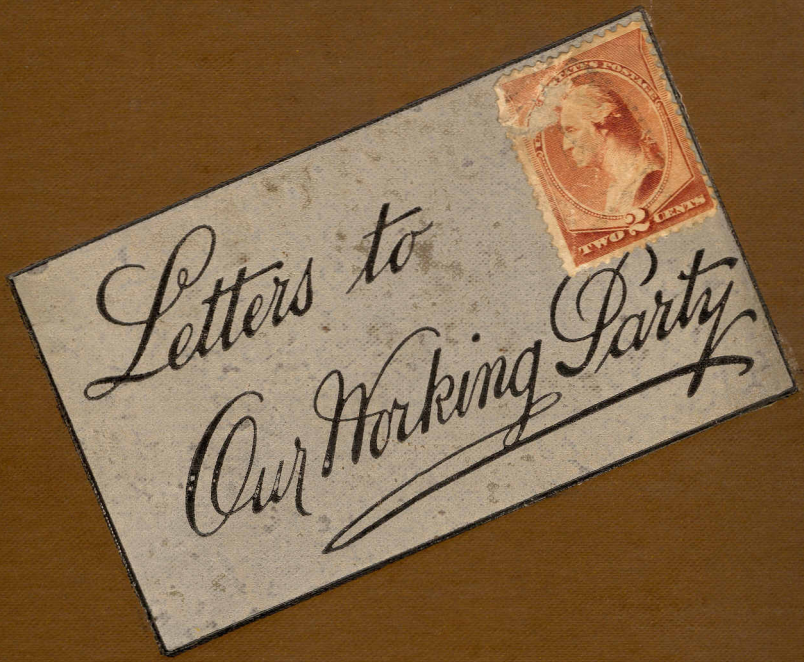

By the Author of
"Miss Toosey's Mission."

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LETTERS

TO OUR WORKING PARTY.

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BY THE AUTHOR OF

"MISS TOOSEY'S MISSION," &c.

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LETTERS TO OUR WORKING PARTY.

I.

DEARKATE,-I am so sorry to be away from home just when the working parties for Home :Missions are beginning, and can so fancy on Wednesday afternoons how pleasant and snug the Vicarage drawing-room looks, with the blazing wood-fire and the round table in the corner covered with heaps of cut-out work, and the centre table adorned with that dear old work-box, overflowing with reels and tapes and buttons and needles. And then at half-past two, how one after another you come dropping in, and there is a little standing about by the fire, warming hanJs and talking over the work and the needles and any little bit of village news, till Mrs. Miller puts on her spectacles and looks round with her kind, little smile, and says, "'Vell, I suppose we may as well begin reading," and then you all settle down in your places, and nothing more is heard but the dear old lady's voice, rather sleepy now and then, and the click of the needles and an occasional whisper to pass the scissors, till half-past four, when the

reviwing sound of tea-cups is heard outside the room, and you all begin to fold up your work with a sigh, and to think how industrious you have been.

You will smile, I daresay, when you read my regrets at being absent, and remember days when skating or a meet of the hounds wa~ a sore temptation to pass the Vicarage gate; but I do not think in those days I gave a thought as to what we were really working for, and only thought of getting the nice little chair in the corner, with my left hand to the light, and showing how much better I could make button-holes than any of the rest of you. Oh! those button-holes! I do not think I can ever make another, after what I have seen lately down in Haggerston, of girls making them for five farthings a dozen, working night and day with poor, strained, faded eyes, and after all only earning enough to keep the barest life in the most worn and weary of bodies. Why do they submit to such slavery? you ask. Because it is worse to starve, and they know there are dozens willing to do the work even for less.

But before I get hot and angry over these poor girls' wrongs, I want to know if, as I cannot join yoU!' working parties this year, I may be your special correspondent, and write to you an account of some of the interesting things I come across travelling about with Aunt Sophy, some of the great and beautiful work that is being done, where you can almost see the bdder *set* up on the earth and reaching to heaven, and the angels ascending and descending. I wonder sometimes if our little working parties may be allowed to help just one

little bit to keep these ladJers set for the angels to come down. I do not think they would ever seem dull, if we might think so. It is quite necessary to see some of the good that is being done, if it is only to get a little heart and hopk)and faith to look into the darkness and sin and ignorance that seems gathering so thickly all round.

I think, if you will let me, that I will begin with the)Iission of the Good Shepherd in Haggerston, for the mention of button-holes has brought that strongly into my mind, for the girls among whom the Mission is working are many of them button-hole makers, while others work at some branch of boot-making, and are either "paste-fitters," "machinists," "vampers," or "flowerers." I never knew before how many hands it takes to make a pair of boots, for after the women and girls have done their share, the men take it up, and it passes all to the" rivetters" and" finishers." 'rhe machine rooms are, many of them, dreadful places, where the girls sit, closely packed, side by side, in front of their machines, often working under gas and in constant distracting noise, frequently till ten o'clock at night, when the poor young things are turned out, tired and cramped with work, to-the streets. But besides the boot-makers, who mostly work at the factories, there are flower-makers, gimp and trimming-makers, fancy box and match-box makers, collar and slJirt-makecs, all sorts of makers, till one's heart grows sick and angry to think of the pretty, gay shop windows, all set out with their 'cheap finery, making the passer-by exclaim, "It's wonderful how cheaply they do things now-a-days." Wonderful ? We ought

rather to say dreadful and terrible, when we think of the price that is paid for these things. I do not mean the money given for the labour-collars stitched and finished at 2~d. the gross, match-boxes the same, out of which the \Yomen have to find the paste, and all the rest at much the same rate- but the heavy price of health and strength and life spent in providing us with our cheap finery; and then, too, to think of the cruel discouragement to honest work, and the temptation to take instead the wages of sin!

You would like to know what these girls are like, and I cannot say they are very attractive. I could not help wondering what Mrs. Miller would say some Sunday afternoon if, instead of her neat, blushing, little Friendly Girls, a party of these sharp-faced, brazen-looking young women made their appearance at the Vicarage Bible Class, with their greasy hair in ponies' manes down their backs, and cut in straight fringes just above their bold eyes, with their big, holland aprons, and white silk neck handkerchiefs, which seem to be a sort of uniform of the class, and generally with a hat and long white feather perched on the top of their heads, making one wonder how many button-holes or shirt collars and starvation must have gone to purchase that showy plume, and if the money had not better have been bestowed on boots and under-clothing which are usually of a most unsatisfactory description. But 1 am afraid if one could see below the surface, unattractive as it is, the prospect would be hardly more pleasing. Truth is a quality almost unknown among them; honesty, the same; purity? ah! one can hardly venture

to look for it in the foul atmosphere of Reform Place, Goldsmith's Row, Haggerston. They have no sense of honour, none of gratitude; they are greedy, cowardly, selfish; their language is often indescribably filthy; they are often the worse for drink; they think nothing of fighting with the men they call their "blokes," or among themselves, and oh! what can be more awful than two women fighting? They are altogether repulsive within and without, and it needs some of the faith that can remove mountains to dig down after the gold under all this refuse, and to patiently seek out the Image and Superscription on the defaced and disfigured coin.

But think of their homes! In many cases slatternly, scolding mothers, urunken fathers, rude -often thieving brothers, and a host of little ones everywhere. A hard bed shared with two or three others, often even roused from that if the drunken father comes in late and quarrelsome, or the brother is hiding a "pal" from the police. Hard work and scanty food every day, and if she have a sweetheart (though it seems almost profane to use that dear old word for the brutal ruffian), ten to one he gives her a black eye or knocks her about.. An utterly undisciplined, irregular life, going to bed when they feel sleepy or have a bed to sleep on, eating when they feel hungry, or have a halfpenny to buy strong smelling fried fish oj' potato chips. I wonder if you and I had such homes, if we should have been better than the worst of those drunken, abus;,'e women with black eyes and hard drink-degraded faces?

It was among these girls living in the neighbour-

hood of Goldsmith's Row, Haggerston, that the l\fission of tho Good Shepherd was begun now eight years ago, iI! a little room in Reform Place, by one of the Sisters of St. Saviour's Priory, whose heart had been greatly stirred by pity for these poor, black, wandering sheep. I think her heart must have failed her sometimes. I am sure mine would have done so very often, in the attempt to humanize these girls; and the discouragements, which she and the Sister who succeeded her in the work had to encounter, must have been well-nigh crushing; but patience has had bel' perfect work. The little light has been kept shining in that dark place, and by degrees small reflections have glimmered back from dark r,orners, little sparks of love have struck out of hearts that seemed like very flints, love for the Sister first of all and then to the Good Shepherd who sent her, little efforts of self-restraint, infinitelysmall in the sight of more disciplined natures, Lut not so in the sight of God who knows how difficult it is to them, a bad word checked, a blow not returned, an impure song hushed. Even in outward appearance there is somo improvement: fringes curled instead of straight, (and, do you know? this is the :first step in reformation) and greater cleanliness; there is a la\'atory on the basement under the house in Goldsmith's Row, to which the Mission has now moyed, where they can, as the girls say, "have a good "ash, wbere you can splash all round."

Every evening the room is open and the girls flock into it, wild with the reaction from their hard day's work, making a noise that would frighten

the ears polite of :0leadowland. The Si~ter makes no attempt to quiet the hubbub, it would be useless, and indeed it is the only safety -valve to give vent to superfluous spirits by loud, boisterous singing and romping about. By-and- bye they quiet down a bit, and on SOllle evenings can settle to real work, when llluch-blotted copies are written in the very sweat of their brows, and sums worked out and primers studied with various degreos of proflciency. There are play nights when a good "step-jig" stretehes restless young limbs tired and cramped from the machine, rings and various games are played at, and innocent street songs are sung in solo or chorus, always ending with Ken's dear old evening hymn, which they have learnt to sing reverently. There are Temperance nights, when songs and recitations are varied by speechifying; and Bible classes on Sunday evenings before church, to which the Sister takes her somewhat eccentric flock, who occasionally scandalize the more civilised part of the congregation by their unconventional behaviour.

There is so much I should like to tell you of those strange, wild creatures, of their summer excursion, of their Christmas gatherings, of the work the Young Woman's Help Society is doing among them, but I should like you to have *seen* the group of ragged, little urchins and "flash fringed" girls, and rough, brutal-looking "blokes" ttanding reverently on Christmas Eve before the little creche or "manger" as the people call it, which the Sister had built in a dark corner of the room with evergreens and virgin cork and simple Christmas texts and hymns hanging about it.

There was a little red lamp above, throwing its warm light on the listening faces round, and the group of pure white figures below, :Mary, Joseph, ox and ass, adoring the Holy Child, while the dear old Christmas story was simply told them. "'Vell, I don't a bit know what it means, but it's very touching," one poor woman said. And then all gathered round the old cracked harmonium and shouted out, "When Shepherds watched their flocks by night," and" Once in royal David's city," with a rough energy that did one's heart good to hear.

Just then, perhaps, at Meadowland, the choir-boys were singi.ng their carols in the moonlight outside the Vicarage. I know how sweet their voices sound in the great silence of the night. Here the voices, loud and rough as they were, were almost drowned by the roar of the streets outside, where Christmas marketing was going on, with all the shouting and swearing and quarrelling that seem a necessary part of it, while over the way, at the democratic club, some Atheist orator was holding forth noisily, amid bursts of loud applause; but through the din and wickedness of Haggerston as from the quiet moon-lit country, and from many and many a place besides, town and country, near and far, rose the same sweet song that the angels sang first at Bethlehem, " Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men."

Now I must end my letter, and wishing you and all the working party a very happy New Year, remain, yours affectionately, E. W.

II.

DEAR KATE,-The text to Illy first letter to you and the dear home working party was a button-hole, and I think the one to-day must be a plush tea-gown, such a pretty one too, of the most delicate pale blue and trimmed with soft cream-coloured lace, all so dainty that it seems as if you would soil it if you looked too hard at it. Does it make your mouth water? It did mine, I can tell you, when I saw it first in S. and D.'s show-room, and that dear, old Aunt Sophy saw my covetous glances and actually gave it to me there and then, as she said we were going soon to spend a few days at Merton Hall, where they dress a good deal, and my wardrobe is, as you know, of very modest dimensions. It is a great deal too pretty and elegant for me, and it will not be a bit of use when I come home, and Aunt Sophy gave a price for it that would have made my poor little purse more than empty, but she liked it so much herself and was so pleased to give it to me, that I should have been ingratitude itself if I had demurred, and, indeed; I was not the least inclined to do so, for I had never had anything half so pretty, and I went home in the greatest satisfaction, only longing that

you and Alice and Bessie and a good many more of those who, that very afternoon, were gathered together at the Meadowland working party, could see my lovely blue tea-gown. That was on Wednesday and now it is only Saturday, and that very blue tea-gown is such a weight on my heart that I could not sleep last night for thinking of it, and I got up more than once and raised the silver paper that covers it in the box, with the feeling that, as Ruskin says, "blood must spot it," and I do not know how I shall ever make up my mind to wear it.

Do not call me fanciful and capricious. Do you remember that story of David, when he was faint and weary in the heat of the battle, how he longed to drink of the water of the well at Bethlehem that is by the gate? What a real human sound there is in that story, even if it were not inspired one would know quite well that it was true, the longing for something from home; no water seemed so clear and bright and life-giving as the water from home, from Bethelehem by the well-known gate, and perhaps he felt the same sometimes even when he had come into his kingdom and could command the vineyards and brooks and water-courses of fair Canaan. And it was something of the same sort of feeling that made Naaman resent the order to wash in Jordan when his memory was full of the beautiful rivers of Damascus, Abana, and Pharpar. One knows the feeling so well oneself. Why those violets you put in your letter the other day, though they were Battened in the post, were twice as sweet to me as those we get in Covent Garden Market, just

because I know exactly where you picked them, under the hedge in the meadow behind the home farm, where we always find the first violets.

But do you remember what David did with the water wben those brave men brought it him? "He poured it out unto the Lord, and he said, Be it far from me, 0 Lord, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? Therefore he would not drink it." Oh! Kate, that is just what I feel about that plush dress, and, if it only would not hurt and disappoint dear Aunt Sophy, I would never wear it. It seems to me like tricking myself out with the life-blood and the health and the youth and the happiness of the work-girl who made it; God grant it may not be also with her purity and her honour and her hope of eternal life. Of one thing I am quite resolved, that every time I wear that dress I will put aside something to help these poor young sisters of ours, even though it can only be a trifling sum,-I was going to say" a mite," only I have come to realize what amazing presumption it is for anyone of us to use that word for our pitiful little offerings. I do believe that some of us think that the dear Lord praised the *smallness* of the widow's gift, the two farthings, instead of the *greatness* of it, "all that she had, even all her living," and we forget that the millionaire's mite would be nothing less than a million, and that with less well·filled purses it would be all that those purses ~ontain, instead of just the 3d. bit which ,ve fish out from among the larger coins when the offertory bag comes round,

But about these girls,-they are a very different

class to those I told you of last month, much more refined, some of them well-educated, many of them have known better days or are descended from families who have done so; some have gentle manners, soft voices, good taste, appreciation (if they have the chance) of poetry, and art, and beauty, are in short, very near being the young ladies they call themselves, though, poor things, they had really far better be servant girls, with good food and a warm bed and a kind mistress and reasonable hours for work and rest. But they prefer to remain young ladies, and, indeed, some of them are as good ladies as you or me, only without the comfort and the leisure, and the music and the books, and the change and the family life, and the society and the love, and the means of grace. Oh! what a poor, dreary thing to be a young lady with all these adjuncts and circumstances stripped away, and nothing left but business and bed, business and bed, day after day; business taking up 12 to 14 hours of every week-day, so that they are too exhausted on Sunday to think of anything but rest. Sir John Lubbock says, "It is understating the case to call it slavery, for no slaves ever worked half so hard."

My plush tea-gown comes back heavily on my heart as I think of one girl, for she works on such very things, may, perhaps, have had a hand in mine. She sits in the workroom from eight in the morning till eight at night-twelve hours-often lengthening to fourteen under stress of work, and these short, foggy winter days the gas is often burning all day, and the air grows hotter, drier, fouler and more impure every minute. And for

this she receives ten shillings a week, and, every time she receives that weekly pay, her heart gives a wretched throb of fear and sickening anticipation as to how long she will be able to earn it, for she is losing her sight from the hard work; the sight of one eye is gone, and the other is weakening and needs rest; but it is only just barely possible to pay her way from week to week, and if she once gets behindhand, a month out of work or even a week makes it a desperate matter to ever catch up again: and so these girls would rather do anything than confess to being ill; will refuse to see a doctor, even if they get the chance, will smother the cough (and do you know how terribly common lung disease is among these girls?) say not a word of the sharp pain in their side~, of the splitting headache, of the legs swelled and aching with standing behind the counter. Do you remember, Kate, that time when we helped at the old English fancy fair at R--, how, in spite of all the fun, our feet ached, and how tired we were with standing just those four or five hours for three days? And think of a girl who has stood 12 or 14 hours a day for six years as a shop assistant, with twenty minutes allowed for dinner, and not always a seat then! Is life worth the living? They say this question is largely discussed in the London workrooms, and I greatly fear, if I were in their place, I should say it was not; and oh! how ashamed it makes one feel of one's own attacks of gloom and discontent ana. ill-temper, which one dignifies with the name of depression, and treats as if it were some affiiction imposed by Providence, to

be endured with a martyr-like feeling by ourselves and others, instead of realizing that it is just grown-up naughtiness, for which we ought mentally to whip ourselves and put ourselves in the corner, and come out smiling in less than five minutes like little Tom Flowers, when he has been, as his mother says, "kinder disagreeable," and she has helped him out of it.

And yet these girls, thousands of them, keep on day after dreary day, serving in shops with smiles on their lips and civil words to tiresome customers; sitting in close workrooms, making pretty, elegant, tasteful things for other girls, no younger, no prettier, no more graceful than themselves; working machines, sorting boxes, folding books, in a dreary monotony of work and bed; "a life of drudgery leading to an early grave; " not a moment left for family and social intercourse, for relaxation, for freo;h ail' and exercise, for reading, for amusement, or for self-improvement. It is almost a relief to hear of one who stands sorting boxes all day, who has a mother to nurse when she gets home at night, though that mother is dying by inches of a terrible form of cancer. Yes, though it disturbs her too well-earned nights, and wears her out with anxiety and pity, still it keeps the human heart alive in her, and prevents her from becoming the mere machine into which she would otherwise grow. And so, indeed, it has proved to be the case, for this very girl, shut in among her walls of boxes, ;finds Spencer's "Faerie Qneen" an interest and delight. I think we will read it through, Kate, you and **I,** when I come home; but even on

its leaves we may find those spots of blood, the blood of those who went in jeopardy of their lives that we might haye those books so cheap. It used to be such a pleasure to me to go into the big booksellers and depots and turn over the sweet-smelling, uncut volumes; but, now that I know the payment for folding and stitching those pages, the voice of my brothers' and sisters' blood crieth unto me from the books.

The more one knows of these girls, the more one wonders that so many stand firm, resisting the temptations that throng around them, keeping stedfastly to the path of virtue that is so dull, so tedious, so miserably unattractive. There are hundreds who day by day pass through temptations hotter than a fiery furnace, "and they have no hurt," for surely, if we could but see it, there is One walking with them in the midst of the fire, and His form is like the Son of God.

You and I can have, thank God, no notion of what the temptation is as the girls leave the hot work-rooms or shops late at night, wearied and jaded, disheartened with the dreary past, sick of the monotonous present, shrinking from the gloomy future, as they hurry through the crowded streets, or by tram and Metropolitan train to the poor, lonely room they call home. They have but to hold out their hands, they are offered ease, comfort, refinement (the greatest temptation to many), sham love; and the poor daz;Jed, young eyes, wearied with making my plush tea-gown, or folding that wonderfully cheap book, cannot always see through the golden dream to the black and bitter waking. They are lonely,

friendless, loveless; if they have ever been in better circumstances so much the worse, for their relations look down on them. Is it not wonderful that they stand?

Oh ! Kate, what would you like to do for them? I know what you will say. Take them quite away, and let them rest, at any rate, for a few weeks; put them in a comfortable arm-chair, in a pretty room with pictures and tasteful things about, with a piano and flowers, and with windows looking on to a garden with soft grass and singing birds, and, perhaps, beyond that the sea, such a sea as one sees in Devonshire, deep, deep blue with great bars of purple cloud-shadows and reflections; and you would like to know there was a little bed, soft and white like yours and mine, ready for those weary, weary limbs and aching heads, in a dainty, lady-like bedroom, where they can have their sleep out. And when they have slept a little of the weariness out of their eyes, and a little of the dull bitterness out of their hearts, you would like to show them all sorts of lovely countrified things, sweet banks, with primroses growing, and young ferns uncurling; thrushes' nests, with warm, blue-speckled eggs; larks singing high in the sunshine; the sun setting in crimson glory over the sea; soft, little waves rippling up on a silver white beach; and the great calm moon drawing her silver pathway across the sea. Think what it would be to take such memories back into the hot work-rooms and close shops, among the walls of boxes and the miles of ribbons ! I think it would make life worth living.

And this is just what has been done, what we

can help to do. At Babbacombe, near Torquay, a holiday house was opened eight years ago for a house of rest for women in business. It will receive thirty visitors. They are not "patients" or "cases," but visitors, and Ferny Hollow is as nearly as possible a pleasant country house, without any vexatious rules or tiresome interference. It is all pretty and tasteful, such as we have been imagining just now. There is a large drawing-room with sofas, arm-chairs, pictures, piano, books, and flowers, and upstairs the pretty bedrooms are not dormitories or wards, but each holds two or three little white beds, round which dainty curtains may be drawn when privacy is desired, and the rooms are called "the rose room," "the green room," "the peacock room," "the violet room," and the walls are tinted to suit their names. And I need not tell you what awaits the girls when, after a good rest, they venture out of Ferny Hollow. You know what South Devon is, and above all Babbacombe; you know the blue sea, and the ruddy cliffs, and the green meadows, and the white marble beach. You know the lovely Devollshire lanes and combes, and the flowers that spring everywhere, and the ferns and moss. How beautiful it is! But what must it be to these girls, many of whom have never had a holiday, never seen the sea, never picked a primrose? "It is like heaven," said one. "It must be easy to be good here," said another. I do not think they debate whether life is worth living at Babbacombe.

I am afraid of making my letter too long, or else I should like to tell you how perfectly happy

the girls are there; of the bathing and boating and excursions, of the picnics on the beach and in the woods, of the pleasant evenings of music and games, of the friendships made there, of the stores of health and life they carry away with them; and not only health and life, but hope and courage, and faith in human kindness and in God's great goodness. But if (as I am sure you would) you would like to hear more, send a stamped envelope to Miss Skinner, Bayfield, Babbacombe, and she will tell you all about it much better than is in the power of your affectionate, **E. W.**

III.

DEAR KATE,-In my first letter to you and the working party I tried to tell you something of the girls of Haggerston, among whom the :Mission of the Good Shepherd is working. And now I should like to tell you about the men of the same class, "the blokes" in fact, of whom I made passing mention in my first letter, and I think that the best way of introducing them to you is by asking you to go back to the 6th of January, the Feast of the Epiphany, and meet 60 of them at supper.

It seems a shame to ask you to step back from the lovely spring weather with the dear, pale primroses coming out in starry knots along the hedgerows, and the birds calling to one another in those long, sweet notes that tell of snug nests and warm eggs, and the young, thick-legged, awkward lambs jumping about in their own delightful objectless way, and to return to the bitter cold of the beginning of January, when the grimy frozen snow lay about the streets, and the silent, cold starvation on the faces of the women and children made one ashamed of one's sealskins, and sicken at one's good luncheon, and struck deeper into one's heart than the monotonous cry, "We've got no work to do; we're all froze out, poor, labouring men, we've

got no work to do," which sounded in one's ears from morning to night.

Some money had been sent at Christmas to the mother of St. Saviour's Priory, Haggerston, to be spent on the *ttndeserving,* and she and one of the sisters held solemn council one day as to how this money could best be applied. Not that it was so difficult to find undeserving, perhaps the difficulty would have been the other way, but it seemed quite a duty to find the most worthless and the least respectable of the Haggerston community, and among so many shades of grey to pick out the darkest instead of choosing such as by comparison look almost white. At first sight it seemed as if something was being done for everyone; there were presents, and parties, and teas, and suppers, and Christmas trees for guilds and school children, for men, and Mother Kate's lambs, for mothers and girls ranging in degrees of respectability from the highly superior fathers and mothers of " Nazareth" to the girls belonging to the Mission of the Good Shepherd, who had a cheerful party of much dancing and mincepies on Boxing Day.

But at last they remembered one class for which nothing was being done, and who certainly came very satisfactorily under the head of undeserving. The blokes had been left out in the cold, and it *was* cold just then, even if you keep close outside the swing doors of a flaring gin-shop and dig your hands as deep as possible into your pockets, and hop first on one foot and then on the other to keep a little life in them, and shrug your thin shoulders up to your blue ears. You could see such by the dozen outside every public-house, and at every

street corner if you go down Goldsmith's Row any day. They are for the most part under-sized, small, poorly made, narrow-chested, knock-kneed, it is difficult to tell their ages, they are men at twelve, and enter on a dead level of degraded manhood till (if they live) they break up into old age and decrepitude at about thirty-five. They have hollow cheeks, large coarse mouths, narrow foreheads, small eyes that never look straight at you, close cropped heads, for their last hair-dressing may have been in prison. Some of them are professional thieves, there is a gang of such in Goldsmith's Row, hanging about a part they call "Piggie's Island," which sounds a remarkable name, but may be traced back to a French weaver, Pige, one of those who at one time made a flourishing colony in Haggerston, where even now a few velvet and silk looms still linger, though they are fast dying out under the blighting influence of Free Trade. Some of these men are costermongers, others glass-blowers, in which employment they work alternate fortnights by day and by night. Some of them work in Lynes wood-yard, the place where there was the great fire in November, 1883, which burnt for a fortnight. Those who work there are called Lyneses dogs, and are reported to be a very low set, as also are the girls who tie up the wood in bundles. Some of them are cracker makers, and these mostly live in a place called the Rookery, where they ply their unhealthy and badly-paid trade in the midst of wretchedness and wickedness unimaginable.

You would get a good idea of this sort of man if you went to the vVorship Street Police Court On

Monday morning, for numbers of them are brought up there every week on the charge of being drunk and disorderly on Saturday night, and attacking the police outside the music halls, theatres or public-houses. They largely frequent the music halls, of which the Belmont is one of the lowest. Have you ever heard of such a person as a chucker out? and do you know what a knuckleduster is? A chucker out is a regularly recognized functionary at music halls, his duties being to clear the place at the time for closing, and, I assm'e you, his duties are arduous enough. A man named "Basher," who is devoted to Mother Kate, and a constant visitor at the Priory, was for some time" chucker out" at the Belmont, and he found it necessary to make use of a knuckleduster to clear the hall, a thing like the fingers of a glove made of brass and fastened by a strap round the wrist, which, on occasion, gives such a blow as oven the most obstreperous" bloke" fears to receive.

Pigeon flying is one of the great-amusements, I was going to say, but I think I ought rather to call it one of the serious businesses of the men of these parts, as it is their method of gambling. Before I knew the reason, it seemed to me a touch of nature about the men that so many of them kept pigeons and apparently took great care of them and treated them well. It brought back to my mind the breakfast-room window at home, and the pigeonI' coming bridling, and strutting, and preening their pretty necks on the gravel-path outside, waiting to be fed, "with their quick, pink feet and their dainty airs lind the bright iris on their burnished feathers. I know that it is un-

reasonable, but I hardly think I shall care for them so much again now that I know that they are the innocent means of such miserable gambling. Sunday is the usual day for this, and bOl(es of pigeons are carried out to Walthamstow or Leighton and let fly there, and money is made or lost according to the length of time the pigeon takes in flying home. Poor, faithful, little bird returning to some wretched, dirty, little room in Haggerston, instead of turning to the beautiful, clean, free country, coming back as truly and faithfully as if the flood still covered the earth and the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot and must needs return to the ark.

It was on these men that Mother Kate resolved to expend the money given for the undeserving, and the Feast of the Ephiphany was fixed upon as the most appropriate day for the purpose, as, being the Manifestation to the Gentiles, it is without doubt the feast of the undeserving, and also a day when we should try to pass on a little of the undeserved light to others who sit in darkness and the shadow of death. Having fixed the day it was soon decided as to what form the entertainment should take, as Mother Kate in her long experience of work, principally among boys, had learnt the truth of the old saying about the nearest way to a boy's heart; and when you have to deal with very low natures, you mllst make llse of the most elementary form of kindness, which is, undoubtedly, fee(ling, a feeder being the simplest idea of a friend.

So a supper it was to be of the most plentiful description and of the sort most likely to please

the guests, and, I assure you, as much thought was expended on the choice as over the most elaborate *menu* to tickle the refined palates of a party of epicures, and you would have smiled to see the anxious discussions over the respective merits of beef and pork. " Don't you think roast pork with *lots* of onions? "

Mother Kate has a theory, founded on experience, that a boy's appetite is almost unlimited, so provision was made on a liberal scale. 58Jbs. of beef and pork to be roasted, and to be accompanied with large basins of stuffing and gravy, 3 dozen savoy cabbages, 1~ sacks of potatoes, 30 Ibs. of very substantial plum pudding. All down the table were arranged at near intervals, salt, mustard, pepper, and vinegar, the latter, let me tell you, being quite *de rigueur* with cabbage. One glass of beer round to each guest if they liked it, and unlimited lemonade for the others and to follow the beer.

But first of al1 the invitations had to be delivered, and this was a work of some difficulty, as the first who were asked were shy and distrustful, suspecting some trick or dodge about it, and :r:nany of them having strong reasons for avoiding respectable society and the light of day. But Sister F. had a slight acquaintance with two or three of them through the girls of the Mission of the Good Shepherd, or had wrung a surly" Good evening" out of them as they loafed round the entrance to Reform Place; and, while I am in that neighbourhood, I should like to tell you a story of one of these girls, that you may see what manner of men these "blokes" may be, though the bloke

in question was not one of the sixty at the supper, and, indeed, was hardly to be reckoned a bloke at all, as he wore a collar, which constitutes him more a "toff" or a " masher."

Mary Anne was one of the bettermost of the girls, nice-looking and quiet, a boot machinist, living at home with her family, fairly decent people. It came to the Sister's ears that she had taken up with a young man, and she asked the girl about it, and soon had the whole story. He was very respectable, and had walked home from work with her for some time, and had asked her in to supper with some friends once or twice, and he talked of marrying her and going to Australia. But her mother must know nothing of it, it was all to be a secret, and she was not to say anything at home. The Sister felt very uneasy, and still more so when Mary Anne said he wanted her to go with him to the Britannia Theatre, "the Brit," as they call it, on Saturday night.

" Don't go," said the Sister.

"I'm afraid," said the girl, "he says if I don't come he'll pay me out."

" Don't go," urged the Sister, and at last Mary Anne promised she would not. She was evidently distrustful herself of the man, and yet she would rather like to go with him, and she was afraid what he would do if she refused. When Saturday came, the Sister watched anxiously for Mary Anne, and feared greatly when she did not come at the usual time. But at last she appeared, pale and scared-looking and silent, and when the other girls were gone, she told what had happened. She had been cleaning down the stairs when he came.

"I'm not going," she said. "Yes, you are, or I'll pay you." They argued some time, and still she stuck to her refusal, and at last he said he would ask her three times and if she still refused she must take the consequences. She stood against the wall, and he asked her three times, "Will you go?" And when the third" No" came, he struck at her such a blow as might have killed her if she had not quickly dipped her head away, and such was the strength of the blow, that, coming against a loose brick in the wall, he cut his hand so badly that he had to go to the hospital to have it dressed. Such, dear Kate, are the lovers' quarrels in Haggerston !

But when the £.rst few invitations had been given, and the men asked if they had friends who would like to come, the numbers soon £.lled up. Men waited outside the Mission-house with £.1thily dirty lists of names in which Jack and Wally seemed the prevailing Ohristian name, and some of them bore curious nicknames "Donkey Bray" being one. Wally Samuel, the champion whistler, was not able to attend, such talents as his being doubtless much in request.

They were all admitted by ticket and specially invited not to come "dressed." Now this will surprise you, I expect, as one does not generally associate dress clothes and white ties with East-end costermongers; but what was meant was that they need not wear their Sunday clothes, which, if they have them, mostly spend the week at the pawn-brokers'; but to come in their working clothes, striped guernsies and " pearlies" (pearl buttons on coat), and spotted handkerchiefs round their necks.

Towards the end crowds had to be refused; but at eight o'clock on January 6th, sixty were admitted to the long low room at the Lodge, which is generally devoted to the boys called Mother Kate's lambs. There was no superfluous ornament except large vases of gorgeous paper flowers, pink and orange coloured, and plentiful crackers, which were pulled as the preliminary ceremony, and each cropped, ill-shaped head adorned with a cap, helmet, foolscap, crown, or granny's nightcap, which greatly enhanced the general effect.

Then, grace having been sai.d, si.lence alJd severe application to business ensued, and you can fancy that the carvers had a brisk time of it. One of the Sisters said she could see the men swell, as helping after helping was passed down to them. I don't like the adjective generally, but I can only say that they were *aufully* hungry. One of them said that he thought he had had about enough after three helpings of beef and one of pork, and pudding still to come.

Their manners were irreproachable; they could not help hooraying when the puddings came in, but otherwise they behaved with the greatest discretivn, and they unanimously agreed at the end that they had never had such a "blowout" in their lives.

After supper the tables were cleared, and if there had been any doubt on the part of their entertainers how to amuse their guests, such doubts were entirely set at rest by finding that the guests at once, without hesitation, took. the entertainment into their own hands. A chairman was

chosen from among them, who took his place at the end of the room with a hammer in his hand, a tap of which immediately stoppp-d the least tendency to noise or disorder; a vice-chairman supported him on either side, and the rest of the company ranged themselves round the room, and when a plentiful supply of tobacco appeared on the scene; and pipes were produced from every pocket, the scene, as far as visible through the clouds of smoke, was orderly in the extreme, far more so than a corresponding party of girls would have been.

I really think the poor fellows appreciated the tobacco as much as they did the supper, and I fancy the whole affair was managed very much as they do what are called" leads" at a public-house. Whenever there was any commotion the hammer descended with, "Order, gentlemen, order!" and the effect was instantaneous.

Then the singing began, a man with a fiddle having been brought in to accompany the songs, most of which were of a very sentimental order, while all, both sentimental or comic, were of the most strict propriety. It seemed strange to hear "Mr. William Sale will oblige," and the gentleman in question sing with much pathos in a hoarse tenor, "Voylets plucked from my dear mother's grave," the said mother being still living and constantly tipsy and given to furious affrays with her son, the two being not unfrequently seen fighting like wild beasts up and down" the Row," to the entertainment of admiring crowds, There wa" also a verse in the song about the venerable father reading the Bible to his assembled family, Mr.

Sale, senior, being a worthy spouse to such a mother.

"And now, gentlemen," said the chairman, "Mr. Bill Hart will oblige with a horn-pipe, after which, if agreeable, some of the gentlemen will take a turn with the gloves."

The horn-pipe should by rights have been danced in clogs, with half-pence in their heels to promote greater noise; but these were dispensed with on the present occasion, and really to an uncultivated ear the noise produced was quite sufficient. It was danced in perfect time and kept up fur a period that must have been very fatiguing to the performer as it certainly was to one of the spectators, though the rest seemed greatly to appreciate it.

Then came the boxing. Do you recollect when Lance and Percy used to box how very dull we used to think it, when, at last we had been convinced that it was not very dangerous to knock one another about with those great gloves? I am afraid I am much of the same opinion still, but the company were of a very different mind, and sat watching with breathless interest and attention, appreciating the science of each blow, applauding their favourites and wanting apparently no other amusement for any length of time. The combatants stripped off their coats, revealing striped guernsies, and bare, scraggy arms and necks of the most gaunt description, curiously devoid of muscle, but displayed with all the pride of a Hercules.

It was all conducted with great solemnity and etiquette, shaking hands between each round, and stopping directly time was called, and walking

round, and when the combatants were out of breath the backers intervened, and the heroes were led off to rest and to have their faces wiped.

There were some more songs afterwards, and then three cheers were given for their entertainers, and then someone in authority said, "Now, gentlemen, your hats," on which they all tore off without a moment's hesitation, being no doubt used to clearing time at the Belmont and the attentions of the chucker-out and his knuckle-duster. Only a fmYstopped to say good-night and shake hands, recognizing, perhaps, that it was not the Belmont, nor Mother Kate the chucker-out.

And there was an end of it? Yes, I am afraid so. To be sure one lad appeared in church next Sunday with his sweetheart, probably for the first time in his life. The girls of the Mission of the Good Shepherd commenting on the fact, said, "It was that supper that did it." "No," said the Sister, anxious not to impute low motives, "for the supper was over." "Oh! but it was that beef that made him want to be good." But good as the iJeef was, one can hardly hope the effects will last very long, and there is nothing being done for these" blokes," and no one is working among fu~.

To be sure, there is the Radical Olub, where, if they can afford 6d. a week, they can drink their full of poison. There is a large concert-room, library, billiards, lectures, any amount of drink, open nights when women are admitted, Sunday excursions in brakes, and now children's entertainments have been begun, as if the corruption did

not begin early enough already. The sowing of tares goes on bravely in Haggerston, you may be snre.

And jnst opposite the Radical club there is a large rough room, empty now since some Russian Nihilists were turned out of it, which seems just meant for these men, a room where they could box, and sing, and smoke, and have a library and Mission Services on Sundays. There is a lady too who has offered £15 a year towards the rent, but -" the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the Harvest."

I cannot help hoping as I read that story of the star that shone in the East to bring kings to the brightness of His presence, that a star may shine in the darkness of Haggerston for these poor Gentiles too. Does it seem profane almost to compare these poor, low, ignorant" blokes" to the wise men who, even in a heathen land, knew the prophecy, and watched for His appearing? They were kings too, and brought rich presents of gold, and frankincense and myrrh. But, indeed, so are these children of the Great King, heirs of the kingdom of heaven, and they can each of them bring to lay at His feet the most precious offering and the dearest in His sight, an immortal human soul, and the sweetest incense of their praise.

Dear Kate, my letter this month ends a little sadly, but it is so much more cheerful to tell of good works being done or even begun, than of fields white already to harvest without labourers.

Your affectionate

E. W.

IV.

DEAR KATE,-I hope all the coughs and colds at Meadowland are better; I mean the real *bona-fide* grown up coughs, not the sudden attacks of scraping and hacking which come on among the school children when they see Mrs. Miller looming in the distance, reckoning in their artful young hearts on the lozenge in the corner of her bag, or on the plentiful supply of honey and lemon or black currant jam that proceeds from the Vicarage store-room. I myself, as a child, always thought of that store-room when I heard of the land flowing with milk and honey. But I am afraid the bitter east winds in March must have been bad for a good many at Meadowland who cannot be so easily cured by Mrs. Miller's pleasant remedies, and that poor old Mrs. Blake will be having what she calls "brongtyphus," and Lizzie Martin "indigestion of the lungs," as they did last year in the cold spring weather.

I thought of old Mrs. Blake's cough the other day as I was passing along a narrow street in Westminster. We had been at the stores, and you know what a lengthy matter that is, and it was nearly six by the time that Aunt Sophy had quite done, and when we came out into Victoria

Street it was nearly dark, and a nasty, raw cold evening, with an east wind penetrating ~U one's wraps, and a fog gathering. You know that Aunt Sophy thinks she possesses the bump of locality to a high degree, and can find her way about London blindfold, and she despises the assistance of policemen whom I regard as a superior substitute in London for signposts, and to whom I always fly if I have the slightest hesitation as to the way. She is not always to be relied on, however, as I have found to my cost on more than one occasion, when she has entrapped me into trams going in precisely the wrong direction, or hurried me into a train that my inner consciousness convinced me was not right.. So this evelling I was looking wildly round for a helmet, when she suddenly turned off down a little side street and declared in a decided tone that she would take me home by a short cut. I had serious misgivings, but was afraid of losing her in the fog, so followed closely down one street and then another, till, as I said before, a cough just like old Mrs. Blake's carried my thoughts away from the foggy Westminster street to the Meadowland almhouses, and the dear, old woman, sitting up in her snug corner by the fire, with the patchwork curtain hanging from the shelf to keep the smoke in, and the invariable little brown tea-pot on the hob, and talking of her "brongtyphus." It was just such a hollow cough as hers, and came from one of a group of men waiting round a door, through which, just as we passt:ld,one of them was called, and then the door closed, leaving the others out in the east wind and the fog.

"What are they waiting there for?" I asked, and Aunt Sophy, after a quick glance up at the high building, answered, "Why this must be the Newport Market Refuge in its new quarters, and they are just letting the men in for the night. We will go in and see Sister Zillah."

So in we went at another door and were soon ushered upstairs to a large warm room, where the women, who had just been admitted, were sitting gradually recovering from the nipping effects of the bitter east wind and sullen fog on weary bodies and wearier hearts. What was the history of some of those sitting there? It seemed almost impertinent to scan the dull, drooping faces to try and guess what brought them there, penniless, without means to get a night's lodging. No doubt there were romances there as thrilling and strange and sad as any of those we get from the library and cry over, only these are not bound in scarlet and gold with Mudie's label on their sides. Some of them may have seen better days, may even have been ladies, for, in the list of the occupations of those admitted to the Refuge last year, there are authors, artists, literary men, governesses, classical tutor, linguists, reporters, medical men. Many who come have known a life of comfort if not affiuence, have been well educated, have started in life under favourable auspices, with hope and ambition and bright anticipations, and have sunk sometimes suddenly, sometimes gradually, till they are friendless, penniless, and hopeless. It is so diffi0ult to realize how it is possible for people to sink away out of sight and get lost in London;—people, I mean, like you and me, Kate, with plenty

of friends and relations, and with strong hands and an average amount of brains-and yet they do. There was the case of Miss Baker. Has Aunt Sophy ever told you about her and her poor, old, blind sister? Their father was a graduate of Christ Church, Oxford, had been an author of some mark in his day, and he and his family had lived in considerable cumfort in a village in Berkshire. The elder daughter had spent many years of her life with an uncle who, when he died, left her in possession of a comfortable fortune. She had travelled in Spain and Italy, and in later years lived with her sister in a pretty country-house near Exeter. After their father's death, however, they fell victims to the dishonesty of an unprincipled lawyer and an uncle, till by a series of misfortunes, which it would take too long to detail, they sank lower and lower and dropped out of sight. When they were found, by chance as people say, by Providence as they mean, they were starving in a little back room in Haggerston. On a heap of filthy rags in a corner lay the elder one, 70 and blind, wrapped in an old black shawl (her only covering) her bare feet and legs lyillg stretched out on the floor. The other sister, a few years younger, was dressed in a ragged petticoat and cloak and an old pair of goloshes, both dirty and emaciated beyond description, yet both, even in the midst of their misery and degradation, bearing unmistakable traces of better days. The shrunken, star-ved features were delicate and refined, and there was a pathetic mixture of the sublime and ridiculous in the old-fashioned courtesy with which they received their visitors. The help came just

in time for these poor creatures, but ah! how many there may be to whom it does not come.

Well, to return to the Refuge. On either side of the room were the heds, sacking strained on frames, close side by side, with pillows and warm coloured blankets for all, and at the end of the room were five small cubicles for those of a better class. But we had not time to see them then, for the Sister (not Sister Zillah, wh<;>I am sorry to say, was ill) asked us if we would like to see the men admitted, and took us down to a small room with a window opening into the passage just within the door, outside which we had seen the group of men waiting.

Here the Superintendent was seated with a large book, and one or two gentlemen belonging to the Board which had just been sitting. The men were admitted one by one, those who looked superior to the mere casual or tramp being given the preference, for the Refuge is not meant for a casual ward, minus the stone-breaking and oakum-picking, but for those who have fallen from respectable antecedents, whose distress may be only temporary, and who may be helped to find work or to return to their friends before they sink deeper into the mire of poverty and crime. As each man comes up to the window with the light full on his face, he is closely scrutinized and questioned, but not bullied or browbeaten. The Superintendent has a wonderful faculty for recognizing faces that he has seen before, and though during the year more than five thousand nights' lodgings were given to men, and no man is allowed to come again after the seven nights

allowed him within a twelvemonth, he seemed able in a second to recognise any that had bel:'ll there before and to remember facts about them even before, he had turned them up in the big ledger before him. There was no opport1l'uity given for untruth, no reason for deceit; no object in cant. There was something very touching in the men's faces, a touch of defiance at first, disappearing as the kindly questioning went on, and in one case ending in such a quivering of the lip, that my eyes grew so dim I could hardly see the eager upturned face. A clerk, out of work, trying in vain to get employment, had answered advertisements for men to direct envelopes at 2s. 6d. a thousand, but had no answer-had been a shoe-black for a time, slept in the streets the night before, no means of getting a night's lodging. There was no sharp cross-questioning as to how he had sunk so low or by whose fault. No doubt it was his own, and I daresay he felt it all the more acutely because he was not obliged to tell a lie about it or to make excuses, and, oh dear! how much worse it makes trouble when it is all one's own fliult and serves one right, and how merciful it is that we do not all get our deserts. I think the Newport Market Refuge is one of God's answers to our prayer, " that it may please Thee to help and strengthen the weak-hearted and to raise up them that fall," for it is not merely the night's shelter and the wholesomE: food that is given, but practical, permanent help, either to find work or to emigrate or to return to their friends. I should have liked to have heard many more of those sad, little sketches of

human life, as, one by one, fresh faces appeared at the window, but the Sister came to call us away to see the women at supper, and we only took a glance in passing at the men's ward with the group round the stove, and saw that it was all warm, and clean, and quiet.

Upstairs there was an appetizing smell of pea soup, and a large tin of this was being ladled out int0 basins with a great piece of bread for each. It smelt so nice and was so cleanly served that both Aunt Sophy and I accepted the offer to taste with alacrity, and it was really so good that I could have finished off the basin with the greatest satisfaction.

But we had not seen half the institution yet, for the night refuge is a very small part, though a very beautiful one, of the work done there. The Industrial School for boys is under the same roof and management, but otherwise is entirely separate. It was begun in 1866, in the early days of the Refuge, when it was still housed in the old slaughter-house in Newport Market. The pity of the committee was excited by the number of destitute lads who came to the Refuge, cast adrift on the ocean of London to go to wreck themselves and to help in the wrecking of others. Hard by the slaughter-house was an old granary, and this great empty shell was taken and four stories built in it, and this new sort of grain gathered into it, promising young rogues and vagabonds on the high road to become accomplished criminals, but capable, by having their talents turned to better account, of becoming useful, honest citizens.

Every year more boys were rescued, and the work of both Refuge and Industrial School went steadily on in the old cramped and inconvenient quarters in Newport Market, but at last a move was made necessary, not only from the ruinous and ramshackle condition of the buildings, but from a summons from the Metropolitan Board of W"orks, who wanted the place for working men's dwellings, and, after much uncertainty and difficulty in finding suitable premises, and, after a temporary sojourn in Long Acre, this new site was secured in Ooburg Row, Westminster, close to the police-station in Rochester Row, and immediately behind the Grenadier Guards' Hospital..

The School is large enough now for a hundred boys, but funds barely allow of seventy-five being admitted, and there are spacious dormitories, school room, workshops, and a large covered playground. We were too late to see the work of the school going on, as nearly all the boys were out in the playground, and we only saw a few bright-faced, brisk lads sweeping out the schoolroom, and washing up in the large scullery and kitchens. Tailoring is taught in the School, and one of the leading tradesmen in Old Bond Street has for many years had all his errand boys from the School, many of whom have worked up into the higher branches of the profession, but do not forget their old friends, and come to the annual supper for the old boys, where they meet school-fellows hailing from all parts of the world, and wearing all manner of British uniforms, for it is in her Majesty's service that the largest

part of the old boys of Newport Market is to be found. This is owinR to the excellent band which is the mainstay of the School, and the musical teaching is so good that the demand for boys from the officers and bandmasters of various regiments is far greater than the School can supply, eighty-two such applications having been received during the past year. Altogether there are two hundred and nineteen of these boys in forty-six regiments of her Majesty's service, including four in the Royal Artillery, ten drummers in the Grenadier Guards, twenty in the Scots Guards, and twelve in a crack kilted regiment, and these last, they say, have acquired the dialect of a Highland corps so glibly that you would think they had never seen a chimney·pot or a cockney.

So when we hear the roll of the drum and the blare of the trumpets and a regiment marches past in all its pomp and panoply, we may look at the manly faces and military bearing of the bandsmen with interest, even beyond that which is supposed to be aroused in all feminine hearts by the mere sight of a red coat, and think that but for the strong hand and kind hand in God's providence held out, that gallant young trumpeter or sturdy drummer boy might now be one of the all too numerous criminal class, useless and mischievous, well-known to the police and prison chaplain-that most hopeless of cases, a criminal from childhood.

All honour to the Newport Market Industrial School and generous support from us all, and above all from any who have dear, manly English boys of their own, sons or brothers. And though like

J!;lcol)of old our eyes are dim, not like his with age, but with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, so that we cannot see these young kinsmen of ours, yet sometimes, when we are asking God's blessing on our own dear ones, we may stretch out our hands to these others, and ask, "The God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel which redeemed mefrom all evil, bless the lads," even these lads of the Newport Market Refuge.

Your affectionate,

E. **W.**

V.

DEAR KATE,-I hardly thought that I should have any letter to send you this month to read to the working party, as Aunt Sophy has been laid up with one of her bad attacks of bronchitis, and, as soon as she was a little better, the doctor sent us off to Torquay to try and escape the east wind. You know how good and *patient Aunt* Sophy always is when she is ill, and this time, when she was quite fighting for breath, she liked me to say the 150th Psalm, and especially the last verse: "Let everything that hath breath, praise the Lord." She says, whenever she is ill or in trouble she always gets to understand some verse in the Bible better or love it more, and that this is the " beauty from ashes" that is granted her. Well, I must not fill up my letter with Aunt Sophy, though I could very well do so, but tell you how it was that I lighted upon some work going on in a little out-of-the-way corner, which I should like to tell you about. Do you remember that hymn the Temperance children used to sing ?-" We must all shine : You in your little corner and I in mine," so I want you to come and see a light shining in a corner far away from Meadowland, and from the lights I have tried to describe to you

in my former letters as shining in the London darkness.

How true it is that half the world does not know how the other half lives, and how good it is to think that there is hardly a spot in England where God is not putting into some heart to work for Him. " Thou, God, hast made me glad through Thy works." Now why this sermon to start with, you will say? Why, only because I have dipped down into a stupid, dull, old-fashioned, little country town with no interesting history, no beautiful church, not even a town-hall, which is, you know, a *sine qua non* to the importance of a country town, in fact nothing that to many would make life endurable, and there I find people with enough interesting work, and more than enough, to occupy busy brains and hands. Coming back from Torquay, through Somersetshire, I thought I would look up a remote cousin who lives perched on the top of Mendip, and offered myself for a visit of a day or two, being one of those gregarious animals that like to remember now and then in a life-time that they belong to a family.

My offer of a visit was accepted, but, on my arrival at the snug vicarage, I was greeted with, " Now, I don't know, dear, what you will say, but I am engaged to a working party at Martel this afternoon, but nurse will take care of you and bring you some tea, and there are three new magazines come in, so you must make yourself happy and comfortable till I come back at 6."

But the contrariness of my disposition, which you know of old, Kate, led me to decline the peaceful prospect presented to me of the comfortable

arm-chair in the sunny window, with the uncut magazines on the table, close at hand, and the pleasant garden gay with spring flowers and clothed with living green, inviting closer inspection, and little Pat, the youngest of the vicarage children, peeping in with round, shy eyes, to see if this strange cousin was a likely person to come and assist in the wonderful messing he calls gardening, and I said, "Oh, do take me with you, I should so like to see Martel."

This produced rather a worried expression, as if I were too great a weight for the poor pony, but still, "Very well, dear, if you like, but it's very stupid, and you know what sort of a place it is as to Church matters."

So I went, and from two to four sat in an old-fashioned, country town drawing-room, with country town young ladies sitting round, with smiling faces and busy fingers, making little frocks and pinaforos, and listening to "Lowder's Life" and short accounts of East London work read aloud, very much the same as the Meadowland working parties, and, I suppose, as working parties anywhere else. At four came tea, and then the whole party went to church, after which my cousin proposed returning home. "Oh, won't you stop and come to the factory tea?" asked Mrs. M.

I am afraid I am a very troublesome visitor, fur in spite of the very decided disinclination in my cousin's eyes, and the refusal that was already on her lips, I ventured to say, "I should like that above all things," and I had again to be given way to. I suppose if you have a troublesome visitor for a day or two, you must make the best of it, and

not increase the trouble by putting her out of temper.

So after a short rest we turned out into the queer old town, which is built on the steep side of a hill, so that the chimneys of some of the houses are on a level with the doors of others. We passed through the lower part of the town, which reminded me of Old London in the "Oolonies," where the picturesque life was wanting that it had in the "Inventories;" and then out between high stone walls into a meadow-path, from which the hill-sides sloped up on either side and met an apricot sky in that bright spring evening. Then in the growing twilight we reached the scene of action, a suburb of Martel which has grown up round the large velvet, satin and crape factories which established themselves along the course of the dirty, little stream, which seems too insignificant to turn the great wheels, and too grimy an~full of cabbage-stalks and refuse to have any hand in the creation of the bright, glossy, delicately-tinted velvets and satins ~hich are produced by its agency.

Two of the factories that we passed were still at work, brightly lighted with gas, and with the buzz and rattle of the looms filling the air; but some of the factories must have finished work, for when we -reached the long, low schoolroom, tea was already going on busily, and the room was full of girls. Three or four long tables were spread with tablecloths and neatly set out with cups of hot tea poured from cans, but sweetened by the girls themselves to suit their own taste, from large bowls of lump sugar which seemed constantly being passed up and down till the supply was gone, and one

felt that it was a good thing that sugar is so cheap. The girls have as much hot, sweet tea as they like, a long roll and portion of butter (half a pound cut into twelve) and for this they pay a penny, which does not, of course, cover quite the cost of all. They seem to like having their own plates and knives, splitting their rolls and thickly buttering them, and also stirring up the abundant sugar in their cups, although the tea-spoons have occasionally to be handed from one cup to another, but they prefer this to ready-sweetened tea and ready-cut bread and butter.

Mrs. 1\1:was warmly welcomed by the girls, and by Mrs. Black, the wife of the foreman of the factory, a bustling, stout, good-tempered person, who undertakes the arrangement of these teas. Mrs. Black is very musical, which is half or more than half the battle with these factory girls, and is organist at a village church in the neighbourhood. She has a sharp, off-hand way with the girls, which seems to suit them. "Now, chatterbox!" "Make yourselves comfortable, girls." "N ow girls, either you must talk or I must; we can't all be heard," and such like, half banter, half command, which makes the girls laugh while they follow her Qrders.

After tea and the clearing away of cups, etc., l\frs. Black said a short prayer. "Eyes closed, girls;" and then they were exhorted to ruake themselves comfortable, which seemed to people demoralized by arm-chairs and sofas, more easily said than done under the circumstances, but which the girls carried out by leaning back with their heads in some cases turned against the wall, or

their arms thrown across the narrow tables; and I noticed that the hands were most of them smooth and soft, and bore no traces of hard, rough work; and I was told that smooth hands were essential in many parts of the work, and that doing any household work unfits them for the factory, and that this is why factory girls make such bad wives, dirty and untidy, because they are quite ignorant of ordinary cleaning and household work. Many were doing nothing but listen, and now and then joining in the singing, while some had crochet or knitting, and a very few needlework. I think there may have been between thirty and forty girls the evening I was there, and that number varies up to seventy or eighty. But it is difficult for all to come even if they wished, as part of the silk work has to be prepared in the evening for the following day, and many of the girls who are friends will do each other's work and come by turns. They were in their factory dresses, with the large, coarse holland aprons and bibs, and every variety of fringe, curly and straight, and, for the most part, healthy country faces, though looking tired and worn.

I was sitting watching the faces, the rosy, the pale, the merry and the sad, and thinking of all their lives, and wondering whether as in our old favourite, "The cry of the children," the girls were glad that the wheels were silent-

"Ay, be silent, let them hear each other breathing
For a moment, mouth to mouth,
Let them touch each other's hands in a fresh wreathing
Of their tender, human youth!
Let them feel that this cold metallic motion
Is not all the life God fashions or reveals.

" Let them prove their inward sonls against the notion
That they live in you or under you, oh wheels!
Still all day the iron wheels go onward,
As if Fate in each were stark,
And the children's souls which God is calling sunward
Spin on blindly ill the dark."

And now I saw their faces for the most part look interested. Mrs. Black had moved her position from the harmonium which faced down the room, and perched herself on one of the tables facing Mrs. 1\.1. with the other auditors to hear the Bible class which Mrs. M. had been asked to give the girls, but which turned more into a talk than a regular class, telling them how they should make the best of their lives. I cannot remember the words she said, but I cau the drift, for it has haunted me since, and I have mixed it up with my own thoughts till it is difficult to distinguish hers and mine. She reminded them of the lovely silkworm's silk in its raw state, golden yellow or creamy, perfect as made by God, but of little use, if put away only as a treasure to be looked at and admired. No, it must be worked by clever hands and clever machinery, passed from one to another, in the process often losing all its beauty, becoming brittle, lustreless and yet not discarded as spoilt or worthless, but still passed on until at last, as they knew, came the lovely satin to be placed proudly in the master's hand and laid away in quiet warehouses, away from the noise and rattle of the looms until it was wanted, perhaps for a royal palace. And so, she told them, it was with their lives. How perfect the little life was, fresh from God's hand, the lips that had never lied, the eyes and ears that had never drawn in what could

stain the soul. And yet this too was of little use, it must be passed through all the troublesome machinery of this world, it must get worn and dim, and sometimes only God and the holy angels, who can see how the work is being perfected, can see any beauty in it. Then at last when all the perfecting is done, the poor worn out body is laid away in the grave and the soul in God's quiet warehouse, beside the still waters which turn no noisy wheels or mills of weary work, where neither the rattle of the loom nor" the strife of tongues" approach "its sweet peace to molest," uutil the happy day comes when the soul is once more clothed with the body, now glorified, bright and gleaming like the lovely satin to be worn in the Palace of the King.

After this the girls sang a great many Moody and Sankey hymns, sometimes together, sometimes one standing up and singing a solo verse followed by a chorus. Then one very melancholy...girl ·proposed to recite, which she did, and a most gloomy recital it was, as far as I could gather from the strong Somerset-shire twang. Then more singing, SOllle of it se~mlar and on the tonic-sol-fa system. Then j\[rs. **M.** read a short sensational account of a child being saved from a fire, which was pronounced "beautiful," and then more singing and a little talk about the G.F.S. and a summer excursion; and at last half-past eight came, and :NIl'SBlack broke up the assemblage, reading two or three collects and wishing them good-night, a!:ld they all trooped out rather noisily, but not doing anything worse than pulling the school bell" by

accident." My much enduring cousin was awaiting me, and we set off on our return journey up the steep hills and along the lonely lanes, with overhead the silence of the stars.

I learnt one or two things more about these girls. They pay in a penny a week to get themselves ulsters, and by-and-bye, when the work is a little more developed, they will be encouraged to pay in for underclothing, and be taught how to make it. Mrs. M. says that it does not do to make it too much of a sewing class, as the girls come out of the factories tired and like to rest, and make themselves comfortable while they sing or hear reading, better than setting at once to needlework. As a rule, Mrs. M. says, few factory women are also good needlewomen. She finds this at her mothers' meeting; they hardly know how to cut the simplest garment, and when cut out have to be shown how to put it together. Then how do they and their families get clothed? Why, principally from ready-made shops. Very extravagant, of course, and if they are given old clothes they have no idea of altering them to fit, but they must be passed on to other hands, and a few pence spent, at least, before they can be worn. This causes a demand fur dressmakers of a very humble description; and tribes of young girls, too carefully brought up by their mothers to enter the factories, are taught a smattering of dressmaking when they leave school, and live at home earning 5s. or 68. a week with these odd jobs from the factory hands, and at Whitsuntide, reaping a short harvest from the stylish holiday dresses that these same factory girls have

bcrewed and starved to get. You would be amused to see how they turn out then. Mrs. M. says she has seen a little, slatternly, half.starved looking factory girl living near her gate, attired in an elegantly-fitting crimson velvet costume, trimmed richly with coffee lace and a hat to match, and this is by no means an unsteady girl in any way, but a poor little toiler for 5s. a week, who, not long ago, came, broken-hearted, to Mrs. M. to tell her that she had been dismissed for being ".flagrantly insolent" to the foreman, and had to have a letter of entreaty written to beg for her pardon, as her mother, who was partly dependent on her wages, was thought to be dying. It is not easy to guage the morality of these factory girls, you have to allow a large latitude for" factory manners," for coarseness of language and habits of thought; but Mrs. M. says there are very few really unsteady, that there is a rough and ready code of honour and honesty among them; that they are affectionate and impressionable; and these are very hopeful foundations to build on; and I hope that the work, which is only in the beginning, may grow and prosper, and that in the great loom of God's Providence these poor threads that look to our ignorant eyes dull and dim, and soiled and tangled, may be woven into that fine linen clean and white in which, when the marriage of the Lamb is come, His wife shall make herself ready. No more now, but good-bye, from

Your affectionate,

E. V"f.

VI.

DEAR KATE,-I was so sorry to hear of old Martin being laid up, and a substitute having to be found to deliver the Meadowland letters. I never direct a letter home without just half a thought to the dear old man, with the leather bag skapped over his shoulders, and with his wonderful, wrinkled, old gaiters, and his face as wonderful and more wrinkled and old, with its frosty blue eyes, and the bit of straw between his lips. And don't you know, if one is particularly anxious to get a letter, how he fumbles and potters about, and gets out his silver-rimmed spectacles, and holds the letter a long way off',and his head on one side, when one knows almost before it is out of the bag to whom it is directed. He is so curious, too, and lingers about pretonding to buckle his straps, in the hope of gleaning a word or two of its contents to carryon to the next house. "There's somat wrong up to the Parsons," or "There's ter'ble bad news of young :i\Iuster Gurge." " We'll be having a wedding, I'm thinking, up to Oroft Farm," and so on. As for post-cards, I think he cOJlsiders that they are intended for his specil! edification, and that he would be quite missing an opportunity

of s-elf-improvement if he delivered any unread.

What a very different thing it is in London. Rat·tat !—a letter drops into the box, which may break your heart or make you the happiest creature in existence, and you see the blue uniform and red facings of the postman pass the window, and hear another rat-tat, and another and another, growing fainter in the distance, before you even have your letter in your hand. He neither knows nor cares what it contains, nor how it affects you, nor what becomes of it after it is once through the slit in the door; he is just part of a machine. But what a wonderful machine the Post-office is, and how marvellous the exactitude with which it works, and the few mistakes that are ever made, almost unworthy of mention, when one takes into account the stupidity and perversity of many of the people who make use of it, and who cry out directly an illegibly written envelope miscarries, or a carelessly done up parcel is damaged, or a misdirected letter is delayed. The wheels of the great machine run so smoothly that very few of us realize all its size and beauty, and we accept all its elaborate arrangements for our comfort and convenience (and, oh! how much of the happiness and peace of our lives is concerned in the working of the post and telegraph), without a thought of the huge organization, and of the instruments by which it is carried out.

One gets to regard the arrival of the morning post, as one does the rising of the sun, and to have as little gratitude for the artificial, as one has for the natural blessings in life. I sometimes think

if He Who gives more than either we desire or deserve, only gave us just what we ask for, or took away all for which we are not grateful, how terrible it would be.

My mind has been full lately of the Post-office and its elaborate machinery, and I made up my mind that my next letter to our working party should be about this, and whenever I begin to be interested in something else, I am always brought back to the point by the sharp rat-tat from the hand of one of the army of postmen, who at all hours of the day and a good way into the night are working for our convenience. It is no exaggeration to use the word army, for in the Postmaster-General's Annual Report, he says, "The permanent staff of the department numbers upwards of 48,000 officers of various grades, and as many more are employed for several hours daily," and all these are engaged in the almost superhuman work of transmitting the millions of missives which are daily placed in the letter-box. I read a most interesting article the other day, describing the General Post-office and all its departments, and I have been promised a visit there myself some day, of which you shall have a full description. But it is less the beautiful organization that has been in my mind lately, than the human instruments that it makes use of, this host of young fellows, men and boys, who are not just a set of wheels revolving or machines working, but living, thinking, suffering, tempted human beings. They are all of them men of a certain amount of education and intelligence, that is necessary in all the departments, and in some of

them, a high standard is required; they must bear a character of perfect honesty, allY shortcomings in this respect being punished with a severity that would seem disproportionate to the crime, if it were not plainly to the interest of the public.

Oh! that public! that great, selfish, indolent, greedy public! I may safely call names, for I am including myself in the accusation; how easily it takes all that is done for it! how violently it grumbles if the machinery is in the smallest particular out of gear! how hard it is on the poor letter-carrier who is tempted by the stamps he feels enclosed in the envelope in his hand! how calmly it shirks the responsibility of doing anything for the public servant who does so much for it !

The early and late hours, often beginning at 3 o'clock in the morning, the long weary walks in all weathers, the short period of rest, often tell severely on the health of the men, especially on the younger lads of 16 and 17, with whom consumption is frequently the result. Numbers of them live at a distance from their sphere of work, so that although they are not on duty during the whole of their time, they may be said, to use their own phrase, to be "on the job"' from the very earliest hours of the morning until the latest at night, and the distanoe from home does not allow of their return, after the early sorting or delivery is over, for the rest which is sometimes sorely needed, or for the ablutions that are often omitted, owing to their early start. And besides the outward discomforts and trials to health and strength, there are the inward temptations, the

vices and evils that cloEelybeset all young men in London; the public-house with its attendant evils, and allurements of a like nature which await the letter-carrier during the hours when he is not actually engaged in the delivery of letters. There are low pleasures to entice him, there are Socialistic clubs to beguile him, there is the great enemy, Atheism, who is making such terrible progress in our midst, to waylay him and enslave him. The Post-office army have much "to contend with, even though they are an army of peace, and it seems to me that if in any way we can strengthen them in the conflict, we are bound to do so to the utmost, lest that bitter curse pronounced by the Angel of the Lord should fall on us, as well as on "Meroz and the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." And mighty indeed, is the strong man armed in his palace in London, so strong that our hearts would fail us if we did not fight under the banner of the Stronger than he.

Ten years ago, St. Martin's League was started with three members, and the Rev. A. H. Stanton, Curate of St. Alban's, as president, and in a few years the numbers rose to a thousand, and now stand at between seven and eight hundred. It was not an easy work to undertake, and the secret of its success (though it seems like presumption to talk of the secret of success when we know Whose Hand gives the increase) was the entire absence of patronage, which is always a hindrance in any work, but especially so in the case of dealing with young working fellows. They are peculiarly sen-

siti ve to anything like being taken in hand and treated as inferior beings, a practice which is very questionable in all cases, as it at once raises a barrier between those who exercise it, and those towards whom it is exercised. So the main promoters of the League are not patrons, but friends, with whom the young men may feel that they stand on an equal footing in the social scale, and enjoy easy and unrestrained intercourse, and may give and receive sympathy and help, face to face, and heart to heart, and not merely signal their good will to one another across the great gulfs that yawn between class and class. At any rate, in St. Martin's League" brother clasps the hand of brother, stepping fearless through the night."

The first house taken was in Greville Street, Halbom, and here are provided a kitchen in which members can have their meals, a dressing and bath-room, two sleeping-rooms, where, during the intervals between the hours of delivery, the men can take much-needed repose, a large sitting-room and conservatory, where books and newspapers and comfortable chairs and sofas provide re~t and recreation for mind and body. '1'hree other houses of a similar character have now been opened in the East, South-east, and South· west districts, besides the central house in Greville Street, and a sea-side bouse at St. Leonards, where the men can go for their holidays on payment of 14s. a week; 375 members having availed themselves of it la.st year.

St. Martin's League aim at being as comprehensive not as exclusive as possible, and though, at first, membership was restricted to those belonging

to the Ohurch of England, it was resolved two years ago to *remove* even this restriction, and now it is open to all who are employed in the General Post-office. But do not think from this that it is a purely secular society, and that religion is discarded as a thing of no account. To be sure an ordinary visitor at one of the League houses could discover nothing" churchy " about it; there are no Bible readings or prayer-meetings, religion is rarely the topic of conversation, and as Mr. Stanton says in his last annual address, "as for the evidence of good we have done, we cannot exhibit any spiritual samples for the inspection of devout, or even any physical achievements for the admiration of muscular Ohristians, but I believe in the *preventive* work not only intimated but assured, the results of which are hidden away secretly in His Tabernacle Who judges not as man."

The indirect influence reaches far; sick members lire cared for, dying comforted, tempted strengthened, fallen and in prison visited and helped to start afresh, sympathy and advice are ready for all in perplexities or distress, in many cases, doubtless, reaching souls that would have shrunk away from a society more professedly religious. It is a great work and one that seems to me should stand in no want of support when one hears in all directions of the difficulties of getting hold of young men and of the great spread of infidelity. Here is a great means ready to hand, here is a great army ready to be set in array against the enemy. But will you believe it? This Jubilee year of the Queen will most likely be the last of St. Martin's League!

The four London houses will have to be given up when the leases fall in next year. They cannot be self-supporting, as the members' subscription of 4s. a year is not sufficient for the purpose, and if that is doubled, half the members would be lost, and more than half the usefulness of the League lost with them, as it would then become merely a club for the superior Post-office employes, and all the poor young fellows who need it most would be shut out. But it is not merely the want of money to support it (£500 a year would suffice), but the want of men. A warden is needed at each house as a resident head, to control the difficulties that continually arise. Mr. Dolling and Mr. Wainwright, who were wardens of the east and south-east houses, are engrossed with other duties, and the whole weight of the four houses has now fallen on Mr. Stanton, and it is too much for one man to undertake. The house at St. Leonards will still be kept on, but the London houses must go, the quiet sleeping-rooms, where the men lie curled up in blanlq:Jts like rows of cocoons, after the morning delivery; the kitchen, where so many hot meals have been cooked, and taken away the chill of foggy mornings, and tramps through snow and driwing rain; the pleasant sitting-room, where an arm-chair and a pipe, and a newspaper by the fire is so much pleasanter than the public-house, and where on Tuesdays, those enjoyable musical evenings take place, when ladies come and sing and play, not *to* them, but *lcith* them, a1J.d get quite as much pleasure as they bestow by an evening spent in " the pure, fresh mountain air of equality," though the outer air is crowded with

tobacco smoke; the little chapel (ah! I did not tell you of that; it is not made conspicuous, but it is there) for shame-faced young fellows to slip in, as many do unnoticed, to say a prayer, without feeling that they are hypocrites and making a profession of being better than they are.

I cannot believe that this gallant ship, with St. Martin's pennon flying from its mast, which has weathered the storm of ten years so bravely, should be suffered now to go down, least of all, as we believe that One is with them Who was with the apostles on the stormy lake, and \Vho perhaps is even now looking on our fears, and saying, "'Vhy are ye so fearful? How is it 'that ye have no faith? "

Your affectionate,

E.W.

VII.

DEAR KATE,-Do you remember that part in the garden where the ground slopes down towards the fernery, and how, sometimes, on Autumn mornings a sudden crop of fungus has sprung up during the night, enough to provide stools for all the toads in the neighbourhood, if such sensible and substantial creatures should think of availing themselves of such unattractive and ricketty furniture? I was forcibly reminded of that sudden uncanny growth during a day I spent at Plaistow the beginning of June, though there was nothing in the surroundings to ~mggest, except by utter contrast, the dear old garden, where the laburnums were in full blaze of golden sunshine, and the ferns on the rockery were unfolding their dainty croziers, and the thrushes singing as only the Meadowland thrushes can.

I daresay you do not know where Plaistow is! Nor qid I till the other day, and after all there was something in Mr. Squeers' practical way of teaching his pupils "c-I-e-a-n, clean, verb active, to make bright, to scour; w-i-n, win, d-e~, del', winder, a casement. When the boy knows this out of book, he goes and does it." And the best way of learning geography is to put on your

bonnet and go to the place in question. But beware! there are two Plaistows, and it is no use saying it is near Bromley, for they are both near Bromleys, only such very different Bromleys, and such very different Plaistows. My Bromley is Bromley-by-Bow, my Plaistow is Plaistow-on-the-Marsh, in Essex, over the River Lea, over the border, far away east, to be reached by the Tilbury and Southend Railway from Fenchurch Street Station.

My ideas had never travelled, nor my body either, further eastward than Bethnal Green or Whitechapel, and there are hundreds of civilized creatures who have liyed all their lives in London and never got so far east even as that; but this great Babylon of ours stretches miles farther, and, year after, reaches out farther and farther, like a hungry monster, eating up green fields and sweet hedgerows and shady trees.

Fifty years ago, Plaistow marshes must have presented a pleasant sight to eyes weary with a long sea voyage, and gazing from a homeward bound vessel towing up the Thames, on the shores of Old England. Broad reaches of green meadow land, intersected with ditches, stretched away for miles, dotted with grazing cattle, and diversified here and there with handsome old houses, standing in well-timbered grounds, and beyond, the shady lanes of **vVest** Ham and the remains of the grand old forest of Hainault, with its stately trees. Even then the dwellers in these fine old family mansions, many of them rich Quakers, must have found the neighbourhood rather damp and aguish, with the marshy land and attendant fogs, and occasional

floods. But folks thought less of soil and climate, pure water and good drainage, in those days. This is a more enlightened age, you will say, in such matters, and yet you would hardly think so if you went to Plaistow, for where *one* man lived in unwholesome surroundings fifty years ago, a thousand live now amidst surroundings a hundred times more unwholesome. Our civilization is, after all, so much of it selfishness: we take infinite pains over our own health and comfort, but we are not so keen about others. vVhere are the broad, green meadows? \Vhere are the shady lanes and hedgerows? WhHl'e are the substantial family mansions? Going! going! gone! And in their place is the mushroom growth that made me think of the old home garden. Rows of poor, little hou ses, run up with marvellous speed, with a wretched monotony of meanness, a dead level of squalor, that is most depressing. In some of the latest productions of speculative builders, to be sure, ghastly little attempts at ornamentation are introduced, pitiful efforts of quaintness and Queen Anne, which have filtered down from the fashionable vagaries of the upper surface of society till they ,have reached even the Plaistow marshes, and would be almost funny if they were not irritating.

In every direction you turn, you see rows of half-finished houses, scaffolding, heaps of bricks, building plots, half-made streets, littered with all the *debris* of building, almost impassable in \Tinter with mud, and nearly as bad with the thick and all-pervading dust in the summer. This is the land of liberty for builders, for it is outside the

jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Board, so that tiresome interference in such matters as drains, roads, gas and pavement is not to be feared. Perhaps in some ways things are not so bad at Plaistow as they were in 1857, when Dickens wrote his article in *Hottsehold Words,* called " Londoners over the Border," in which a ghastly picture is given of the dirt and wH'ltchedness of the place; of the houses built, or rather laid like bandboxes upon the soil, close on the stagnant ditches and draining into them right under the very windows, these ditches being choked with filth and having no outlet, till the floods came in the winter, lifting all the accumulated filth and spreading it over the land; spreading also disease, which coming upon bodies saturated with the influences of such air as this, breathed night and day, fell as a spark upon touch wood, and ague, fever and small-pox brooded over the place almost without intermission. But if things are not as bad as this in some ways, in others they are worse, for in the thirty years that have elapsed since that paper was written, the population has been increasing at the rate of something like a thousand a year, the building going on with amazing rapidity, till Dickens himself would hardly recognize the place; row upon row, terrace upon terrace, filling up the open spaces, and stretching across the marshy grouIld, till the great" Dismal Swamp" is rapidly being converted into a huge compact city of one-storied houses, which are filled as soon as finished by the great tide of human life pouring eastward out of London.

·Why do they come to Plaistow? you ask, and

you might well wonder what can be the attraeti~n, if you saw the heavy fogs that lurk there all the winter, and the hazy thickness that hides the sun in summer, and gets into your throat and seems to choke the life and energy out of you, or if you could smell some of the odours of the place. You had better put your nme in your pocket before you go to Plaistow. The main sewer from L0ndon runs through it, and is quite a striking feature in the place, and there is, I believe, a talk of making a *boulevard* of it; the noxious, ill-smelling trades, which London would no longer tolerate in its midst, have found a happy home across the Lea, and manure works, bone works, tar distilleries and chemical works of various kinds, pour their filth into the river Lea and pollute the atmosphere for miles round. The small-pox hospital is erected there too, and though at first it was isolated, now those enterprising builders are running up houses close to its very walls, with a brave disregard of infection (for other people).

Why do they come? you ask again. The great Victoria and Albert Docks Lring a great many, hundreds more than can possibly make a living out of them; numbers who get a day's work now and then, numbers who just loaf about the dock gates and live as they can and let their wives and children live or die as they cun. These make up a large proportion of the people of Plaistow, with unskilled artizans chronically out of work, and a large floating population of people who ha~e seen better days, and a good sprinkling of the criminal class.

The old parish of Plaistow extended down to the

Thames, including all that part now covered by the Victoria Docks, and the densely populated town that has grown up round them; and though this has now been cut off and forms the separate and huge parish of St. Luke's, and three other parishes have also been carved out of the unwieldy mass, the old mother church of St. Mary's is left still with the charge of 15,000 souls, increasing, as I said, at the appalling rate of a 1000 a year, a rate which does not seem likely to diminish till every square inch of soil is covered, and the mean little houses packed together too closely to allow room for more.

Don't you think that the present vicfll''s heart must have failed him when he came into the parish three years ago, and found a church capable of holding 400 people, but never called upon to do so; with broken windows and dirty, slovenly arrangements; day-schools in a sort of dilapidated rabbit-hutch, Sunday-schools hardly worth mentioning, no parish organization of any kind, no Scripture reader nor Bible-woman, no mothers' meeting, nor Bible classes, nor mission services, and all around a great population entirely alienated from the Church, some of them given *over* to dissent, but more sunk into actual heathenism, among whom the Atheists were making triumphant progress, hundreds crowding to the notorious Cromwell Club to hear Bradlaugh, Mrs. Besant, and such like, whose object seemed to be to rob the poor creatures, who listened open-mouthed, of the only thing that could make their sad, suffering, diseased existences endurable: the hope of immortality, the faith in a merciful and loving Father

and in a Saviour who was afflicted in all their affiictions; while the dirty little church, with the wind whistling through the broken windows, was left empty?

It must have been more than discouraging, simply overwhelming, and I think, I am afraid that had I been in the Vicar's place, I should have given it up as an impossibility and gone to some pretty, healthy, country vicarage, with a nicely restored church and a simple, docile, little flock of a few hundreds, and a Squire ready to put his hand in his pocket whenever means were wanted. There are no Squires in Plaistow, no one who can help in the smallest degree-all the 15,000 are on a dead level of poverty, as dead and as level as the marshes themselves.

It must have required wonderful faith to believe that "they that be with us are more than they that be against us," and to see through the thick, murky air of Plaistow, and through all the sin and ignorance and infidelity, as plainly as the Prophet of old saw in Dothan, that it was "full of horses and chariots of fire round about," for "the chariots of God are twenty thousand *even* thousands of angels, and the Lord is among them as in the holy place of Sinai."

But much has been done already, even in the sho:tt space of three years; it is not often that one can point to such triumphant progress in so short a time, and it is only in comparison with what remains to be done that the re~lts seem small and insignificant. First and foremost the flag of St. Mary's, Plaistow, waves proudly over the Cromwell Club, the Atheists and scoffers have

beon routed out of their very stronghold, not without a struggle, you may be ::lure; every Sunday morning lecturE's of the most blasphemous and violent description against the doctrines of Christianity were delivered in the large hall behind the club, and these were answered and refuted every Sunday evening on the green, outside the cluh, by lecturers sent by the Christian Evidence Society, meeting the Atheists on what they consider their own special ground of reason and science, and conquering them as thoroughly on this as on the higher standpoint of faith.

I must not stop to tell you how by degrees the arguments of the secularists turned to mere abuse and insoll3nce, and how gradually the influence on the other side extended, by patient house to house visiting and open air lecturing, but I think it is pretty plain which side got the best of it, for the Cromwell Club, or as one called it, "the Sunday morning drinking saloon," and others "the hell of Plaistow," is now a coffee tavern and reading-room, where the working men of Plaistow may find rest, recreation, instruction and refreshment, and in the great hall behind, where these infidel lectures used to be given, and where in the evenings, including Sunday, variety entertainments were given, consisting of low comic songs and recitations and acting and dancing of the lowest and vilest description, is now a Mission Hall for the preaching of the Gospel.. This transformation was not done with a wave of the fairy's wand and a "Hey, presto !"-transformations of this sort in real life cost a great deal of money, and you will bear in mind that there is no Squire in Plaistow, not even

rich manufacturers, no large landed proprietors, not many even who cau afford to keep a servant.

There is, connected with the coffee tavern, a soup kitchen, which makes sixty gallons of soup daily through the winter, and supplies thousands of penny dinners, or dinners *minus* the penny to the starving children and others who are destitute, and it is not easy at Plaistow to say who is above a penny dinner.

The windows of the church have been mended, and it is clean and weather-tight . if it cannot be beautiful, and there is a talk of enlarging it. 1'here are two Mission churches, one of them in a part called " :No man's land," rather over a mile from the parish church, one of those sudden growths of little houses, where in an incredibly short time 5,000 people were settled, with not a single place of worship in their midst. Ah, Kate, I wonder what the dear old vicar would say if a sudden irruption of wretched little cottages sprang np in some of the fields of Meadowland, and 5,000 oj' more of poor were added to his parishioners in a few months! The rabbit-hutch schools in which the mistress, tradition says, kept school of old under an umbrella in wet weather, havo been improved, and the standard of education so greatly raised that now 97 instead of 66 per cont. of the .children pass, and the" Excellent" grant has been obtained; and the Sunday-schools have multiplied, and continue to multiply, ill a way most satisfactory from oue point of view, but overw'!elming when teachers are almost an impossible attainment. . Don't you know how eyen in Meadowland it is not easy to get teachers for all the classes of snn-

burnt, stupid, little lads, and blushing, blue-eyed maidens; and think of the difficulty at Plaistow, where all the people are poor and hard-worked and ignorant.

:Mrs. Given-Wilson has a large and very successful mothers' meeting, numbering over a hundred, which has outgrown its two first habitations, and now has taken up its abode at the old Cromwell Club, and is stretching out its influence far and wide through many a poor, hard-worked, broken-down mother, and helping them with blanket, coal, clothing and provident clubs, but still more by human sympathy and heart to heart kindness and gentleness.

My letter is getting too long, and there are yet many things to tell of what has been done, and if lance begin on what remains to be done I shall never get to the end. It is impossible, and it would be criminal not to look forward and see what Plaistow will be in a few years time. It is not merely the present, overwhelming as that is alone, but the future, the dense population settling down like a swarm of locusts on the Plaistow marshes, on whom the Lord will, nay does, look with compassion and says to us, "Give ye them to eat."

Mr. Given-·Wilson has secured two sites in dif·ferent parts of the llarish (and remember always, if you please, the absence of that money-giving Squire in Plaistow), so that the Church may find a corner among the crowded habitations in days t() come, where the Cross of Christ may be raised for the healing of the nations. It was" without the gate" that the dear Lord suffered, and shall we let

it be? "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?" that He is being crucified afresh, " without the gate" in this London over the Border, and that none of us go forth to Him, without the camp, bearing His reproach.

Your affectionate,

E. **W.**

VIII.

DEAR KATE,-The last letter I wrote to the working party was heavy, it seemed to me, with the air of Plaistow, and dull with the gathering clouds hanging over its future prospects, and depressed with the dead monotony of meanness, and with the white faces of the little children playing-no, it was too listless to be called play-loitering round the foul, stagnant ditches. Aunt Sophy got it into her head that I was out of sorts, and even threatened to send for the doctor or to give me a course of tonics; but one morning at the beginning of July she looked up from her letters with a very smiling face anJ said," vVell, child, here's a tonic for us both. There is a vacancy at The Buttercups, and we will take that poor little baby from Haggerston down ourselves."

I must say that the prospect at first sight was not so pleasing as Aunt Sophy's smiling face would have led me to suppose. I am very fond of babi.es, as you know, but experience has taught me that it is as well to keep within hail of mother or nurse, as, the moment you get out of earshot, some contingency occurs, to which the capacity of an ordinary woman-body is unequal, and which leads to tribulation of some sort or other, sacrifice of

clean pinafores and sashes, destruction of valuable drawing-room ornaments, or, worst of all, loud squalls and consequent indignation from mother and nurse. But this, at any rate, was not a case of clean pinafores and sashes. I had seen a sort of sick white monkey, quite devoid of clothing, sitting up in the middle of a large bed filling up most of a back room in Haggerston, while his mother was washing one or two minute rags which represented Johnnie's wardrobe, and my heart failed me at the idea of an hour with a child screaming for his mother, for The Buttercups is near Twyford, on the Great vVestern Railway, and the journey takes about an hour from Paddington. And then to my dismay Aunt Sophy added, " And I see they want us to bring down a child from vVestminster Hospital with us, so we shall each have a baby to see after." And then perhaps she noticed that I was looking rather aghast, and she laughed. " Ah! perhaps you don't know how go()d London children are, poor little souls; it would be quite a different matter to take two Meadowland babies from their mothers."

I never can quite make up my mind if it is most a compliment to human nature generally, or a reproach to the mother in particular, when the baby stretches out its poor little arms to anyone who likes to take it, and falls asleep quite happily in a stranger's arms, or on the clean, cool pillow of a little blue cot, as unlike as possible to the frowsy tumbled bed at home, shared by, I should be sorry to say how many.

But in spite of Aunt Sophy's assurances it was with some trepidation, and a large bag of sponge

cakes, that I took Johnnie in my arms at Paddington that July afternoon, and saw Aunt Sophy furnished with another specimen-smaller, whiter, and with a sharper and more wizen old face even than my Johnnie, and rejoicing in the name of Bob. There was something so pathetic in Johnnie's patient, little face, his resignation to whatever might be coming next, that, in theory, I should have been almost glad if he would have howled. There must surely have been something a little happy in his short past that he was sorry to lose, something just possible to conceive in the future that might be worse than what he had hitherto experienced. But in practice, of course, I was infinitely relieved when Johnnie went to sleep almost before we were out of the station, and I was rather inclined to crow over Aunt Sophy, whose charge, though perfectly good and composed, continued wide awake, watching first one and then the other of us with those odd old eyes of his, that had a strange look of contempt in them as if he had seen through the world and was not to be taken in again.

"They have a great deal to learn at The Buttercups," Aunt Sophy said. "They have to be taught to play and to laugh, and, I was going to say, to be naughty-I mean *bona fide* baby naughtiness, little tempers, you know, what they call 'tantrums' in the nursery, that can be cured by a few minutes in the corner and sobbed away with a face hidden in a friendly apron. They are wicked enough, poor mites; young lips can lisp out oaths and tell lies, and some of them at five years of age have seen and understand more wickedness than

you and I have any notion of. One baby of nine months old had been used to her half-pint of beer regularly for supper, and liked a drop of brandy when she got the chance. One little black. eyed imp was so wicked, inarticulate, happily, but spiteful and sly, and evilly disposed to such an extent, that the matron could only account for it by supposing that he could not have been baptized, which idea was favoured by the fact that only his surname was given on his medical certificate, and that a curiously appropriate one, "Savage," but on enquiry it was found that his baptism had not been neglected, and a few more weeks at The Buttercups worked such outward and inward improvement in Jimmy, that he really became almost fair both in complexion and conduct before he left.

Aunt Sophy told me a good deal about The Buttercups as we travelled down, while Johnnie lay peacefully sucking a small and dirty thumb, and oblivious of time and space, and Bob traced out the pattern on Aunt Sophy's mantle with a long pointed finger.

It had its beginning a good many years ago, before the summer holiday and fresh air mission became so popular, by some ladies having a few London children down in the summer and boarding them out in respectable cottages. It is so very generally done now that you can hardly go to a railway station in London during the summer months without seeing parties of children with tickets and directions tied round their necks, being seen off by anxious and bustling mothers or friends, or tho same parties returning sun-burnt and somewhat the worse in the matter of clothes, but with

big bunches of flowers and such brightness in their eyes and on their cheeks as London can never give. Then one summer an old servant of these ladies, who was a widow, was somewhat unwillingly persuaded to take care of a certain little ricketty Emmie, and, I think when the little thing clung round :Mrs. Green's neck with her poor, crooked, young arms, and cried at parting from her, she laid the foundation of The Buttercups, and opened its pleasant door to all the many sickly, sad, miserable little ones who have found their way in since that, and gone back, for the most part, rosy and bright, and fat and happy.

The Buttercups (is not it a nice name, Kate? so young and childish and countrified), is about a mile from the Twyford station, and is a long white cottage, with black beams and a red brick gable end, in which is a large bow-window with tinted glass in the upper panes, and generally a row of young faces in the lower. There is a little grass plot in front where the babies bask in hot weather, and a good-sized cottage garden round the house, full of potatoes and cabbages, apple-trees, roses and pinks; and behind there is a barn, a great resource in wet weather, where there is a swing and a rocking horse; and beyond the barn a meadow, where, the day we arrived, haymaking was going on. Fancy carrying IitHe Haggerston Johnnie, still sleeping, right into a hayfield, and laying him down on a haycock and letting him 'wake and look up into the cool shade of an elm, with the July blue sky beyond, when he had fallen asleep in the dust and bustle of Paddington, with engines whistling and bells ringing, when he was used to

dl"agging about the hot pavements of Haggerston in the arms of a girl not many sizes bigger than himself, crawling from one sultry doorstep to another, with occasional excursions into the gutter! I do not think you can imagine it even as nearly as I can, for you do not know what a London baby's life is like even as much as I do, and I know little enough, but I think that the change must be some slight approach to what we shall feel one day when we shall awake and be satisfied.

" You must excuse the children being so untidy," said Mrs. Green, "they do get such grubs in the meado\v." And sbe picked up a kicking sunburnt person of three, and pulled a tumbled frock and pinafore down over a pair of sturdy legs.

"But," I said, doubtfully, glancing round at the haymaking party, numbering about twelve altogether, "'I thought The Buttercups was meant for delicate children." " So it is," said Aunt Sophy, " but it does not undertake to keep them delicate, neither does it turn them out at the end of a rigid three weeks as is done and must be done in m0st convalescent homes. It takes time to make such a change as this," she said, comparing the stout members in :Mrs. Green's arms to Bob's spidery limbs, which looked like empty stockings with boots dangling at the end.

And then Mrs. Green told us how Walter had come down two years ago, eighteen months old and weighing thirteen pounds and a half. He had been born with bronchitis, ~nd was too weak to sit up, and constantly sick, not being able to keep anything down. Why Bob and Johnnie were grand compared to what Walter was when he first arrived.

Polly, a rosy, curly-headed little girl of four, who was making her way so rapidly along by the palings towards some gooseberry bushes, that I did not notice she was lame, came down from ,Vestminster Hospital \V~th incipient disease in both hips, brought on by sitting out in the streets in an weathers with her father, a shoe-black, in vVestminster. The Charity Organization Society pay for her now, and all fear of hip disoase has gone, but one leg is shorter than the other, and she is to have a high shoe to help her get into all the mischief that curly little head imagines so readily.

vVinnie is five, and looks up at us with great expressive eyes that make up for her lack of speech, for she has a hollow roof and is sadly disfigured by a scar on her lip. A. sad little story was Winnie's-a mother dying of consumption, with a baby pining away by her side, and vVinnie not two years old, and no bigger than many babies at six months, lying in a cradle near her, utterly neglected, too weak to turn her head or hold anything in her hand. The father was out at work all day, there was no one to attend to tho dying woman and the two babies. She took tho baby with her when she went, and ,Vinnie seemed unlikely to be far behind them, for when she came to The Buttercups in her sad, little, black frock she brought bronchitis with her, and for six weeks was so near death that it seemed almost cruel to try and keep back the poor, little, struggling soul that had got so far through the dark valley towards the light beyond.

But she lived, and I do not know how Mrs. Greon could ever part with her now, for that six

weeks day and night nursing haye tied her so closely to her heart.

There were so many little stories to hear of children past and present: of Jessie, whose father was in prison for ill-treating his wife and children, and who had expressed his willingness to swing for the baby. Poor little soul! you might almost have thought that she knew of the threat, for she shrank if anyone spoke to her, as if a blow usually followed a word, and she had to be coaxed and surprised into a little wintry smile in spite of herself; and would hasten to retrieve such a rash step by relapsing into a heavier scowl.

There was 'Villie, whose deserted, desperate mother brought him to be baptized at a church in Ha:rgerston, and went straight on to drown herself in the canal, being happily rescued and helped to start afresh.

There was a fair, little Lily, rescued by the Society for the Prevention of Oruelty to Ohildren from a den ofinfamy.

There was a little Mabel, so rickctty that the hospital doctors thought her arms must have been broken, they were so crooked and twisted. She came down in splints, which she used to put together in the funniest way to say grace.

There were victims of Board School education, over-worked brains and St. Vitus's dance.

There were so many that it would make my letter too long to tell a quarter, and moreover it was tea time, and the little maid at The Buttercups came out to bring the children in to their tea in their nice, cool, bow-windowed room, with the long table spread with an array of mugs, and such huge plates

of bread and butter that I could hardly believe it could ever be demolished, but was assured by :Mrs. Green that more and yet more would certainly be required. There was tea for us in the matron's own pretty room at the other end of the cottage, and after partaking of it, we went up to see the children's bedrooms; pleasant, airy, cottage rooms, with rows of small beds and cots, each with a little red flannel sleeping-jacket, worked with a buttercup, as were also the curtains in the sitting-room below.

There was nothing fine, and nothing of an institution about it. It was j list a cottage and a home, with only such simple rules as any orderly family might have; no laws of the Medes and Persians as to hours and diet, and coming and going. The children do not become cases, they are all individuals with likes and dislikes, recognized, and as far as possible complied with; and I think the most satisfactory proof of' the success of this easy system is the love that springs up almost invariably between Mrs. Green and each of tho children, the tears that are shed at parting (it is by no means so pleasant, Aunt Sophy says, to escort a child back to London), and the improvement that is seen when they get home, not only in rosy, sunburnt faces, and bright eyes, and renewed health and strength, but in manners and morals too, for minds, as well as bodies, benefit from the pure air and healthy surroundings of The Buttercups.

The fly was waiting to take us to the station, and we \yent to say good-bye to the children, and I cherished a secret hope that after my successful

journey down with Johnnie, he would express some sorrow or regret at parting with me; but would you believe it, such is the ingratitude of human nature, he was too much absorbed in a mighty piece of bread and butter to take the slightest notice of me, and he sat up in his high chair among the others as if he had been born and brought up in The Buttercups.

"Well," Aunt Sophy asked, as we went to the station, between the hedges covered with wild roses and honeysuckle, and the sweet-smelling hayfields, " do you feel the better for a visit to the Buttercups? "

And I answered, "Ever so much, but I should like to take hundreds of little London babies out of the gutter straight down to The Buttercups' hayfield."

In the matron's bedroom there was an illuminated text, ""Whoso shall receive one such little child in My name, receiveth Me."

Don't you think, dear Kate, we might manage a Buttercups at Meadowland?

Your very affectionate,

E.W.

IX.

DEAR KATE,-I wonder if you remember as vividly as I do a day in January, some years ago now, at Torquay, when the flags on the vessels in the bay were hoisted half-mast high, and nearly all the houses and shops showed some signs ofmourning, and St. John's was thronged with sad-faced, tearful crowds, bearing wreaths to lay on a coffinthat stood in the chancel, almost hidden with white flowers. And do you remember how among them came some fishermen from Brixham with a wreath of seaweed, and how it was given the place of honour on the coffin, very near the noble dead heart that in life had loved the St. Andrew's Waterside Mission, and the sailors and fishermen so dearly? I am sure that anything to do with the work of which Canon Robinson was the founder, and in which he took so deep and tender an interest, cannot fail to interest any who, like you and **I,** remember the sad leave-taking when the sorrowful procession passed down the church, bearing the flower-covered coffin, while, with broken voices, choir and mourning people sang-

"Jesu, give Thy servants
Consola tiOll sure,
Haste Thee to us bringing
Blessings that endure."

How empty the church looked when the choir came slowly back without their burden, and there was only the white wreath in the empty stall, and the stole laid across the desk.

'Vell, Kate, that is my excuse, if any excuse is needed, for asking you and the working party at home to take an interest in the St. Andrew's ",Vaterside Mission at Great Grimsby.

Thirty years ago Grimsby was only a little fishing village of no particular importance on the Lincolnshire coast. About that time four smacks from Barking began to land their fish here, and forward it by train tQBillingsgate, and this system developed so rapidly that last year 80,000 tons of fish were sent from Grimsby to London alone, and the little fishing village has become the first fishing port in the world, owning more than 1100 smacks, and giving employment to more than 6000 men afloat, and providing occupation for almost as many ashore. Only a few of these are the old Grimsby fishermen or their sons, and a few more are hereditary fishermen from other places, but the great demand for apprentices draw boys and young men from all parts of England, and applications are even made to workhouses and reformatories to supply the demand. Some are incorrigible lads, to whom magistrates give lighter sentences on condition that they are sent to sea when discharged. There is one such I heard of, a lad of sixteen, who had been given three months' hard labour for threatening to murder his employer and blow up his house, and who would have had a heavier sentence but for the understanding that he should go to sea. Some are runaway!'!, either to avoid punishment or escape all control..

Don't you remember, Kate, how Joe Dance ran away to sea after a long course of hen-roost robbing and pilfering, and how broken-hearted his mother was? But Meadowland is too far from the coast for the craze for going to sea to be very common among our lads, who are more often enticed away from the plough by the recruiting sergeant and the bunch of fluttering ribbons.

Some of these Grimsby lads are ne'er-do-weels of private homes, for whom it is hoped that the utter absence of control and the freedom of sea life, with its positive discomforts, will do what kindness and unbounded affection has failed to accomplish. Some have received good educations, some cannot read, some have been well brought up, and some have had no bringing up, some are brave, honest, manly fellows, while some are quite the reverse, without honour or truth, graduates in every form of vice. It is easy to imagine the difficulty of working among this assemblage of incongruous elements, it is impossible to treat them as a class, the work must to a great extent be individual.. There is no public opinion for good to begin with, which is so powerful a help in country parishes. It is not acting from a high motive, to be sure, to go to church because the folks would notice if one were not there, and not to get drunk because one could not look the neighbours in the face afterwards, and to put on a clean shirt and be tidy on Sunday because people talk so if one does not, but these small motives are very helpful sometimes, they are like the low box-edging round the flower borders, quite inadequate, of course, to keep people off them, but very

effectual all the same in preventing us from wandering off the gravel path. Say what you like about Mrs. Grundy, she is not a bad friend after all, if she is not too much of a tyrant. Anyhow, at Great Grimsby there are no box-edgings, not Mrs. Grundy, and their absence is by no means an advantage. For half the year, usually from March to December, during what is called the "fleeting" Eeason,the boats are away in the North Sea, only returning for one week during the time. They go to the fleeting in companies of from 40 to 100 smacks, under the direction of an "Admiral," who signals when fishing shall go on. These smacks keep together for the whole season, and build small towns on the water, a steam cutter leaving them every day with the fish they have caught packed in boxes, either for Grimsby or London. The rest of the year is devoted to what is called single boating, when the trips are only from ten to fourteen days, and the boats then return to port with the fish they have taken carefully preserved in ice. There are two sorts of smacks used in the fishing, known as "codmen" and" trawlers," the former usually carrying ten hands, and the latter five, and these boats vary in size, the largest being about 90 tons. The smacks used in the single boating are arranged entirely with a view to the storage of the fish, and with verv small consideration for the comfort of the men: In the fore part of the boat, the sails and ship stores, nets, cordage, etc., are placed; tben comes an ice-room, holding about 14 tons, and all the centre of the vessel is filled up with what looks like the stalls of a stable, called at sea

"pounds" or "pars." Into these is put the fish as it is caught and covered with ice, till a stall is filled, and then boards are put up to keep it firm and steady, and then more fish and more ice are added till the stalls are closely packed and the whole centre of the boat is practically a huge mass of fish and ice, when the men set sail for home. As for the accommodation provided for the men, that is a very secondary consideration, or rather of no consideration at all; quite in the after-part of the boat there is a little hole of a cabin, dark and close, provided with "bunks," where the men sleep. Oh! don't imagine for a moment they are like the berths we had on the Southamptl)U and Hawre boat, with nice white pillows and sheets and silk curtains and gilding, and a hovering and encouraging stewardess, though we were both far too miserable to appreciate the comfort and even elegance that surrounded us that night; these bunks are more like small cupboards, or like the drawers of a bedroom chest of drawers with half the front cut out.

Little thou~ht seems to be given to the comfort and welfare of the bodies of the" hands" employed on these smacks, and still less has been bestowed on their souls, those souls that in the course of their perilous calling may at any time be called to their account without a moment's preparation. During the time of single boating the men seem more within reach, but our seaports are such dens of vice, of which it is impossible to describe or even imagine the dangers, that one might almost be glad to see tho smacks sail away out of reach of them, for if afluat thoy aro without God, on shore

their life is often one continuous debauch. And of all men in the world one would have thought that these men who go down to the sea in ships and occupy their business in great waters should be God-fearing, God-knowing, that in all the perils of their dangerous life they should be able to cry unto the Lord in their trouble. Death is so near them, the lad that is the noisiest and wildest and most full of fun and mischief, may in a few minutes be a poor lifeless body tossing about at the sport of the waves, to be cast up among the drift and weed on the shore, or to be seen no more till the sea gives up her dead, and it may be that he goes with an oath on his lips or half stupified with the drunken bout of the night before. If you glance over the *Pm'i.sh Magazine* for Grimsby your eye is constantly caught by such headings as "Fisherman drowned," "Two lives lost at sea," "Burnt at sea," "Collision and loss of life," " Dock accident," etc., and here and there the sad record of a storm with its attendant casualties.

About eleven years ago a Mission was begun among the seamen at Great Grimsby, and the St. Andrew's 'Waterside ~fission gave a grant of £60 a year towards it.)11'. Harte, the first Mission chaplain, found it certainly very uphill work; I suppose good \york always is, since the cross was carried up the Hill of Calvary. Little seemed possible, the lads would sometimes attend the :Mission-room, then held in a private house, to "have a game with Daddy Harte," or to blowout the tongues from the notes of the harmonium, which a friend had provided for the Mission, or any other piece of mischief which might occur to

them, with any amount of noise and rough horse-play. Mr. Harte's kindness and imperturbable good nature were proof against irritation, and his real interest in his somewhat erratic flock began at last to produce some effect. He begged many books and funds for the supply of new ones, and almost every smack sailing from the port carried Qff some reading material from the Mission, and he did much for the spread of temperance, drink being apparently a seaman's special temptation, and in lllany other ways laid good foundations for future work.

Soon after this a Fisher Lad's Institute was projected on a large scale with swimming-bath, reading-room, navigation-room, etc., but it eventually became a "non-sectarian" institution, in which the .Mission chaplain to these fisher lads had no place. ·When in 1884 Mr. Harte left Great Grimsby, funds were insufficient for the appointment of another chaplain to succeed him, and a layman, Mr. H. D. Lee, undertook the work, a large Mission-hall was secured, and through much difficulty and penury the Mission has struggled on, increasing and extending, however, till last year the number of Yisits of the lads to the Mission-room were 9,581. Here they have draughts, dominoes, etc., illustrated papers and books, and at times addresses and readings. The clergy frequently drop in, and Mr. Lee is present every night from 6 to 10, gaining their confidence and gradually acquiring a wide-spread influence among them. As a rule these lads are communicative, and their emotions are readily stirred, and into the ear of this ready and sympathetic listener,

many stories are poured of far away homes and kind and much enduring friends, whose patience the runaway has tried to the uttermost. They tell, too, of the scrapes that are of almost daily occurrence, and which very frequently end in longer or shorter residence in what they call " Webster's hotel," "Webster" being the governor of the gaol, and they frankly describe the stages of the temptation which leads to the often repeated fall. One of these lads seems almost to get into that ancient hostelry on purpose, and spends mo~t of the winter there, as he does not like work and bad weather; and another says, "I can't help getting into trouble. It's just this way, when I come in from sea, I meet an old shipmate; he shouts '\Vhat cheer?' (the regular fishermau's greeting) I answer, 'What cheer?' and the next thing is, 'Come and have a drain?' I say , No,' but I go. He stands glasses, and then I stand glasses, and before we've done, another chap turns up and has a drain, and then I'm ready for any number of glasses, and I'm very noisy when I'm drunk; the police look after me, and nobody knows how mad lam with myself the next day, and still I do it again."

There are half-a-dozen badly-written, ill-spelt letters lying before me now that I should like to send you to see, or copy for you, if my letter were not already too long. They come from the North Sea, from lads out fleeting, to .Mr. Lee. You could almost fancy there was a smell of the salt spray about them, though, more likely, it would be the smell of the close little cabin, of the fish and the tar, and the oil of the dim, little swinging lamp, and the coarse tobacco that the foreign

"copers" bring to the men when they get the chance, along with the wretched spirits, to muddle the foolish, young heads, weary of the monotony of the rough, hard work, without change or variety, for four months at a stretch.

I began by asking you to be interested in this work for the sake of Canon Robinson, but I had better have asked it for the sake of his .Master, who drew four at least of His little band of Apostles from among these fisher-folk, and among them the three who were nearest to Him, who were with Him at the Transfiguration, by the bed of Jairus's daughter, in the Agony of Gethsemane; and the disciple whom Jesus loved, who leaned on the Lord's breast at the last supper, was but a fisher lad. The Lord was with them, teaching them in dock, when the" ships were standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone out of them, and were washing their nets." He was with them too when they were at their fishing near land, at the single boating, as it were, when He bid them "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught;" and again when they were far out away from land, like the smacks in the wild North Sea, "in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves, for the wind was contrary, in the fourth watch of the night, JeSliSwent unto them walking on the sea." An effort is being made to follow in the footprints of our Lord, whose way is in the sea, and His path in the great waters, by providing a Mission ship which shall go with the men fleeting in the summer, and be a dock church in the winter, when the men go single boating, and for this £2,500 is required.

Those fishermen were very near the Master's heart then, these fishermen are just as near it now; and as from the Cross His dying eyes looked down on the fisher lad, the great Apostle and Evan~elist, St. John, so now He is looking from His throne on God's right hand on these rough, wild fishermen of Great Grimsby; and He says to our Mother Church, as He said to His own dear Mother then, "Behold thy son."

With my love to the working party, I remain, your very affectionate,

E. W.

X.

DEAR KATE,-A verse in the Psalms has been in my mind since we left Ventnor. " 0, spare me a little that I may recover my strength before I go hence and be no more seen," and with it a recollection of the guest chamber in the House Beautiful; you remember it, I am sure. "The pilgrim they laid in a large upper chamber, whose window opened towards the sun-rising; the name of the chamber was Peace."

This quiet resting place where toilers up the steep hill of consumption can rest before they go hence and are no more seen; this large upper chamber called Peace from whence weary pilgrims can see the sun-rising of a fairer day, is St. Catharine's Home for patients in advanced consumption at Ventnor. The view from the windows of the little home is fair enough, framed by the roses and passion flower that cover the verandah, into which the windows of the men's wards open; the town lies below sheltered by the steep hills and cliffs, with little St. Catharine's Church, half hidden by trees, and beyond is a sunny stretch of blue, blue sea with such lights, such colours, such variety of beauty; with seagulls catching the light on their white wings, and little brown sailed

fishing boats or dainty yachts scudding past, and further off the puff of smoke of a passing steamer on its way to India, Ohina, or America, or the Ohannel fleet itself on its stately way. You need not be afraid to withdraw your eyes from the smiling scene outside, expecting to find nothing but what is sad and melancholy within. It is nothing of the kind; the rooms are bright and cheerful, so are the faces of the inmates, so above all are the sisters. The sunshine comes pleasantly in at the large windows on the pale blue walls with their bright pictures and the dark stained floors with warm coloured rugs; there are plenty of flowers and books and ornaments about on the tables, there are comfortable cushioned arm-chairs, and the little beds with their blue quilts and snowy sheets look very tempting.

I had always had a fear of that little uninteresting grey house, which in spite of its pretty situation and the fair sunny scene all round it, seemed to my fancy always to have a shadow resting over it, a shadow from the valley of shadows; it seemed as if the grim motto over the entrance to Dante's-" Inferno" might be read over that unpretending little door: "Who enters here leaves hope behind." I could look with pleasure at the great hospital for consumption with its handsome blocks of building and its bright rows of windows; that is a convalescent h?spital, and the very name has something cheerful m the sound; but when Aunt Sophy proposed a visit to St. Oatharine's Home for patients in advanced consumption, I remembered that I very much wanted to finish that sketch at Bonchurch in time for your birthday, and had half-a-dozen

other very important things to do, and I actually let poor, dear, little Aunt Sophy set off by herself, toiling up the glaring white chalk road, and she was almost out of sight at the turn of the road before I came to a better mind and went after her, getting ,very hot and out of breath as a punishment for my selfishness.

And I am so glad I went. FirEt of all it is not at all a gloomy place; the sun was pouring in to one of the men's wards that looks over the sea, and the men were clustered round the window with a large telescope, deeply interested in the passing of some yachts, and from above, where the two wards for women are, sounded merry voices and laughter. It is not necessary, e\'en as regards this life, for those who enter to leave hope behind; they do not all come there to die-the tender care and nursing, the nourishing food, the mild air, the comfort and rest will sometimes stop the progress of the disease, even when it is very far advanced, and the patients leave the home benefitted, and, in some cases, so far restored to health as to be able to resume their work and return to their occupations. And as to that other hope, the hope of the life to come, many of them find it for the first time shining for them in the very darkness of the valley.

I think everyone who has had anyone very dear to them who has entered into rest by that long, steep hill of consumption cannot fail to be interested in St. Catharine's Home, and in this climate of ours there can be very few who have not followed some dear friend along the toilsome way, weary and sad enough with all the alleviations that money and

tender care and nursing can procure, and how infinitely worse in loneliness and poverty.

Consumption is so dreadfully common, and many of the occupations of the young men and girls are of such a sort, and in such circumstances that they fall a ready prey to this sickness that destroyeth in the noonday-the noonday of youth, and life, and activity. It is not only the trades that are known to be injurious to health, the steel-grinders, stone masons, glass cutters, millers, etc., but the long hours in hot work-rooms, and bad air make lung disease very common among dressmakers and work-girls, clerks, and shopmen, and the exposure to weather in other occupations, such as the young postmen, about whom I told you in one of my letters, adds to the long list of victims who fall yearly before this fatal disease.

Think what it must be to those who are working for their daily bread, whose only chance of keeping their heads above water is to struggle on with all their strength, never abating their exertions for a moment; who, in the rush and hurry, and hideous competition must jostle and elbow and push, just to keep the pitiful foothold that a dozen others are ready to seize if they give wayan inch. Without time to spare a thought for the future, for old age, or for a rainy day, and with, perhaps, others dependent on the poor little earnings, think what it must be to such an one when the first symptoms of the disease show themselves-the hollow cough, the wearing pain in .the side, the short breath, the heavy perspirations at night, the hectic fever. He fights against it at first, he will not allow it even to himself, he will not be ill, he cannot, be will

shake it off, it is nothing but a cold. But by-and-bye there is no mistake about it, no self-deception or deception of others is possible; the work which has been done every day with increasing difficulty and pain has to be given up, and the week's wages taken for the last time-and then? VVell, if he is not too far gone, he may get admitted to one of the consumptive hospitals, and remember these will not (and rightly, too) take incurable cases, or those that are not likely to derive benefit. Perhaps he is fortunate enough to get admitted to the Ventnor Hospital, and there the mild climate, and care, and good food, really seem to be doing him /l:ood, and be hopes that he is going to get well again-these cases are nearly always hopeful, sometimes to the very last. But the two months come to an end all too soon, and it is the middle of winter, and he shrinks from returning to the snowy, bleak country, or the frosty fogs of London, and some friends send him a little help, and he takes a small lodging at Ventnor and struggles on as well as he can. It can only, of necessity, be a humble, little lodging, not always clean, with bad cooking, an~ no means of supplementing it with the little delicacies that tempt the appetites of richer invalids, and with a pitiful desire to economize in fires and nourishing food, which are by no means luxuries, but mere necessities in his condition. He is not very likely to get better in these circumstances, so he gets worse, or the remittances from friends who can ill afford to help, get uncertain and fail altogether, and then? There is the workhouse Infirmary.

It was to keep some of these from this bitter

alternative, more bitter to many of them than death itself, that St. Catharine's Home was opened eight years ago to receive twelve patients, six men in the wards on the ground floor, and six women in the wards above. The payment for each case at the home is 10s. 6d. a week. It is open to patients of all religious denominations, neither Roman Catholics nor Dissenters being expected to join the services in the pretty little chapel which has been fitted up in a room Dext to the women's wards. It is nursed by Sisters from St. Margaret's, East Grinstead, hospital-trained and very experienced, as to whilse kindness and sympathy in soothing the weary hours of pain and weakness, there is no need to speak, for their testimony is written plainly enough in those "pathetic haunting" eyes that brighten and follow them as they pass, and plainer still on grateful hearts, read there by the Eye unto whom all hearts are open, read in those long nights offever and exhaustion, when as has been so beautifully said, " He gives His angels charge of those who sleep: but He Himself watches with those who wake."

The Sisters' work must be sometimes very depressing; the patients are many of them so young, so bright, so promising, it seems to our dim eyes such a pity, as if there might be so much good work done in the world by such brave young hearts and bright young intellects, if only they could be spared to do it; it seems sometimes so mysterious that the rusty, old tools should be made use of year after year, and the bright, keen ones laid aside almost unused, that the active stirring life has to be exchanged-

,. For such long \yenlmess. and snch wearing pain
As has no end in vie'Y, that makes of life
One bitter ayenue of darkened days-
The bitter darkness growing darker still,
,Vhich none can sl1[\re or soothe, which sunders us
From all desire, or hope, or stir of change,
Or service of our Mastel' in the world,
Or fellowship "lyithall the faces round,
Of passing pains and pleasures, while our pain
Passeth not, nor \yill pass ;-and only this
Remains for us to look for,-more of pain,
And doubt if ,ye can bear it to the end."

There are so many sad stories of loneliness and poverty attached to the young lives that end here so peacefully, of friendlessness and destitution and mental anxiety, and of the weary search for escape from" the hand that holds and pierces us, and will not let us go, however much we strive from under it." In St. Catharine's Home they find friends ::mdtender care, and nursing and gentle teaching, and if indeed there is no escape from that hand of sickness that is laid so heavily on them, they learn to know and love it as a Hand that was pierced for them, and to hold it fast "though the nails pierce thine too."

There was one young French girl who was there for four months. She was a French governess in a large scbool, and when she was taken ill had nowhere to go to, and no money or friends in England. Her mother came from Paris to see her before she died, not able to speak a word of English, but with a card round her neck with the address at Ventnor on it.

Another girl spent ten months at St. Catharine's, and left benefitted, but after being three months at St. Leonardi", came back to die. Sbe had such

a great longing to get back in time, that, when she was brought in, she said, "Now I can die happy, and I do not mind if it is to-night. I have had my wish." She lived two months and suffered much, but she was very patient to the end.

There was a man who had been in South America, and had had sunstroke. He had a wife and dear little baby not two years old, in London. He was very fond of the little thing, and grieved much at the idea of leaving it. He was prepared for Oonfirmation while he was in the Home, and taken when very ill over to Bonchurch, where the Bisbop confirmed him in the vestry, as the risk of the excitement of a crowded church was too great fur him. He did not live long after that-a very peaceful end which need not even have been saddened by the thought of leaving bis baby, for the little thing went first, only twenty-four hours before his father, who did not know of it here, but only when they met there.

There are many other cases I should like to tell you of, but those last days seem too sacred to intrude upon, too holy to be described by me, who-

> "Am not so much as worthy to stoop down
> And kiss the sacrAd foot-prints of my Lord,
> Upon the feet of any such an one
> As lieth patient here beneath His hand;
> 'Whom Christ has bound on I-lis own cross, to lie
> Beside Him, till Himself' shall give release;
> And that shall not be, many an one knows well,
> Until this place knows him no more on earth."

They want to enlarge the Home, so as to receive twenty instead of h'elve patients, and to have a

ward for children; they also want more single rooms for exceptional cases-they have but two such now-also rooms where the patients could have their meals, so that they need not have them in the wards. Better accommodation for the .sisters is needed, and a garden for the patients, and I do not think that we, who in almost every family have a sweet and tender memory of one who left us going Zionwards up the long, steep, stony hill of consumption, will let them want the means to carry out these improvements.

Your very affectionate,

E.W.

XI.

DEAR KATE,-I had almost begun this letter tQ you with "my pretty lady," and asked you to cross the poor gipsy's hand with a piece of silver, and told yon that you had a lucky face, and that good fortune was coming to you from over the sea, only that you must beware of a dark woman who means you no good; and from this beginning you will guess what has been filling my thoughts lately, and what I want also to fill yours.

Aunt Sophy and I went down in September to stay with the Martins in Oxfordshire, and a very pleasant time we had there. The house was full of people we liked, the old manor house is so pretty and so are the gardens and park and the rich, undulating country round; the weather too was beautiful, and every day there was something going on-a picnic, or a water party, or tennis, and when the men were out shooting, we had some delightful sketching excursions, the results of which you shall see when I come home; and Edith Martin took me to see her poor people in the pretty, thatched, black-timbered cottages, and to the little model village school, which is quite a picture, and even surpasses Meadowland school, if dear Mrs. Miller will forgive my saying so.

The children's faces seem all cut from one pattern, just as their pinafores are, and the little girls curtsey and the boys pull at their forelocks as if it was all regulated by machinery. There is no public-house in the village, and all the old women wear white caps and scarlet cloaks, and use the same expressions and quote the same texts. I do not mean that they are hypocrites, but they have got on to a certain line and their little pious ejaculations mean no more than the bad words that interlard the conversation of the East-end costermongers or the Grimsby fisher lads.

It made me a little irritable when I remembered Plaistow and its neighbours, and all the mass of poverty and suffering to be found there with so few to help, when I saw all the sympathy and half-crowns and jelly and broth and new flannel that the least trouble or illness calls forth at Nestley, and how the sufferer's cottage is beset with kind enquirers laden with little covered baskets and overflowing with offers of help and good advice. One could not help feeling wickedly that a little misfortune at one of the cottages was almost a Godsend to the ladies at the Vicarage and the Grange and the Manor, giving them a little variety from tennis and dancing and picnicing, and an opportunity for the luxury of showing kindness, just as, after the ambulance classes at Meadowland, though we did not actually wish accidents to occur, we were not altogether sorry when Joe Cape cut his arm or Mrs. Benson's baby scalded its foot, as affording us an opportunity of displaying our skill and prowess.

Well, you will say, what has all this to do with

the gipsies? but I am coming to them now. For several days in the beginning of September we could not drive in any direction fi'om Nestley without meeting processions of vans of all sorts and descriptions passing on their way to St. Giles' Fair at Oxford, which is a great annual meeting-place of gipsies from all parts of the country. There were vans and shows and roundabouts, and covered carts and waggons, most of them very heavily-laden, and followed by a pictnresque tribe of handsome, dark-eyed women, with gay-coloured handkerchiefs tied over their heads, and funny, little, half-clothed children with eyes as bright and quick as monkeys, and big, hulking, loose-limbed men, nearly everyone of whom had a lurcher dog at his heels with the same stealthy movements as his master.

It certainly gave a great picturesqueness to the neighbourhood, and Edith made a lovely little sketch of an encampment on a bit of waste ground near the gravel pit, with a fire lighted and a regular gipsy kettle boiling over it, and the van behind with its gaily-painted red wheels, aud smart little green door and brass knocker and white curtai~s to tho trim, little windows. *vVe* suspected that this outward appearance of cleanness and tidiness was delu siYe, and that the interior was not so presentable, but we did not realize the least in the world what gipsy interiors are as a rule, nor trouble ourselves to think how that picturesque-looking group round the fire, and the children who were ranging about and kept turning up in all sorts of unexpected quarters, and the couple of men asleep under the great golden gorse

bush on the grass where the raw-boned, grey horse was grazing, could all pack into such an extremely small space at night.. They stopped for three or four days at Nestley as the horse was lame, and Edith and I were quite sorry when they moved away, as we had made friends with one of the queer, little, brown boys, and he had taught us to " raker" one or two words of gipsy language, and to call rabbits" shoshi," and hares" kanegros," and hedgehogs" hotchi-witchi," and in return for this instruction had accepted as much cake and pudding and fruit as we liked to give him. The gentlemen, however, were much relieved at their departure, as gipsies are not plea~ant neighbours to well-preserved coverts, and they and their dogs are such adepts at poaching that they have been known to clear a field of' hares and rabbits, and bag their game while the keepers have been lying in wait for them over the fence. The hen-roosts too are not sacred to them, and pigs and cows have been known to sicken in a mysterious manner an~ die after the visit of gipsies to the neighbourhood, and the farmers have been glad to sell the body for a trifle to part of the same gang, wh() according to a pre-arranged plan, call on him a day or two afterwards. Mrs. Martin, too, was glad of their departure, as the queer old hag with the scarlet handkerchief over her head, who reminded us of the witch in the story of the tinderbox, was constantly lurking about the kitchen door beguiling the maids with her rubbish, and, though I was inclined at first to treat it as harmless nonsense, she convinced me that the silliness of girls is such that it often leads them on into mischief, deceit,

and dishonesty, as the cases in the police court testify; and she told me of one case in Dorsetshire where two gipsy women induced a dairyman's wife to part with her sovereigns for a sheep's heart studded with pins in mystic patterns outside, and crammed inside with bright farthings. The heart was to be hung in the chimney till Easter, when it was to be taken out and all the farthings would be found turned to gold.

When the gentlemen found how interested Edith and I were in the gipsies, they proposed that we should go and have a look at the fair on Monday, and though Mrs. Martin did not quite like our going, and Aunt Sophy was rather dubious about it, Allen and Walter offered to take care of us, and we started off, in spite of a little rain, on the six miles drive to Oxford to the field outside the town, near Somers Town, where the annual fair of St. Giles is held.

As we drew near our destination, the road began to be thronged with vehicles of all descriptions, from the trim, tidy-looking van drawn by substantial horses to the tumble-down cart covered over with sticks and old sheeting, drawn by a donkey in harness not worth sixpence, tied together with string and pieces of rope, and these last always most heavily loaded-one that we passed having a woman and six poor, dirty, little children peering through an opening in the rotten canvas, reminding one of a nest of young rabbits.

I do not know how these tardy arrivals got accommodated, for the road for more than a mile-and-a-half from the meadow was bordered with vans, carts, and tents along the side of the road

i.n the ditch, and the square seemed packed as tightly as possible, and the toll-clerk told us that there were 220 vans and shows there, and that it required endless patience and ingenuity to arrange them, and, as it was, we heard more than one quarrel going on between envious or discontented neighbours.

The noise and hubbub all around was qui.te confusing at first; there were crowds of people, and a brisk trade seemed to be going on at the gingerbread and toy stalls, and at the shows and wheels-of-fortune and cocoanut shies, while fortunes were being told in all directions, and, I believe, horse dealing was also in progress in another part of the field, though we did not see anything of it.

It was altogether a very lively scene, and Edith and T, having come intent on the picturesque, shut our eyes as much as we could to the dirt and squalor and wretchedness that peeped out from behind the fun and the freedom and the romance of gipsy life. 'Ve counted over fifteen wheels-of-fortune, everyone of which was surrounded by a crowd and kept spinning without cessation. These consist of a large wheel, something like a clock face or compass, with a swinging finger or hand. Round the outer edge of the wheel stand a lot of prizes, chiefly children's toys, fancy boxes and ornaments. Those who want to try their luck put down a penny opposite the thing they fancy. ,Vhen several have done this, and the pennies are studded about the wheel, the finger is set swinging, and wherever it stops, the fortunate owner of the penny claims the prize, but it was most remarkable

how seldom the finger stopped at any of the places ,,:here the pennies were laid-it always seem~d 61ther to go just past the mark or stop short of It. However, this circumstance did not seem to prevent the crowd of boys and young women and girls trying their luck again and again, and I was told by those who knew, that the wheels-of-fortune and shows make more money than all the other things in the fair put together. It was very eyident to a looker-on that the luck was regulated by the stall keeper pressing a stud that operates underneath the top of the table against the swivel upon which the finger or hand is placed, and he can stop it wherever he likes.

We went on from there to the cocoanut shies, where Allen and Walter accepted the invitation of one of the men. " Now, gents, try your luck! try your luck! all good uns and no bad uns, bad uns returned!" But they were too good cricketers to be very acceptable to the owner, cocoanut after cocoanut fell before their aim, and the proprietor at last suggested that they should patronize another of the twenty or more establishments, and I was glad to move away as I was so afraid lest some of the little brown children who were scrambling afterthe balls should get a knock on the head, and both Edith and I wanted to find out our small friend Zack, whose acquaintance we had made at Nestley.

There were shows of all sorts, wax-works, acrobats, dog-monkeys, tightrope dancers, white bears, fat women, Indian conjurors, female blondins, but the only one we saw was" Boscoe, the fire king," who was dressed and painted like a red Indian, and who went through a horrifying performance of eating fire,

making leaden bullets, putting a red hot poker down his throat and drawing it across his tongue, and bending red hot iron bars with his feet. This was followed by an acrobatic performance by a poor little boy with a thin anxious looking faco, and then an equally pathetic, nervous, little pony told fortunes; but we did not stop to the end, as the tent was hot and close, and we had had enough of it and wanted to be getting home, and the fair was becoming more crowded and noisy every minute, and there were a great many tipsy men about-yes, and women too, and even little children, and among them our little friend Zack, who staggered across our path as we left the fair too stupified even to recognize us.

vVe were all very silent as we drove horne, and even the stately beauty of Oxford with its grand old colleges and churches drew no expression of admiration from any of us, though it seems the very embodiment of learning and science; perhaps our eyes were still dazzled by the dirty finery and tawdry spangles of the gipsy shows, and with the orange and scarlet handkerchiefs and flashing dark eyes of the women, even the grand roll of the lYIagdalen organ as we passed seemed somehow out of tune, while the" raker" of the gipsies and the shrill cries of the children were echoing in our ears.

"vVell," Aunt Sophy said, "have you enjoyed yourself? "

And I said, "I don't know, I want to think about it."

And, of course, when I want to think of anything myself, I want you and the working party at home to think of it too, and the more I think of it, the more terrible it seems, tbis horde of gipsies spread about

over this beautiful Ohristian land of ours, living in utter ignorance, in indescribable dirt and wretchedness, sin and misery, beyond the reach of religion or of sanitary or educational inspection, with no power but the policeman exerting any influence over them. It seems almost unbelievable that in a civilized {lountry 30,000 children should be growwing up in ignorance and heathenism, growing up naturally to fill the ranks of our criminal classes and people our prisons, for it is well-known that ignorance and crime go hand in hand, and of the persons who were committed to prison last year 60,840 could neither read nor write.

One who has the cause of the gipsies very near his heart, and who has already done noble service for the children in the brick fields and on the canals, **Mr.** George Smith of Ooalville, says that gipsy morality, cleanliness, faithfulness, honesty and industry exist, with some noble exceptions, only in imagination. The pure bred gipsies are very few now, and their ranks have been filled up by all sorts of rogues and vagabonds who, for one reason or another, were anxious to cast off the constraints of decent life and live a roving existence, for the most part wandering about the country during the summer, and settling down on the outskirts of London or some other big town during the winter. Upon Wanstead flats, Oherry Island, Barking Road, Oanning Town, Hackney Flats, Battersea, Wandsworth, Ohelsea and many other places, they gather together for the winter living in tents, which, at first hearing, sounds better than some of the overcrowded kitchens and garrets oftbe London courts and alleys, but when we see what these tents are like we

may change our opinion. I will describe one. It is about 7 feet wide, 16 feet long and where the round top is highest about 4! feet in height.. It is covered with old pieces of sacking or canvas to keep out the cold and rain, and the entrance is closed with a kind of curtain; the fire by which they cook their meals is placed in a tin bucket pierced with holes, and some of the smoke from the burning sticks goes out of an opening in the top of the tent that serves for a chimney, while the rest of it fills the place and helps to keep the inmates' faces and hands a proper gipsy colour. The bed is a little straw laid on the damp ground, covered with a sack or a sheet as the case may be; an old soap box or tea chest serves both as cupboard and table. Oreeping into one of these tents almost on all fours you will find half··naked gipsy children squatting upon the ground, busy at skewer or washing-peg making, and, at night, father and mother, brothers and sisters huddle together, lying down where they have worked and sleep as they are, with but a rag between them and the bleak night of pitiless snow and rain. The over crowding of these tents and vans is something terrible. The following will give you some idea of the average numbers and chances of decency and morality in such circumstances. " Phillips, a gipsy from JYlaidstone, had in his van one woman and eleven children; Green, from Bristol, had two men, two women and eleven children; Brinklow had in his van two women and seven children; Lee, a gipsy from London, had in his tent two young men, one woman and seven children; making a total of 47 men, women and children of all ages and sizes huddling together

in these four tents and vans, and not two of these could read or write a sentence.

There is so much I should like to tell you about the gipsies and the hardships and miseries of the life that looks so free and merry and picturesque, of the horse-dealing gipsies and their arts in doctoring-up broken-winded and roaring horses to look quite serviceable, and buying them back from the deluded purchaser for a trifle to be doctored again and again. A fine-looking, broken-winded horse "roarer" or "cribber" is almost a fortune to a gipsy. During two or three years while he can go, the screw is sold and bought in again scores of times. I could tell you too of their poaching and thieving, and of the way in which infection and disease is carried from one place to another by their means, and the worse infection and disease of sin and impurity.

It is certainly a very difficult matter to deal with, but the difficulty of a thing does not take away our responsibility with regard to it. Through the instrumentality of Mr. Smith, a bill is now before Parliament to provide for the registration of all gipsy vans and temporary dwellings with a view to their inspection by the sanitary authorities to prevent overcrowding and insanitary conditions, and also to enable the School Board officersto get hold of the children who will have a pass book to enable them to obtain admittance at any school for as long a time as they happen to be in the neighbourhood, and to allow of their presenting themselves for examination at the usual time, provided they have made 200 attendances during the year, and that such attendances have been duly entered

by the various schoolmasters at whose schools the children have attended.

There are many difficulties in the working of the scheme,.but I do not think they are insuperable ones. Do you remember how the Israelites, wanderers and dwellers in tents like these poor gipsies, asked leave of the Amorities to pass through their land to Canaan? "Let me pass through thy land, we will not turn into the fields or into the vineyards, we will not drink of the waters of the well: but we will go along by the king's highway until we be past thy borders."

I think the little, bare-footed, ignorant, heathen gipsy children are asking us, and all the more eloquently, that they are too ignorant even to know what they want, to let them pass through our borders by the king's highway of education and civilization to the promised land, and that if, as the Amorites, we will not let them pass, we shall be ranking ourselves with the enemies of the Lord, and His punishment will not fail to fall on us aR upon Sihon and his people.

The Lord, who in His righteous anger with Israel, thought with mercy of the "little ones which ye said should be a prey, and your children which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil," and promised that they should go in to that good land and "unto them will I glve it, and they shall possess it," and who spared sinful Nineveh for the sake of the "more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand," and He who "was moved with compassion on the multitude because they were as sheep not having a shepherd,"

will look with pity on the 30,000 ignorant gipsy children in the very midst of rich, highly-educated, Christian England.

Your very affectionate,

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