



MISSION HALL TYPES.

[Photo by Scarlett & Francis.]

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A "SISTER."

By FLORA KLICKMANN.

PART I. CHURCH OF ENGLAND WORKERS.



A MILDMAI DEACONESS.
(Photo by Lambert & Lambert.)

It is usually when a girl has left school and is just entering upon the early years of womanhood, that she realises with sudden force the fact that her life has been entrusted to her as a personal responsibility, and that she alone will be held accountable for the way the years are spent. And then the more thoughtful-minded

place by the glamour of the thing, seeing only the bright, pleasant side of a Sister's calling, and knowing nothing of the hard, harrowing work that it entails; some are primarily anxious to escape from a home-life that is tedious or un congenial, and they feel that by joining a religious community they avoid the reproaches of their friends; others again will fully appreciate the sacredness of the work, and in choosing it be actuated only by the highest motives, and yet they have to be declined on physical grounds.

Every Sister who is at the head of a community says practically the same thing: unless a girl approaches the work with a single eye to God's service, she is worse than useless. In a very short time the novelty wears off, and the glamour is stripped from everything; the Sister is being confronted with suffering and sorrow and work that is not only laborious but often positively revolting. For instance, the loathsomeness of some of the diseases, and the preponderance of vermin that I myself have seen in a morning's round of visits have turned me faint from sheer nausea. It must be an unselfish love for poor humanity that the novice brings with the service, otherwise she will do no good herself, and only be a hindrance to her fellow-workers. Moreover the constant demand that is made upon her bodily strength, and the bad air and painful surroundings in which so many hours of the day are passed, make it imperative that a Sister be in perfect physical health. Nervous, highly-strung girls will often rush to this work in an overwrought, though possibly most sincere, state of mind; these are no good. The constantly-recurring cases of heart-breaking sorrow which have to be dealt with often undermine the strongest constitutions, unless the Sister carefully guards against it; a neurotic or hysterical girl would go under directly. Not that a hard-natured girl is any more desirable. The great need is for an unvaryingly cheerful, sympathetic, yet unemotional temperament.

will look around and try to discover some sphere of work that will directly benefit their fellow-creatures. In the majority of cases it is the vocation of a "Sister" that appeals to such girls, and for which they consider themselves most adapted.

Yet a large proportion of those who seek admission into these communities of women-workers are utterly unsuited to the life. So many girls are carried away in the first

In giving a general idea of "What it means to be a Sister," it is difficult to know which individual communities to select as illustrations, since in London alone their name is Legion and the work they accomplish positively immeasurable. I have only space to mention a few, but these may be taken as fairly representative of the work of the whole.

Perhaps one of the best-known Institutions is that at Mildmay. The scheme of their work is clearly stated.

"No vows bind a Mildmay deaconess, but she voluntarily, for Jesus' sake, relinquishes all other pursuits, devoting herself wholly to such forms of Christian service as those in authority at Mildmay deem most suited to her abilities. Her one aim is to win souls for Christ."

The Deaconess House is conducted on Evangelical Church of England principles, the members working in various parishes at the request of the clergy, their primary duty being systematic visiting from house to house. Of course the ordinary routine of open-air missions, mothers' meetings, classes for women, night school for men, take up a large portion of their life; but, in addition to this, nursing and medical work is a prominent item in the curriculum. The Mission Hospital is at Bethnal Green; and there are various other similarly valuable institutions in connection with this side of the work. There are about two hundred and fifty deaconesses



A MILD MAY DEACONESS.
(Photo by Robinson.)

and nurses in all. There is a Probation House, a Junior Deaconess House, and a Central Deaconess House. A candidate for entrance at the Probation House must send in as full an account of herself as possible, with two names for reference, and if accepted, she resides in the Probation House for a month, on payment of £4 4s., and is given as complete a view as possible of mission work. A short paper of theological questions has to be answered before the month ends. The entrance to the Junior House follows upon a satisfactory completion of the term at the Probation House. Junior deaconesses pass through a two years' training which includes a systematic course of Bible study, cutting-out and needlework, sol-fa singing, the keeping of accounts, and a certain amount of house-work, cooking, and simple nursing. Those whose means admit of it pay the cost of their maintenance in the home, and many contribute generously to the funds for carrying on the work.

The "Grey Ladies" are a number of women-workers who live together in a delightful "College" at Blackheath, and help in Church work in various parishes in South London. The particular duty that each shall undertake is chosen for her by the Bishop of Southwark, who is the warden, after every consideration has been given to her special abilities. The members pay fifty pounds per annum for board, lodging and general attendance, but this does not include washing,



MISS EVES AND A GYMNASIUM CLASS. (Hoxton Christian Settlement.)



MISS YEATMAN. (*The first head of the Grey Ladies.*)
(Photo by Russell & Sons.)

and they also provide their own dress, the uniform being grey and black—hence their name. One day a week each "Grey Lady" is supposed to reserve for rest or recreation;

this is an excellent system, as it forms a beneficial break in the constant strain such work entails.

The Maurice Hostel at Hoxton is a Christian Social Union settlement that is doing splendid work in connection with the Church of England. Here, again, the workers receive no payment, but each contributes to the maintenance of the whole. I asked Miss Eves, the head of the women's house, if the members go through any special course of training; but she has no fixed rule in this respect. "If anyone came wishing to do relief work, who had no knowledge of the poor, I should recommend her to work in a Charity Organisation Office for a few months. If she wished to do club work, I should send her into the clubs under an experienced worker. And so on." The work at Hoxton is chiefly among the poverty-stricken classes whose sordid existence is spent in the factory by day and in the streets when the day's work is over. The girls' and boys' clubs that have been organised by the settlement are a Godsend to these benighted ones.

St. Hilda's, Bethnal Green, was originally started by old pupils of Cheltenham Ladies' College. A number of girls had looked round for some definite sphere of work, on leaving college, and they decided that there was ample scope for any number of workers among the teeming crowds of East London. Here they pitched their tent, and they do much parochial work in the parishes of St. Philip's, Clerkenwell, and St. Leonard's and St. Saviour's, Shoreditch. Resident members pay one guinea per week, and here, as at Grey Ladies, and in many other sisterhoods, one day a week is set apart for recuperation.

Settlements such as these are of immense help not only to the clergy of the district, but also to the workers themselves. There are many who are anxious to devote themselves to helping the poor and suffering, who have no idea how to go to work in the first place; moreover it is mentally injurious for a woman to live by herself in the midst of so much that is depressing. But when once such units are banded together, with some experienced organiser at their head, there is no limit to the benefit they may be to the world at large.

Next month I will deal with some of the Sisterhoods in connection with the various dissenting bodies.

(*To be continued.*)

GRANNIE'S TABLE.

By E. A. BENNETT, Author of "Aunt Jane's Turkeys," "The Result of a Song," etc.

CHAPTER I.



BEAUTIFUL weather for the time of year!" So said the warmly-clad ladies, as they hurried along the sunny side of the frosty pavements, drawing their furs closer round their throats and burying their hands deeper in their muffs as they met the biting north-east wind at the corners of the streets.

"Seasonable weather for Christmas-time!" remarked the men, in their thick great coats and mufflers, nodding cheerfully to one another as they strode along briskly to their comfortable homes.

But a very different view was taken of the weather by the inmates of a tiny room at the top of a house in one of the most wretched courts of a large city. There was no sunny side or warm wraps, so no wonder neither the beauty nor the seasonableness of it was appreciated by them.

Of all the miserable places in the town, and there were

plenty of them, Black Jack Court held by a long way the highest place. It owed its name, and a good deal of its misery, to the "Black Jack" standing at the top of a narrow, thickly-populated alley which led to the Court. It was a small enclosure, not many yards square, but though this was decidedly a great disadvantage in the matter of fresh air, it was so far convenient that any one of the numerous occupants returning home in a state that rendered it difficult to find his own door, was unable for obvious reasons to go far wrong. It likewise had the advantage that any matron waylaying her recreant spouse with words of indignation and wrath, could be swung off with the full force of the masculine arm, and was brought up by the opposite wall without sustaining more damage than that of a severe shock.

There were eight houses in the Court, and each house was packed as tightly with human beings as it could be. It is true that the "Specter" paid visits at intervals, but his reception was so distinctly unfavourable, to use the mildest term, that he was in no hurry to encounter it oftener than duty absolutely compelled him. Besides, poor man, he knew well enough the uselessness of it. His arrival was known to the whole Court before he had taken two steps down the alley, and was the signal for many and varied re-arrangements. Though he was perfectly aware

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PART II.

DISSENTING SISTERHOODS.

FOLLOWING the excellent example set by the Church of England, several of the dissenting bodies have organised sisterhoods in connection with the work of their various churches. In these, as in the Church communities, gentlewomen are more particularly needed. With the enlightenment of modern times, it has been proved that the woman of refinement and education can make more headway with the lower classes than one nearer their own social standing, not on account of the education itself (it is immaterial to a starving, homeless outcast that the Sister who befriends her is a London B.A.), but because a cultured woman should have more tact in dealing with the difficult cases that are always coming to the surface; and she should also possess a wider experience and more gentle manners than a woman whose life has been spent in one narrow groove, and who is probably handicapped by prejudice and ignorance.

It is interesting to notice that where a sisterhood is attached to some particular denomination, it is never a *sine qua non* that the Sisters themselves must be members of the same body. For instance, "Sister Constance,"



[Photo by Russell & Sons.

SISTER GRACE.

(Bermondsey Settlement.)



[Photo by Scarlett & Francis.

A SISTER DRESSING A DISPENSARY CASE.

(Baptist Deaconesses' Mission.)

the Lady Superintendent of the Baptist Deaconesses' Home, is herself a Wesleyan, and on every hand mere sectarian differences are disregarded in the one great aim that is common to all.

The Wesleyans are well to the fore in providing openings for women workers. The Sisterhood of the West London Mission was started fourteen years ago. To quote Mrs. Hugh Price Hughes's own words to me, "It was an attempt to start a sisterhood on broad lines, allowing scope and larger measure of freedom for the individual, and embracing all kinds of social and philanthropic work. Sincerely Christian women of all Protestant churches are welcomed among its members, and those are eligible for admission who prove that they have the necessary goodness, sense, force of character and ability for one or other of the numerous branches of work. The object we seek to attain in our Sisters is quality and not numbers. We wish to obtain the services of earnest women who can originate ideas and become leaders in their various departments of work. Many of the Sisters give their services, though to some, who have no private means of their own, we give a small sum sufficient to defray personal expenses. All receive board and lodging alike free of charge. No one is admitted into the Sisterhood until she has successfully undergone a year's probation. The ideal of the Sisterhood is perhaps shown most plainly in the name they have chosen for themselves, viz., 'The Sisters of the People.' Wherever there is trouble, need, sorrow or difficulty, no matter who the person may be—rich, poor, whatever creed or nation—that alone constitutes a claim upon the Sister if any possible help is within her power. Our branches of work are many and varied: district visiting, district nursing (which is undertaken only by those Sisters who are fully trained and qualified nurses), mothers' meetings, girls'



[Photo by W. G. Parker & Co.]
SISTER CONSTANCE.
(Baptist Deaconess.)



[Photo by Russell & Sons.]
"SISTER OF THE PEOPLE."
(West London Mission.)



[Photo by T. C. Turner & Co.]
A "SISTER OF THE CHILDREN."
(The Children's Home, Bonner Road.)

clubs, boys' clubs, work amongst children, temperance work and rescue work. We have also a large *crèche*, day nursery, rescue home, and home for the dying. Our workhouse teas are a special feature of the work of the mission amongst the poor who have drifted into the workhouse. The general work of the Sisterhood is directed by a council consisting of myself and the senior Sisters in the Mission. Each Sister is responsible for her own department,

and is allowed great freedom of action, as we assume that, if she is fit to be a Sister at all, she is fit to be trusted. When a Sister joins us she is not pledged to remain any given time, though it is expected that she intends to give some years at least to the work."

This description of the work of the West London Mission gives an excellent idea of the scheme of work upon which most Protestant sisterhoods are based.



A GROUP OF MISSION HABITUÉS.

[Photo by Scarlett & Francis.]

Another important band of workers, which, though entirely undenominational, owes much to Wesleyans, is the Bermondsey Settlement. The one great qualification that is required in candidates for admission is "a real desire to share whatever one possesses with those who are less well off. The least valuable possession is money." The nurses receive some remuneration for their work, but the other workers are supposed to pay £1 a week for their maintenance. All the ladies do not live together in one building; they are divided up, some living in one house and some in another. Miss Mary Simmons, the head of the Women's Settlement, lives in what was formerly a public-house (now a Temperance House) in one of the backest of the back streets. And this is illustrative of one great aim of this community, which is to induce cultured Christian people to settle in the midst of the large and ever-growing poor population, so that a higher influence may be exerted over the masses.

In addition to the usual departments of mission work, the Bermondsey Settlement has one remarkably interesting feature in its special provisions for children's pleasures. "The Guild of Play" and the "Guild of the Poor Brave Things" are now famous all over the country. "Sister Grace," who is responsible for these, was originally a Sister in the West London Mission. It was Mrs. Ewing's book, *The Story of a Short Life*, that suggested the idea for the "Guild of the Poor Brave Things." The object of this guild is to help and cheer the lives of crippled and deformed children. Everything that loving thought and willing hands can do to brighten the miserable existence of the little sufferers is carried out by an ardent band of workers under "Sister Grace's" direction; the poor mites on crutches have even learnt to tramp it round the gymnasium to musical drill. Fresh guilds on the same lines have sprung up in other parts of the country, and these in themselves should provide scope for many sympathetic girls who have some little time to spare each week. The members of the "Guild of Play" are the Board School children in the district; and these hold weekly meetings in the Board Schools and playgrounds, where they are taught how to play—not the wild horseplay of the embryo Hooligan, that used to be the order of the day, but all the old English games, with singing and *tableaux*, and valuable moral discipline thrown in all unconsciously.

Work among children is pre-eminently women's work. The Children's Home, which was founded by Dr. Stephenson, offers a large field in this direction. The members of the community are known as "The Sisters of the Children." No candidate is admitted as a probationer under twenty-one years of age, but the authorities prefer her to be at least twenty-three. Two years must be spent on probation before a worker can become a fully-fledged Sister. Board and lodging are ordinarily provided free of charge to both candidates and probationers, but in cases

where the applicant or her friends are able to meet the expense of the preliminary training they are expected to do so. Those engaged in the work of the Children's Home, who have private means, give their services gratuitously; but the position of those who receive pecuniary allowance is not in any way different from those who do not.

Every sister is required to pay one shilling per month to the Sisters' Superannuation Fund, which guarantees to those spending thirty-five years in the service, an annuity of twenty-five pounds per annum on their retirement from the work. Sisters who have spent twenty-five years in the service, and are compelled by ill-health to retire, may receive, if the application be approved by the Committee, a proportionate annuity. Sisters retiring before completing twenty-five years of service will be entitled to have the amount of their subscriptions returned to them, but without interest.

The Baptist Sisterhood in Doughty Street is first and foremost a nursing and medical community. Experience proves that the bulk of the people can be more readily reached through the cure of their body than in any other way. The Doughty Street Sisters therefore start work upon this foundation. They have an excellent dispensary, and Dr. Lush, the Honorary Medical Officer, devotes much time each week from his large practice to attend to the crowds of patients who present themselves for free treatment. Serious cases, that require constant attention and supervision, the Sisters nurse in the patients' own homes—if such the garrets and hovels can be called. Invariably they have to supply linen and clothing in addition to food and medicine, so desolate are the poor creatures. Some of the Sisters work in connection with chapels in other districts, but in all cases they specialise on medical work. They are provided with board and lodging and, when needful, a yearly sum of fifteen pounds each for dress and pocket-money.

I have only space to refer briefly to the Congregational Sisterhood at Canning Town. Here a work of great dimensions is being carried on, and medical work is again a prominent feature. This settlement has a hospital of its own, and numbers two lady doctors among its resident officials, in addition to three lady physicians, and two lady surgeons on its consulting-staff. Resident workers contribute a guinea a week towards their board and lodging; and two scholarships are awarded annually to those who are otherwise eligible, but are unable to afford the expense. A scholarship entitles the holder to a year, free of cost of living, at the Settlement.

Though I am obliged to leave unnamed many bands of workers which are quite as deserving of mention as those I have dealt with, I think enough has been said to show our readers what a large amount of work is being done—and what a still larger amount is waiting to be done—by girls and women who would follow the example of One Who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

US AND MOSES.

BY MARY E. HULLAH.

CHAPTER I.

THE entry of the birth of the twins was inscribed on the page of the family Bible immediately after the entry of the death of their brother Reginald.

Their names were Theodore and Dora Weylette. Theo had brown eyes that looked out on to the world benevolently. He carried his square chin high, and believed Under Grange to be the most favoured spot in the British Isles. Dora was fair, blue-eyed, loving, irresistible. She was the only person in the house who had not yet found out that she ruled her father with a rod—of gold.

The Weylettes were people who had seen better days. The present owner of Under Grange had settled down on

the patrimonial estate and farmed his own land. There was not much of it; folks said that the Squire made up in pride for what he lacked in acres.

Christmas-time and a raw winter afternoon. Theo stood in the study, his hands in his knickerbocker pockets.

"Father," he announced in a high boyish treble, "we have found a friend."

Vere Weylette raised his eyes from his book.

"I am glad to hear it, my boy! May I ask where?"

"Near Meadlands. He's the learnedest chap you ever saw, and the stupidest! He fell into a ditch and laughed, and he's reading Cæsar. He's staying at the Vicarage at Glencross, and his name's Moses."