

## Unawares.

(By Christian Burke, in 'The Dawn of Day.')

'It is a vulgar and commonplace prejudice which would measure everything by its own habits of mind. . . .—Dr. Pusey.

It began with Eleanor Scott. She was one of those decided people who carry all before them by sheer force of will, and by their own unshakeable conviction of their inability to make mistakes. Therefore when she announced the opinion that the stranger who had come among them from 'nobody knows where,' could never be altogether 'one of us,' the other lassies who made up what was commonly known as, 'Miss Beckenham's young people,' agreed more or less unanimously, and sent the new-comer to Coventry with a calm certainly that their leader and spokes-woman must be right.

The workers at Rosslyn House were considered by less fortunate neighbors to live and labor in clover. The Principal was one of those good women who take a real and vital interest in those who serve them; to whom a fair day's wage included a sympathy and kindly interest in the comfort and well-being of the young lives spent in her employ. The business was a quiet and old-fashioned one, less subject to rushes than its more ambitious rivals, and giving time and scope for good and notable work. The girls learned to take a pride in the dainty stitchery for which the establishment was famous, and scant indeed was the mercy shown to any of their number who by slipshod work was likely to bring discredit on the honor of the house.

There were fifteen of them in all, ranging from Letty, the youngest apprentice, to Eleanor, whose two-and-twenty years were considered to have supplied her with an inexhaustible store of wisdom. For two or three years there had been no changes in the work-room. The girls were all drawn from the same neighborhood, many of them had been school-fellows, and not a few lived 'next door,' to each other out of business hours, or met at classes and clubs when their work was done. Thus they had plenty of interests in common, and the friendships formed among them were not likely to be of an undesirable sort, while it gave them a certain esprit de corps which was most valuable. It fostered, however, a tendency to cliques, and to a quiet contempt for those whose ways were less enlightened or whose standard was different from their own. Probably no class of beings is so desperately, so wholeheartedly exclusive as young girls, whatever may be their station. The very keenness of their interests, the all-importance of every detail of life, and their absolute certainty on every subject under the sun—as yet unshaken by rough contact with problems and contradictions which beset their elders—all tend to a kind of narrowness, a lack of sympathy, or comprehension of all that lies outside of their own particular groove. A spirit of dignified superiority had grown very strong among these girls, and certain indications of it had influenced Miss Beckenham in her determination to introduce an entirely fresh element when next there should be a vacancy. And perhaps her estimate of the girls who were really attached to her was an over-favorable one, for she never imagined that they would be likely to resent such a step.

The first break in the little circle occurred when Isabel Saddler thought fit to get married. Her companions were enchanted, and

danced to, if not at, her wedding—which she considerably fixed for a Saturday afternoon—with light feet and lighter hearts. They felt the event conferred distinction, not only upon the bride-elect, but upon the whole community. To leave for the sordid aim of 'bettering' oneself in a stuffy, fashionable London work-room, as one of their number had once done, had something mean and unsatisfactory about it; but to leave because the inevitable prince had come—and he is not less a prince to loving eyes if he comes in a workman's dress—that was just what it should be! So they gave Isabel their blessing, and a number of useless and useful articles for her new home into the bargain. Few brides ever began life with a more magnificent supply of pincushions, tidies, chair-backs, wall-pockets, and every other luxury

cally, the head of the room; and Mary Graham had a convenient little cousin, whose name had been on the books for some time, who could now be admitted, and give everybody a move up without introducing a fresh and possibly undesirable element.

'It is so much better to have them in young,' Eleanor remarked judiciously, 'we can get them into our ways from the first; besides, it will be company for Letty.'

Letty, a humble, peaceful little person, blushed with pleasure at this recognition of her needs, and great and overwhelming was the disappointment when they discovered that Miss Beckenham did indeed intend to find a corner for the small cousin, but that Isabel's place was to be filled by a stranger, and that stranger a girl from the wilds of the country, whose days had been spent in



AT LAST SHE CAME

that could be worked by ingenious fingers, or come within the scope of slender purses. But when they had sprinkled their old companion generously with rice, and paid her a visit in a body to admire the brand-new little doll's house in which she reigned as mistress, and inspected the new furniture, the fascinating pots and pans, and all the cunning contrivances which some of them thought more interesting than the unfortunate bridegroom, who might occasionally be rather in the way—after they had done all this, they began to consider somewhat anxiously who would take Isabel's place.

They settled the matter entirely to their own satisfaction, and words cannot express their unbounded dismay when they discovered that Miss Beckenham had other views. The recent change had left Eleanor, in point of seniority, what she had long been practi-

a benighted village ten miles from even the primitive station where the trains stopped about twice a day, and the fast ones not at all! That she was to board with Miss Beckenham, who knew her family, and that their principal hoped they would soon make her feel at home, was all the information they could gather. For the next week, therefore, they amused themselves with gloomy prognostications as to the nuisance she would prove, and nursed their grievance till it became something very real and tangible, though they were discreet enough to keep it to themselves.

At last she came. A round-faced comely, looking country girl; with a frightened expression in her eyes at the new and bewildering life which seemed to seethe around her, that might have appealed to these young critics had they not been so blinded by pre-