CHAPTER III.

ow Blanche Trent lived through the next two weeks was a puzzle even to herself. The most that she reflected on her Uncle Derwent's words, the more convinced she was that all he said was just and right. The Dingle had more than 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 misfit, and regard herself as the dependent, for that was what it amounted to. However, there was no alternative, and she had to end the dinner, climb the ladder 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, where they were all seated, resolved at least to impress her new relative with a sense of her importance at the very outset.

It was dark 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 show it. She stood by the hall door 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 sat down and turned back with an expression of surprise — "Uncle Derwent, this is Miss Lyster!"

"This was Miss Lyster, dear!" then seeing Blanche look indignant, he turned to her. "I really thought Blanche would welcome 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 looking 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 door opened, 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. "I was afraid it was too bad for her, too," 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 made for her. I think she will come back to us very soon, a wise, even if a solder girl."

(Tobe 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 certain at hand nations who are possessing all the blessings of civilisation, are still in deepest ignorance of the gospel. There are more than one nation that has never been explored, Africa, nor the peninsula of India, to find dark places where the light of truth has never shone. If the girls who have the great advantage of a tour on the Continent for their summer holidays, will spare a thought for the beauty of the country and the joy of the education 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 world. They can, 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 of their leisure to it, and so hindered in every direction for want of more helpers, and in many places especially of lady helpers. In many 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 variety 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 the people, that they may 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 unnecessary. During the last thirty years great change has been passing over the nations. A spirit of doubt seems to have swept over them, shaking their faith in their own national 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 commenced to look to some other doctrine, 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 circumstances which led to the beginning of Mr. McAll's great work in Paris. He was distributing tracts in one of the streets, when he was stopped by a lady, who asked 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 you will only tell them what it will do for them, they will listen to you." Some other working men standing near joined in, and said what he had spoken was the truth. With such an opening, Mr. McAll, after the best part of a year 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 ladies, especially especially Christian ladies, should not know what an opportunity they have of helping to proclaim the gospel in Paris." There is a very important one just mentioned, conducted by Mr. McAll. We may just say in passing that the chief characteristic of his work is the judgment with which he approves the action meetings he holds for the people. There is no controversy allowed, no long prayers, and no long sermons; but assistants invite all to come to the table, and the congregation is meant 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 character of Christ. He has been 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 destitute district of Portobello. Great things are done there by the Bible, 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 both 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 them to take home with them when they go. The assistants talk to, and explain difficulties to, any who wish for it. The patients also have the opportunity of buying Bibles; and as most 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 permit to describe them. We should strongly recommend all girls going abroad to buy, before starting, a little guide, published by the British and Foreign Evangelisation Society, giving a list of churches and places of worship in all the large 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 ministering 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 of Voltaire are not prejudiced in short and simple tracts, containing clear and definite refutations of these atheistical teachings, and very plain and simple statements of the doctrines of Christianity, people can be read with great interest, and arguments would be beyond their comprehension. We must fight with their own weapons, and since Voltaire and his like are prejudiced 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 Christian, gious Tract Society in this way. They have published religious literature of every description in all the languages of Europe, and in all the Protestant countries (to be found in any Bible shop containing every variety of books suitable for distribution. Probably girls in their expeditions would have the opportunity of giving away pictures, text cards, and illustrated letters suitable for peasants and children, than those prepared for more advanced thinkers. Possibly they might accept a picture or letter 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 another and another. Let us not forget the high privileges we have had his attention drawn to looking over a child's paper. Many other such instances might be given would space permit; these are only a small number. It might be the fact that many non-Catholics are daily in the service of the large towns of France. Everywhere there is much indifference and contempt of all religion; but elsewhere there is springing up a new sect, which many must not be allowed to go on unchecked. There is an urgent 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 the Church they seem to be opening their eyes to the pure faith of the early Christians. Till a few years ago, the Bible was prohibited 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 highly educated and deeply religious. 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 all of the sects, and are among the most loyal subjects and the most orthodox Catholics. There are many holding back from fear of ridicule and the petty persecutions they have to suffer from their employers and from their own friends. They gladly accept any books or tracts offered them.

It is hardly necessary to say a word of warning against giving away and spreading 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, passed in his printing and drew a tronc, and asked if we could give him any Christian books. He said a lady had given him a tronc once, and he had been very much interested, but had never been able to get another. He said he had had some in his cabin, and went down to get them. Supposing he was afraid of being laughed at by his companions or possibly he might have got into trouble; at all events he 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 book from me, thanked 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 astonishment not of preachers.

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

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 these was not even a history book without the most monstruous 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 tracts 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 increase is to be felt amongst all classes of people. Think of the changes in the last few years that have brought about. Twenty years ago, Spanish Protestants were condemned to the galleys; today 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 very bad, and there is a good deal of low-minded disbelief. On the other hand, Sunday-schools are increasing in number, and the old prejudices are fast disappearing. There is a great deal of unbelief, but many are only holding back from fear of ridicule and the petty persecutions they have to suffer from their employers and from their own friends. They gladly accept any books or tracts offered them.

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 and make 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 town 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 worship that are not approved, but are as right. Instead of spending the Sunday as they would do in England, brings disgrace on the name of Christians, and does the cause irreparable harm.

MARY SELWOOD.