

of his head, and to go right into the middle of yours. When you see his lips at rest, you have to raise your eyebrows expressively or smile meaningly, or to adopt any neutral form of expression in order to keep up a pretence of interest, although you have not heard a word of what he has been saying. But do not be entrapped into anything more decided. It was once our misfortune to travel with a gentleman who, as the train was moving out of the station, commenced an anecdote of how he once saw a very respectable man—and here the progress of the story was rendered inaudible by the noise. When we drew up at the next station, the gentleman was still pursuing the same story, and was in the midst of a simile about swans when his voice was drowned in the roar and rattle again. He continued in this way for four stations, and as we approached the fifth, the anecdote came to an end, and as the train was accompanied by some gesture and

a bump of the narrator's hand on the window-ledge, we thought it incumbent on us to pay him the tribute of a little interest, so said—

"Dear me! Well, I should really never have thought that. That's the most extraordinary part of all."

"Eh?" said he, rather abruptly, as the train drew up.

Being fairly in for it, we repeated that we thought that very odd indeed—in fact, the oddest part of the whole affair.

Upon which, after a gloomy silence, he said—

"I am sorry you have such a poor opinion of my honesty."

"Bless me! what gave you that idea?"

"Why, I tell you that after I found out who the purse belonged to, I gave it him back again, and you say that that was very odd indeed, and the oddest part of the whole affair!"

Picture my feelings!

A. H.

A FLOWER FROM THE SOUTH.



LITTLE maiden glad with sunny glow,
With warm-flushed features, and bright piercing eye,
And cherry-lips full ripe for smile or sigh,
O'er which the laughter-ripples come and go
Like merry wavelets dancing to and fro;
A face that's flooded over brilliantly
As when in summer all the rich fields lie

Gold-tinted where the ruddy sunbeams flow—
A little flow'ret this of no cold land,
No hot-house plant e'er needing watchful care;
A native rather of some sunnier strand,
Growing in wild untrained luxuriance there;
A sweet bud born beneath a Southern sky,
To blossom to perfection by-and-by.

G. W.

LADY CLERKS IN THE POST OFFICE SAVINGS BANK.



THE question of the employment of educated women has for a long time assumed too grave a form to be lightly set aside; and the time has arrived when talk has resolved itself into action.

We are continually hearing now of new work for ladies, and it is a pretty certain proof of the greatness of the necessity, that there is never any lack of candidates when openings are offered for their employment.

A staff of female clerks has lately been appointed at the Post Office Savings Bank, and between sixty and seventy young ladies are now employed there.

The idea of the appointment of women to this work was doubtless suggested by their employment in the Telegraph Clearing House, although that of which we

are now speaking requires a better education than any which is open to women in the other departments of the Post Office.

Before the present staff in the Savings Bank was completed, there were two examinations, about one half of the number beginning work in the summer, and the other half only last autumn. The subjects of examination were, of course, the same in each case, consisting of six subjects:—Arithmetic (including vulgar and decimal fractions), handwriting, orthography, geography, grammar, and composition.

These subjects are evidently chosen in accordance with the requirements for the duties, a fact which, as it is not always the case, may be worthy of mention. The importance of arithmetic in a savings bank is self-evident, while the use of geography should not be under-estimated, since the Post Office Savings Bank, of course, has dealings with all parts of the United Kingdom, and occasionally with depositors abroad. In fact, a very little insight will serve to show that, from the most practical point of view, not one of the subjects could well be dispensed with.

The ages of the candidates were limited, none having been admitted to the examination under sixteen or over thirty.

Many ladies who cannot or who do not wish to be idle would gladly compete for a Government appointment where the hours are not heavy, and where there is not merely one settled duty and one fixed salary, but scope

for those who can work the best, and salaries that rise at a certain ratio. Those of the second-class clerks commence at forty pounds a year, rising yearly by seven pounds ten shillings to seventy-five pounds. Those of the first-class commence at eighty, rising by seven pounds ten shillings to a hundred. The salaries of the principal clerks commence at a hundred and ten, rising by ten pounds to a hundred and fifty.

The idea at first was, we understand, that the female clerks should only be employed for copying and writing addresses; but they have already been promoted to higher work, a fact which augurs well for the future.

It is thought that during the next session of Parliament an Act may be passed, increasing the maximum and decreasing the minimum of the amount that may be deposited in the Savings Bank. In such a case the only result could be that the total of the deposits would be increased, and, in consequence, that the amount of work would be greater. Therefore, eventually, it is reasonable to suppose that the staff, which is now complete, would have to be enlarged, and that the present employé's are not all that will some day be in this one department of the Post Office.

From the commencement it has been intended, and the intention has been carefully carried out, that all the clerks should be ladies, and it is not likely that this rule will be dispensed with as time goes on.

In an experiment such as the present one there must always be some time spent in finding out who is best qualified to fill the higher and more responsible positions. And though, as a matter of course, it is a help to any of the candidates to pass the examination well, yet afterwards the wish to gain a position, and then the wish to hold it, must lend an interest beyond that engendered by the work itself.

A good deal of jealousy exists among some men at the advancement of women to occupations which have hitherto been exclusively their own. But that the two interests clash with one another is not a reason for women being precluded from employments simply on the ground of their being women. The question becomes involved in such innumerable considerations, that it seems almost impossible to look at it as a whole until time shall have shown how the many experiments answer which are being tried at the present time.

Apart from those objections arising from the conflicting of interests, many people have objected, and even still object, that ladies are not meant for such duties as they are now beginning to perform; but necessity has answered opposition better than any number of excited arguments upon a subject where each antagonist is apt to feel too warmly for very calm discussion to be secured. And now Opportunity has followed in the footsteps of Necessity, as she cannot help doing, however she may loiter on the way.

Government hours, from ten to four, are not such as to frighten any women who know anything of work, and probably many a one has been glad to escape from the fate of becoming a governess, which fate awaits so large a number at the present day, and which entails a kind of responsibility very irksome to those whose power does not take the direction of

imparting information to others. There are some people who can teach better than they can work, but many who can work better than they can teach, and it is to this class that the increasing opportunities for employment will be most welcome.

The life of a governess, even to those who have talent for teaching, has many disadvantages which do not present themselves in an occupation such as this of which we are treating. In individual cases, either a resident or a daily governess's life may be very pleasant where there is mutual liking between the employer and the employed, and where the intelligence of the pupils lessens the anxiety with regard to their progress, which must usually be taken as a test of competence on the part of the teacher. But in many cases it is a life of ill-paid, unsatisfactory drudgery, and for those who possess few accomplishments, offers little opportunity for rising in the world. When a daily governess has more than one engagement, and spends her morning with one set of pupils, and then her afternoon in going over perhaps the very same ground with another, besides the extra fatigue of travelling from place to place, she has little time or energy left for beginning to learn the accomplishments which would enable her to command higher salaries. And however well she may perform her duties, her employment depends on the caprice or changing circumstances of an individual, so that besides a life of present worry, the future is often full of anxiety. Yet in spite of the arduousness of the work, the exposure to weather—often several times in one day—which falls to the lot of many daily governesses, those who are prejudiced against the employment of women seem to consider this particular occupation is the one field open to them, and the one occupation for which they are fit, both mentally and physically.

Now, in the Savings Bank, although it would be impossible to employ ladies who cannot go out in any weather, yet there is only the one journey to and from the office when they are exposed to it, as there are dining-rooms in the building, where they can obtain their dinners at a moderate charge.

It is now so obvious that there are many more women in need of work than there are governess's situations for them to fill, that nothing can prevent the increase of the number of occupations for them. And as every new work which is offered to women, and which it is found they can perform, is a step towards still more being thrown open, the employment of female clerks in the Savings Bank is interesting, not only to the clerks themselves, but to all who, from one cause or another, are anxious for the extension of the field in which women's powers may be developed.

Those who are already beginning to feel the advantages of the greater choice of the method by which they may earn an income, may be said to be working for others besides for themselves. Doubtless this thought has occurred to many, but it cannot be urged too strongly, and in many cases may be some incentive to the earnestness of the women who are already at work, while to those who are still looking forward to the future, there is every encouragement.