

ASCENSION DAY AT ST. JOHN'S SERVANTS' SCHOOL.

By ANNE BEALE.



ANY years ago a young lady just entering her teens said to her maid, "When I am grown up I will found a home, and you shall be the matron."

This prophecy was literally fulfilled. It was uttered by the late Lady Kinnaird,

and we had the happiness of setting our small seal as witness of its fulfilment on Ascension Day last. Nearly half a century ago Lady Kinnaird did actually found St. John's Servants' School, and the faithful maid to whom she spoke those memorable words was its first matron. She began it with two children in 1842, and on Ascension Day of this year of grace, 1889, we see the result. It is the period of reunion of pupils, old and young, and all who have been educated at the school are sure of a warm welcome home on that day on which we celebrate the return of our dear Lord to His Father's kingdom.

The school is now situated near Westbourne Park Station, in Great Western Road, and is, therefore, easy of access. It has twice changed its locality, having originated in the parish of St. Andrew's, Holborn, whence it migrated to St. George-the-Martyr, and thence to its present site. When Lady Kinnaird succeeded in erecting the large and commodious building which is capable of housing 130 pupils, it was situated in the midst of fields, and might almost be said to have been in the country. Now it is surrounded by brick and mortar; albeit its friends still congratulate themselves on certain insular privileges, of which they cannot be deprived. The canal and railroad circle it like a belt, and prevent encroachments which might interfere with fresh air. Indeed, the said friends flatter themselves that the institution and playground form an island, and so healthy are the small embryo servants in this their water and steam-girdled kingdom that a home of health at Brighton has been given up. It is not, perhaps, universally known that a railroad brings with it fresh and dry air—we say nothing of its sounds.

But to return to Ascension Day, and the inmates and guests of the training home. In so doing we touch a chord of sadness. All the children, and most of the visitors, are in mourning. Striking and neat as is the costume of black gowns and white aprons worn by the former, it tells of a loss almost as irreparable to them as to the daughters of the foundress of the home, who mingle amongst them. The Dowager Lady Kinnaird was taken to a better and more permanent home, "even a heavenly," on the 1st December, 1888, and thus scarcely half a year has passed since she departed from amongst us. She was wont to consider Ascension Day one of the happiest of her year; and we cannot be surprised, because she then reaped the fruit of her labours. Of her manifold good works she loved this the best. Not even the Young Women's Christian Association, which she also founded, could afford her the pleasure of this her earliest philanthropic and Christian effort.

Over 1,500 children, varying in age from one to fifteen years, have been trained in this school, and it is strange and interesting to watch the gathering of pupils, old and new, in the large airy playground. The scholars of the past are accompanied, for the most part, by their offspring; while those of the present are vigorously going through wonder-

ful gymnastic exercises, under the guidance of an expert teacher. It is pretty to see the little regiment of domestic soldiers perform all the evolutions of Swedish drill, and if their industrial training be equal to their physical, they will make very good servants indeed.

Amongst the onlookers are four middle-aged women, who were brought up at the school. Three of them are married, and have nearly grown-up children with them, who are watching the drill with great interest. All have held responsible positions in good families, and all unite in lamenting the absence of their benefactress, who "used to greet them so kindly year by year." Their regrets are touching tributes to the virtues of the departed.

Not less touching are those uttered by their youngers; for all unite in testifying to the happy days spent in the school. Many of them are orphans, who look upon it as their home, and it is delightful to see the eager pleasure with which they greet one another. Arm-in-arm, or with arms circling one another's waist, they walk about the playground, discussing the past and present and all that has happened since they parted. Many of them, again, are mothers with babies in the arms; or, more truthfully to speak, in the arms of the Miss Kinnairds, who carry them from friend to friend for general admiration, playfully introducing them as their "grandchildren," their mothers having been their pupils for religious instruction.

It is a glorious day, and the skies smile upon our gathering. They could scarcely bestow their approval upon a more hopeful scene. Matron and teachers mingle with the cheerful crowd, and the representatives of the foundress of the institution are here, there, and everywhere, setting aside personal feeling and many memories, in ministering to the pleasure of others.

Comparative calm reigns while the drill proceeds; but tongues are well loosened when the large party assembles for tea. One side of the immense school and dining room is appropriated to the children, the other to the guests. The latter must number seventy or eighty, and they thoroughly enjoy themselves. "I feel at home again. I have no parents," says one interesting girl, "and I would rather be here than at service," another. But all look respectable, and one cannot be too thankful, in these ambitious times, to those who will thoroughly train girls for domestic service.

The pupils of St. John's School have come from all quarters, not only from the United Kingdom, but even from India and China. Many are daughter of sailors, thankful to place their children in safe custody while themselves away on the broad seas. Another sad chord is touched by one such as we wander through the large, airy dormitories. In a private room containing only three or four beds, lies a little girl, dying of consumption. She is the daughter of a sailor, who died of the same insidious malady. Her mother is by her bedside, and on a small table are portions of the feast prepared for her companions below. "This is my last child," says the poor mother, "the others have all gone, like their father, of consumption." It is very sad, but the little girl has every comfort—friends, medical advice, and the presence of her mother. Two-thirds of the pupils from the commencement of the school have been orphaned of one or both parents, and when, as in the case of the dear child now passing away, it has been the father, the mother has been able to pursue some avocation, while her

child or children are trained and cared for in the school.

Of course the parent or friends pay for this, as it is no charity school. Still it is scarcely self-supporting, since £18 a year will not educate, clothe, and board a pupil, and it is hoped that the kind donations and subscriptions of friends will not diminish with the lamented death of the foundress. To quote from the last report. "The managers feel deeply the grave responsibility which rests upon them to carry on the school in the same spirit and in the same admirable manner, which has been the outcome of so much prayer and effort. They ask for the continued support of old and valued friends, and for the co-operation of any who would desire to see the school efficiently worked."

Amongst these six "managers" we read the names of the three daughters and daughter-in-law of the departed foundress, while her son, the Lord Kinnaird, is hon. treasurer, and one of her daughters, the Hon. Gertrude Kinnaird, is hon. secretary. Let us be thankful that they walk in the steps of parents who "went about doing good."

We go about seeing good on this bright Ascension Day. There is a "Poet's Corner" in Westminster Abbey, and at our institution there is a "Pupil's Corner." In each dormitory we remark a curtained corner appropriated to those who have attained the rank of pupil teachers. Here, on a tiny table, are many treasures. Photographs and ornaments, gathered during a brief tenure of life and office, and showing to admiring neighbours what industry and perseverance may effect. They have certainly effected much here, for from well-ventilated dormitories to school-rooms, kitchen, lavatories, playground, and what not, all breathes of work. It is truly a school for industrial training, and servants of all denominations are taught the useful and invaluable arts which shall make of them respectable members of the commonwealth. If girls only knew what was best for them, they would qualify themselves for domestic service, instead of scorning it, and striving after what they cannot attain.

Returning to the large tea-party after our tour through the house, we find the meal virtually finished, while the buzz of conversation increases. The old scholars make the most noise, and scarcely know how to enjoy their day enough. The children are comparatively quiet, and doubtless envy their elders their unbridled delight. Their turn comes when grace has been sung, and they appropriate the flowers that have adorned the tables, pinning them into every available corner of their frocks or aprons. One tiny mite has secured a purple rhododendron, and we help her to insert it into the bib of her white apron. Very proud she is when it is so placed, and very happy they all appear as they march off to another scene.

Ascension Day closes, as it should, with prayer and praise. The pupils sing hymns, and their spiritual pastors address them. The neighbouring clergy are most kind in aiding this excellent work, and several are present. We think of the good seed sown, and how it must have ripened during all these years. We think of the various means employed to bring the girls to a "saving knowledge" of Jesus Christ their Lord, and while thinking, try to realise what these means are. "Above all, we seek for the true conversion of the children," said Lady Kinnaird, and to aid in this, ladies hold Bible classes, and keep the members of them in view when they have left the school.

They are invited to join the St. John's branch of the Young Women's Christian Association, receive a monthly letter, and are otherwise reminded of their early teaching. Most of the girls belong to the Scripture Union, and cannot easily forget how they read their daily portion, joined in family prayer, and were brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Neither are they likely to forget the hour spent every week in working for some missionary or charitable object, when they learn experimentally to help those who are less fortunate, than themselves.

Some sceptical reader will exclaim, "Charity begins at home." So it does here; for the girls make all their own clothes and outfits for service; which proves to a demonstration that time may be found in the busiest day for help-

ing our neighbours. And what with house-work, tending the little ones, keeping up to the awful educational "Standards," laundry work, etc., etc., the pupils of St. John's Training School have a very busy day indeed! And as to the teachers—well, they must be busier still.

They all thrive upon it, nevertheless, so it is not work that kills, and to judge from the embraces of teachers and taught, the fervent welcomes and somewhat sad farewells, they have had a happy time together, despite "laborious days."

And we certainly have all had a happy Ascension Day, from the morning service in church to the afternoon gathering, and the evening addresses, singing, and games—a day not to be forgotten. Perhaps the most notable feature of it has been the mourning garb of the

large party and the regrets that have mingled with the mirth. Indeed, some few of the elders find mirth impossible, and confide to us that the blank left by the absence of the one who had been the guiding-star of the establishment for nearly fifty years, could scarcely be filled for them. "Perhaps she is with us in spirit," is, however, the feeling of some; and we all understand, as we watch the scene, the meaning of the text, "and their works do follow them." May the children of the Christian lady who from childhood devoted her life to the service of her Divine Lord, have strength given them to carry on these works and to increase them as they are already striving to do. The motto of their house is *Certa Cruce Salus*—"Sure salvation by the cross"—and they need no safer watchword.

A YOUNG OXFORD MAID.

(IN THE DAYS OF THE KING AND THE PARLIAMENT.)

By SARAH TYTLER, Author of "Papers for Thoughtful Girls," etc.

CHAPTER XXII.

A "BALM OF HURT MINDS."



DEATH had not before, within Kitty's consciousness, come and touched her best beloved, so Jack's death was an overwhelming blow to her. She was little more than eighteen, and he was her only

brother, while sister and mother she had none. She was so stricken that it seemed as if the whole world had come to a standstill for her, as if she could have no future in this world with her Jackie gone hence without her, even as the outlines of her past were washed out in tears.

The first thing which roused Kitty was the sense of her father's sorrow, inarticulate at first. She awoke from her dreary apathy of extreme crushing grief, to seek to creep nearer to him, to venture to show him her silent, piteous sympathy, to try to minister tenderly to him in a hundred ways, in which Mrs. Judy, faithful, afflicted soul that she was, could not approach him. Kitty would prove to Dr. Dacre that though in this life he had lost a son, he had still a daughter. Jack had taken the great step which divides the mortal from the immortal, and carries the wayfarer into infinitely vaster fields of God's universe, and if all is well with him, into an awful, unspeakable increase of nearness to the Great White Throne, where none left behind, however near and dear, can follow him. But Kitty was still beside her father, close to him, linked to him

more than ever by that strong link of their common sorrow in addition to their common love, able to commune with him as he was able to commune with her.

This was the first lever to raise the mountain-load of heavy grief. Then in God's gracious economy there were other levers given her, which Kitty, in her dutifulness to God and her father, and the trained reasonableness which balanced her warm, constant affection, was qualified to use, as no man or woman of ill-regulated temper and unbalanced unreasonableness would have had the smallest chance of doing. Kitty could take the levers into her trembling young hands, and employ the weapons so as to free herself from the dark prison-house of inordinate mourning. She let in the light of God's hopeful, eternal word, and His no less hopeful world with its golden sunshine, its green earth, renewed year by year, and its myriads of kindly, natural influences for healing to the broken in heart and the bruised in spirit.

Kitty could not do it all at once or without many a pang. For it was one thing to believe with her whole heart, soul, and spirit that her brother would rise again, and that it was well with him; though it was only by an aching stretch of her poor human faculties that she could imagine confusedly and gropingly where he was now, what he was, how he was employed. And it was quite another thing to know in happy confidence that he was alive and well on this earth with her, on her own level, ready to come to her next month, or at the farthest with the new year, or at Easter or midsummer, as circumstances would permit.

Kitty could not at first and for a long time attain to the patient resignation of Mrs. Judy, who had grown accustomed by long use and wont to the trials of life. She took them almost as a matter of course, even when her motherly heart was aching most sorely for her nursing, her bright and eager Master Jackie, of whom she had secretly prophesied great

things, who was to have been a still more notable scholar than was Dr. Dacre.

Kitty could but feel after the humble thankfulness which, with the woman's inveterate habit of looking round and discovering how God could be praised in all circumstances, lay at the root of Mrs. Judy's cheerful philosophy. It caused her again and again to bring forward what a good, what a blessed thing it was that Master Jackie had taken it upon him, out of his own head, in his integrity and natural affection, to pay that short visit home when he had come into Oxford to see about the exchange of prisoners. What a merciful thing it was, to be sure, that they had seen him once again! And did not Mrs. Kitty remember how pleasant and delightful the dear lad, who had grown so fine a young man, had been that windy March afternoon, and how he had departed after evening prayers at peace with all? What a terrible trial, how infinitely worse it would have been if his father and he had not met this once again, been reconciled, and spoken good words like gentlemen and Christians! Master Jackie might have fallen in the beginning of the war, when the last speech he and Dr. Dacre had held together was full of cruel strife and fierce contention.

Kitty had but a vague consciousness how absolutely glad she would be one day that the hands of loving friends prepared Jack for his rest. Prissy Walton and her mother washed his wounds, smoothed his locks, and crossed his arms on his breast in the attitude of one who is watching and waiting; Alice strewed rosemary on his pillow Anthony lifted him into his coffin.

Another privilege was granted to John Dacre's friends. By dint of urgent representation and private favour, with which few would have found the heart, even if they had possessed the knowledge in time, to interfere, the coffin was brought by night within the range of the sentries, into the village of St. Clement's, near to the east gate of the beleaguered city,