



WOMEN CLERKSHIPS IN THE CIVIL SERVICE.

BY A CIVIL SERVANT, WHO ON EXAMINATION TOOK FIRST PLACE IN ALL GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

WE have now reached an age in which, for the first time in the world's history, women are looked upon as capable of earning their own livelihood. Therefore, the subject of women's employments is one about which there is a great deal of curiosity. When a girl makes up her mind to be self-supporting she naturally inquires what work she can do. A clerkship not unfrequently presents itself to her mind, and then perhaps some of her friends advise her to obtain, if possible, one of the clerkships in the Civil Service. On this account information about these clerkships will no doubt be very welcome to many.

Perhaps one of the most attractive features of the Civil Service clerkships is that the clerks are placed in private departments, and are not directly in touch with the public. For example, in the General Post Office they are employed in the chief office and mix only with their sister clerks. This is an important point when we remember that girls are admitted into the service only between eighteen and twenty years of age.

The hours are seven each day except Saturday, when there is a half-day of four hours. The holidays are very liberal, and comprise a calendar month each year, three days each at Christmas and Easter, two at Whitsuntide, the Queen's Birthday, and the August Bank Holiday.

The salary is not quite so satisfactory. It begins at £55 and rises by annual increments of £2 10s. to £70; thence by £5 to £100, which is the maximum unless promotion to a higher grade takes place. When the list for promotion is made out, the chief points taken into account are seniority, attendance and ability. In some departments nine years' service secures promotion; in others thirteen or fourteen years are necessary. The highest position that a woman-clerk can attain to is that of Superintendent of a department which carries with it a salary of £300 or £400. Of course there are few vacancies in these positions.

The qualifications necessary to obtain the situation of woman-clerk in the Civil Service are a good knowledge of English history and composition, geography, arithmetic, and French. The candidate must also write carefully and legibly, and must make an average score of from seventy to seventy-five per cent.

When the clerical examination has been successfully passed, the medical officer makes a careful examination and reports as to the state of health. If her opinion is favourable, the would-be woman-clerk is placed on probation in one of the departments for a year. At the end of that time, if her health and work prove satisfactory, she becomes a permanent member of the staff.

Pensions are granted on retirement after twenty years' service at the rate of one-sixtieth of the salary at the time of retirement for every year of service. If retirement from the service be due to ill health, a pension is granted after ten years' service at the same rate. Girls leaving to be married are, after six years' service, entitled to a dowry calculated at the rate of a month's salary for every year of

service. Thus, if a girl had served eight years, at the present rate of payment, her dowry would amount to £50.

And now a word about the social life of women in the Civil Service. To the pleasant companionship of the other clerks each one owes much. This is especially true in the case of those who are country-bred. About forty per cent. of the women-clerks are obliged to make their homes in "furnished apartments" or boarding-houses. Consequently it is a great boon for them to find congenial spirits amongst their sister clerks. Indeed, many depend on their office friends for nearly all their social life. With these friends they go cycling, walking, playing tennis, or to concerts or other places of amusement. In their company they spend many of the four or five hours of leisure which fall to their lot in the evening. Common interests bind them together. In some departments an office magazine is a connecting link; in others literary or athletic clubs, dramatic or musical societies, concerts or parties arranged by the clerks form the basis of union. Clerks of a more studious turn of mind attend classes together and help each other along the difficult pathway of knowledge. They discuss the literary merits of the last new book, or confide their own literary aspirations to each other.

Life, apart from the office, varies in each particular case. When London means "home" there are, of course, the special home ties, interests and pleasures. After the seven or eight hours' absence each day, the toiler returns to the home circle and finds there her own particular niche. Those who are not Londoners are obliged to spend their evenings otherwise. As I said, they frequently do so with their office friends. Others engage largely in church and mission work, and it is from this class that the churches draw many of their staunchest supporters and best workers. Living as they do, an independent, free, self-supporting life, they gain a rich experience which the home-sheltered girl does not possess. Their office training makes them methodical and quickens their intellectual grasp; and, having plenty of leisure time at their disposal, they often become quite invaluable members of their own little church-circle. This frequently leads to the formation of lasting friendships, so that after a time the friendships formed at the office and the church do much towards making London seem home-like. After all, as someone has very truly said, "Home is in the hearts of those you love," and one cannot feel a stranger or lonely long when she is surrounded by friends. Some few there are who do not coalesce with the others, but, on the whole, the woman-clerk is very human, and values highly the kind thoughts of those who surround her. An outsider may think she is very much like a machine guaranteed to work steadily for seven hours a day, and then efface herself till work begins again next morning. On closer inquiry, however, we find that her life is really most interesting, and can be made truly well worth the living.

back. She was voiceless, perhaps because Mrs. Bethune said a little querulously—

"Of course, dear Bethia, we quite understand that. Your dear papa, indeed, knew that he could never win me unless he accepted my dear children, too. I was firm as a rock on that point. 'All of us or none!' was my word. Jane may forget that I am a mother, but I cannot. And why she should wish to bring all this up now, just when we are comfortably settled, and each of you with a bedroom of your own—and I have tried to be fair about that, for if Betty's is the highest up it is certainly the prettiest."

"I told you we should quarrel," said Claire, nodding to Beth across the table. "We always do when the padre is out. Sometimes it is about him, but now I suppose it will be about you! But now that we've buried the hatchet (and I've finished all the raisins), let's go to the morning-room, and I'll soothe you with a little sweet music. Your padre has given me a very fine Bechstein, Miss Bee-bee, and I reward him with Grieg or Chopin when he's very good."

"Yes, let us go," said Mrs. Bethune, with recovered cheerfulness; "these little scenes are so painful and so unnecessary, and, dear Jane, let me say it, so unlady-like."

"I am sorry, mamma," said Jane, quietly enough now. She submitted to be kissed in token of peace, but she did not follow the others into the morning-room.

Beth went mechanically, her mind unreceptive of all that was said. She had braced herself to a great effort, spoken out of the fulness of a brimming heart, and her words had made no more impression than snow on a stone dyke. She was stunned and filled with a helpless sense of the distance between her mind and these other minds. It was as if they ran in parallel rows, and by no law of nature could ever meet.

She scarcely listened to Claire's brilliant playing, though Claire was at her best when at the piano, or heard much of Mrs. Bethune's murmured monologue. Mrs. Bethune could never be made to understand that music was not invented to encourage talk.

Beth caught but fragments of her tattle as they sat on the same sofa. Her step-mother, who liked people to be pleasant, and knew that to make them so it was well to make them comfortable, patted the sofa-cushions into an easy shape for Beth's back.

"Do lean against them, dearest, and let us be cosy!"

But Beth's spine would not bend. Her mind refused to be patted into ease. She was bewildered, hurt, with a growing sense of injustice, and anger, and helplessness, as if she were stifled. Her little offering of kindness had been disregarded.

"They don't want me," the thought ran bitterly. "They put up with me because I belong to father, they take me on sufferance because they like the things he

has to give—this great house, and grand furniture, and servants, and fine clothes, and fine food. They would be glad if I had never been born."

She had begun the new life with many resolutions, but at nightfall she had scarce one left with which to prop her failing courage. When she climbed at last to the apple-blossom room, she found Ball had unpacked her trunk, and laid her little possessions out. There was the new desk Uncle John had bought that day in Princes Street—she stooped to give it a passionate kiss—her work-box, photographs of the dear home faces, and many another little treasure.

On the writing-table lay her Bible, and beside it a little worn copy of Thomas-à-Kempis which had belonged to her mother. She had dipped into the little book more than once, and she took it up now with a feeling that to handle it, to scan the lines that those other long-closed eyes had scanned, brought her nearer to the dead young mother, for whose presence she had never longed as she had longed to-night. It fell open where a faded green ribbon marked the page.

"If thou seekest this or that, and wouldst be here or there to enjoy thy own will and pleasure, thou shalt never be quiet nor free from care, for in everything somewhat will be wanting, and in every place there will be some that will cross thee."

Her attention was caught. She read on.

"It is but little thou sufferest in comparison of them that have suffered so much, were so strongly tempted, so grievously afflicted, so many ways tried and exercised. Thou oughtest, therefore, to call to mind the more heavy sufferings of others, that thou mayst the easier bear thy little adversities. And if they seem not little unto thee, beware lest thy impatience be the cause thereof."

Not out of the mouth of any mystic in the far-off Middle Ages did the message seem to come, but soft from the lips of the mother who had lived in the world scarce longer than she, and left it surely before any shadow of trouble darkened her sweet spirit.

Yet she, too—who could doubt it?—brief as was her journey, went by that Royal Way of the Holy Cross which all must tread who would reach the Kingdom of God.

This new dawning sense of comradeship in trouble, of frets and woundings, of bafflings and discouragements that were no new sorrows, but far older than this little monkish book, as old as Eden itself, was to Beth like a window opening to hope.

If, through all those centuries of wounds, and pain, and falling tears, that Royal Road had yet its never-ceasing throng of pilgrims, falling, faltering, yet upheld by the Divine Love to press forward to the end, might not she, too, prevail?

"O God, help me," cried Beth, falling on her knees, "help me to be good!"

(To be continued.)

GIRL CLERKSHIPS.

SOME months ago in an article I dealt with Women Clerkships in the Civil Service, but for those who are too young to compete for these appointments, a more interesting subject is that of Girl Clerkships.

The old proverb has it that "Necessity is the mother of invention," and the origin of these clerkships is a case in point. About four years ago the stress of work in the Post-Office Savings Bank was very great, and how to relieve it was a problem difficult to solve. The solution,

however, was found in the girl clerk. The central idea of the establishment of these appointments was to draw into the Civil Service at an early age those who would probably later on have become women clerks. By making the age limit 16-18 years, and the examination similar to that for women clerks, it was rendered possible for intending candidates for the higher appointment to compete for the lower. A lower standard of proficiency qualifies for the girl clerkships, and, of course, a smaller salary is offered.

In the first year the girl clerk receives £35. During the second year this is increased by £2 10s. If at the end of the second year her work and conduct have given satisfaction, the girl clerk is promoted to the position of woman clerk without further examination, and her salary rises from £37 10s. to £55.

Many parents are inclined to question the advisability of a girl of sixteen years working in a City office. They think that she is not physically capable of the work, and that instead of being shut up in an office, she should be out-of-doors and be perfectly free to indulge in the pleasures and sports of girlhood. They also take exception to the idea from an educational standpoint. A girl's education, they say, is not finished at that age, and that once she is engaged in official work it is a mere chance if it ever will be.

These arguments are certainly cogent when there is no necessity for a girl to assist in her own support. But in cases where there is a large family of girls and not much in the domestic exchequer, the opening of appointments as girl clerks is to these a great boon. Of course the salary is small, and does not make the girl entirely self-supporting, but it is always increasing. It is as much as she would get in any other City office, and there is every prospect that at the end of two years she will become a woman clerk.

With regard to the questions of physical ability and education, it should be noted that a girl clerk is only required to work six hours a day. Reckoning two hours daily for travelling, this leaves sixteen hours out of the twenty-four for study, recreation, and sleep. For the latter ten hours should be sufficient, so that the girl has six hours at her own disposal. Surely it is possible not only to get enough exercise, but also to do a little study in that time, more especially as the work required of a girl clerk is neither responsible nor laborious.

One great advantage of obtaining a girl clerkship is that no further examination is necessary to become a woman clerk. Anyone who knows the keen competition

for women clerkships will appreciate this. The competition for girl clerkships is as yet not so great, because the appointment has not been so long open and many have never heard of it. The work given to the girl clerk is the easy part of what was formerly reserved for women clerks. It is so graduated that by the time she has served what we might term her two years' apprenticeship, she is almost competent to perform the full duties of a woman clerk. She has in this way a certain advantage over the new woman clerk fresh to the office and office ways.

A girl clerk's life in the office is precisely the same as that of a woman clerk. She has just as many pleasures in connection with the office, and is treated as an equal by the older girls, where, in many cases, to her sisters at home she is "that child!" One is apt to undervalue the refining and educating influence of this intercourse. The girl and woman clerks are almost invariably ladies in reality as well as name. Their standard of right is very high. The spirit of their departments is a decidedly good one and cannot but be helpful to a young untrained girl entering the Service.

In cases where it is necessary for a girl of sixteen to assist in her own support, there is no question that the Civil Service is better than any ordinary City office. Parents can therefore rest quite content that their daughter is not surrounded by influences which they would regard as injurious, but, on the contrary, by those which will give her a training that will prove of inestimable value in after life.

We are continually being told that women are too easily led away, too sensitive to outside influences. This work then is in itself of great service to a girl. By assisting in earning her own livelihood she gains a feeling of independence and self-reliance at a time when her character is still in a plastic state, and very susceptible to influences for good or bad. She learns to be methodical, obedient, tidy and business-like, and is never likely to regret the day she became a girl clerk.

IN THE TWILIGHT SIDE BY SIDE.

BY RUTH LAMB.

PART III. THANKSGIVING.

"I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving."—
Ps. cxvi. 17.

"In everything give thanks."—I Thess. v. 18.



It is some little time since I promised to devote one or more of our talks to the subjects of thanksgiving and praise, in compliance with requests from several of my dear girl friends.

I think I hear one of you ask, "Do not thanksgiving and praise mean almost the same thing?"

By no means. Thanksgiving, if it be worthy of the name, is a hearty acknowledgment of and an expression of our gratitude for benefits received, either by ourselves or others.

Under the old Levitical law there were not only sin-offerings and trespass offerings, but peace offerings, some of which were called "sacrifices of thanksgiving." These were regarded as visible proofs of gratitude and thankfulness, and a public acknowledgment of the good things God had done for those who offered them.

The Psalms contain many allusions to these sacrifices of thanksgiving. In the fiftieth, we are taught that the offering of slain animals upon the altar could give no pleasure to Him who declared, "The world is mine and the fulness thereof," if unaccompanied by the homage of a truly grateful heart. "Offer unto God thanksgiving," is

the command, followed by words of encouragement and precious promises.

In other Psalms we find expression given to individual resolutions. "I will magnify Him with thanksgiving," sang the Shepherd King. Another psalmist, writing in an ecstasy of thankfulness, exclaims, "I love the Lord because He hath heard my voice and my supplications." Then he enumerates his own troubles and God's wonderful deliverances, and asks himself, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" He answers his own question in the verses which follow, and amongst other things says, "I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving."

In other Psalms God's children are invited and exhorted to be thankful. "Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving." "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving." "Let them offer the sacrifices of thanksgiving." "Be thankful to Him. Bless His name." In the prophetic writings the same teaching is found, and in the New Testament thanksgiving is to accompany prayer. "With thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." It is to accompany faith and prayer, and the use of the creatures which He hath "created to be received with thanksgiving."

Our Lord Himself set us a supreme example of thankfulness when, "in the days of His flesh," He twice used the words, "Father, I thank Thee," not to prove that in Himself He was unable to perform the miracle of raising the dead to life, but for the sake of the people, that they might believe in Him as One with the Father.

You and I, dear ones, will all acknowledge that it is a