief aim is to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who do not know Him, and to make the way of salvation clear to the people, not to make them change the form of their religion, though that sometimes follows, as a matter of course.

The strange condition of religious belief in many parts of the Continent just now makes an effort to teach pure Christianity especially necessary. During the last few years a great change has been passing over the nations. A spirit of doubt seems to have swept over them, shaking their faith in their old traditional beliefs, and leaving in its place, in the majority of cases, nothing but disbelief and infidelity. In many cases, however, having lost their faith in the orthodox clergy, the people have sought for someone to instruct them in other doctrines, and there has been an opening for the introduction of the gospel such as has hardly ever been known before. As an instance of this, we may mention the circumstance which led to the beginning of Mr. McAll's great work in Paris. He was distributing tracts in the street one day, when a workman accosted him saying, "You think we are all Atheists, but you are mistaken; there are many men here who are thirsting for a religion of truth and righteousness, and if anyone will preach it we will listen to him." Some other working men standing near joined him, and said what he had spoken was the truth. With such an opening, Mr. McAll could not but remain amongst them, and the eagerness with which he has been listened to for several years is a proof that the people are really hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Probably never in the history of France has there been such an opening for the preaching of the gospel. Crowds gather to hear. A clergyman in Paris wrote not long ago: "It is a pity Christian people, especially Christian ladies, should not know what an opportunity they have of helping to proclaim the gospel in Paris." There are several agencies at work there besides the very important one just mentioned, conducted by Mr. McAll. We may just say in passing that the chief characteristic of his work is the simple and attractive nature of the Evangelisation meetings he holds for the people. There is no controversy allowed, no long prayers, and no long sermons; but assistants invite all passers by to enter, books and magazines are lent to such as come early, and each one being provided with a hymn book there is plenty of singing, and short, simple addresses on the elements of Christian truth are given. He has between twenty and thirty stations in Paris alone, besides many others in other French towns. The mission work is much helped on by a number of young ladies who have devoted themselves to visiting the sick and poor, and



teaching the children, under the direction of Mr. McAll.

Then there is Miss De Bröen's mission to the lowest classes in that miserable district of Paris, Belleville. This is a great mission, which is only hindered from being largely increased through want of helpers and funds. There is a medical mission, and while the patients are waiting, a short service is held in the waiting-room, each person being lent a Bible, and after the service is over the Bibles are left in the room so that they may all have the opportunity of reading them if they wish; and the assistants talk to, and explain difficulties to, any who wish for it. The patients also have the opportunity of buying Bibles; and as many of them come from great distances the Scriptures are thus taken into many places to which the mission could not reach. Then there are sewing classes, and Sunday and day schools, in all of which more help is urgently needed, and Miss De Bröen pleads for Christian ladies to help her, if only for a few months in the winter.

There are many other missions, but space will not allow us to mention more. We should strongly recommend all girls going abroad to buy, before starting, a little guide, published by the Foreign Evangelisation Society, giving a list of churches and missions in all European towns, which enables them to see at once what religious societies there may be in each town they visit, and will give them many opportunities of cheering and helping struggling communities.

Of the need of such missions there can be no doubt, for though, as we have said, a large number of the people are seeking after the truth, and hundreds are giving up their belief in their particular Church, a very large number, having their faith shaken in the one creed they have known, think that with it their faith in everything must go. It is needless to say that this spirit is carefully fostered by the infidels of France, England, and Germany. The *atheistical* tracts of Voltaire and other writers are freely circulated all over the land; the newspapers are full of jests, some profane, some merely absurd, levelled indiscriminately against the most solemn truths of the gospel. All sacred things are turned into ridicule. Incredible as it may seem to us, it is nevertheless true that there are three different comic versions of the Bible published in Paris.

The most powerful agency for counteracting the terrible evil caused by these infidel and profane publications is the distribution of pure Christian literature amongst the people, especially short tracts, containing clear and definite refutations of these atheistical teachings, and very plain and simple statements of the doctrines of Christianity. Large books would not be read; elaborate arguments would be beyond their comprehension. We must fight with their own weapons, and since Voltaire's teachings are published in short and simple tracts, ours must be short and simple too.

We must not omit to mention the great and good work which has been done by the Religious Tract Society in this way. They have published religious literature of every description in all the languages of Europe, and in all the chief towns their depôts are to be found, containing every variety of books suitable for distribution. Probably girls in their expeditions would have more opportunity of giving away pictures, text cards, and illustrated leaflets suitable for peasants and children, than those prepared for more advanced thinkers. People will always gratefully accept a picture for their children, and who knows but that the verses of Scripture on them may be the means of saving their souls? There are earnest men and women now at work who owe their

conversion to reading a fragment of the Scriptures casually picked up. One who has worked long and well, was led to Christ through a text card given him in a hospital, another through a tract given on a racecourse, another had his attention aroused by looking over a child's paper. Many other such instances might be given would space permit; these are but samples of a vast number which might be cited for the encouragement of everyone who tries to help in the good work. The Christian work in Paris is a fair specimen of that which is being carried on in many of the large towns of France. Everywhere there is much infidelity and contempt of all religion; but also everywhere there is springing up in men's minds a consciousness of a need for a pure religion of truth, and a willingness to listen to anyone who will tell them simply of the gospel.

In Italy there is much encouragement. As the people throw off the corruptions of their Church they seem to be opening their eyes to the purer faith of the early Christians. Till 1848 the Bible was a prohibited book in Italy; now the whole land is free, and there is a great movement towards the truth, but much patient faithful work is needed, for the people are very ignorant and want much teaching. Unhappily, what is true of France is also true of Italy: that many who have lost faith in their own Church have gone over to the opposite extreme and become infidels; but many are only holding back from fear of ridicule and the petty persecutions they have still to encounter from their employers and from their own friends. They will gracefully accept any books or tracts offered them.

It is hardly necessary to say a word of warning against giving anything in any way sectarian in its teaching: the tracts given must be *simple* gospel, with no question as to sects.

An interesting incident occurred to us at a Spanish port. When as usual the custom-house officers came on board, one of them, seeing English people, paused in his pacing up and down the deck, and asked if we could give him any Christian books. He said a lady had given him a tract once, and he had been very much interested, but had never been able to get any more. Fortunately, I had some in my cabin, and went down to get them. I suppose he was afraid of being laughed at by his companions, or possibly he might have got into trouble; at any rate, when I came on deck again he gazed out to sea, and would not appear aware of my presence till his comrades had gone some distance off, when he hurriedly took the books from me, thanking me warmly for them, and by the time the other men had turned towards us again he was absorbed in adjusting his sword belt, with an astonishingly natural air of preoccupation.

It would be impossible here to mention a quarter of the Christian stations in Italy, as the number is increasing over the land, and in many places working with very great success; but it is sometimes very hard and depressing work for one clergyman and evangelist, surrounded as they are by the densest ignorance and superstition, and often meeting with coldness and indifference from the nominally Christian merchants or travellers who may come in their way. If tourists knew how much they are often in need of a little cheering and encouragement, they could not so often pass by coldly without an effort to help them.

Evangelical work in Spain is slow and difficult, although religious instruction is increasing in the schools. Entirely new school books have had to be published, for there was not even a history book without the most monstrous statements about English heretics. It has not been found advisable

to give away copies of the Bible; great numbers are sold at a low price, but the free distribution only led to their being carelessly treated. Tracts, cards, and Scripture almanacs are distributed largely, and as soon as these awaken an interest in holy things, the people are sure to come back to buy a Bible. There is a great mass of superstition and ignorance to fight against in Spain, and the Protestant congregations are few and feeble, but they are like the little leaven which is beginning to leaven the whole lump, and their influence is beginning to be felt amongst all classes of people. Think of the changes the last few years have brought about. Twenty years ago, Spanish Protestants were condemned to the galleys; to-day, everyone is free to follow their own faith.

We must only mention some of the other lands in a very few words. Switzerland is, in some respects, rather discouraging: the attendance at religious services is not at all good, and there is a good deal of avowed disbelief. On the other hand, Sunday-schools are increasing in number, and the old prejudices against them are disappearing. The people are willing to buy the Scriptures, and gratefully accept and read tracts and papers. In one of Miss F. R. Havergal's letters, given in her "Memorials," she describes how eagerly a Swiss peasant, to whom she offered a little book, not only accepted it, but came and sat down by her for a talk about it, and afterwards beckoned his two sons to join him, and they in their turn brought a sister.

We all have opportunities such as this for spreading the knowledge of God's word when travelling; and we cannot tell what good may be done by these little efforts. "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters."

In Germany there is a great spread of infidelity; but even there some encouragement may be found. The Home Mission is doing good work in many towns, and there is earnest preaching of the Gospel all over the land; the Sunday-schools, too, are attended by a vast number of children, and seem to be the one hope of checking the disastrous spread of rationalism.

All over Europe it is the same: there is much encouragement, but many difficulties, and great need of patience. There is much hard work to be done, but if Christian English people will do their part, with God's blessing their efforts must and will succeed. We cannot all devote ourselves to mission work, but many readers of this magazine, who go abroad for their holidays, might do a great deal to help on the spread of Christianity. It is a great help if they will only ask for and find out any Christian community there may be in the towns they visit. The mere presence of visitors at their Sunday services is an encouragement, and the mere fact of their keeping away, or attending places of which they do not approve, just as a sight, instead of spending the Sunday as they would do in England, brings dishonour on the name of Christians, and does the cause incalculable harm.

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