

Guilford, and Compton are probably the most interesting; the three first are quite like Sussex churches. "Restoration" has been perfectly "rampant" in Surrey, so that the few old churches which have escaped destruction and re-building are robbed of that picturesque and interest which attaches to ancient buildings which have been untampered with.

Many of the old village churches in this county had curious towers; the lower portion constructed of rubble, or rough stone work, and the upper portion of timber, the whole crowned by a dwarf spirelet of wood, sometimes painted white, and at others covered with lead. Most of these have now disappeared, several very recently. A very characteristic example, however, still remains at

Thames Ditton, near Kingston. The lower portion of the tower is very rudely built, and dates probably from the thirteenth century. The belfry storey is of wood, and the curious combination of roof and spire is covered with metal; the whole forms a quaint object, but is a singular example of very humble not to say rude church architecture.



HOW TO START AND MANAGE A MOTHERS' MEETING.

HAVING for many years spent very happy hours at a mothers' meeting, I thought it possible that those who do not happen to have experience of parish work may like to know how, in a very simple way, we may enliven the monotonous lives of some of our poorer friends and neighbours.

We began by going round to the cottages, and after explaining what we intended to do at the mothers' meeting, we cordially invited them to come. The only convenient days of the week for working people are Monday and Thursday. We chose the latter day, from 2 o'clock to 3.45. At least two people are required to conduct a mothers' meeting satisfactorily.

When we started our meeting we had to pay 2s. per week for a room. This payment included fire, gas and cleaning. Later on we were able to have it in one of the mission rooms. Very good red and white flannel, plain and twilled, unbleached calico, blue flannel, shirting and sheeting, wide and narrow holland for aprons we got at cost price through the kindness of a personal friend (a merchant in Manchester). There was often a saving of twopence or threepence per yard on the flannels. The women paid by instalments. Nothing was allowed to be taken home until it was paid for. We gave no bonus, but provided buttons, cottons and needles, this expense for some years being covered by an annual donation of £1 from an old lady. By the time the garments were made they were usually paid for. One of the senior women took a pride in getting everything out of the trunk on to our trestle table, and she also put them away. The box was given to us by the friend who, with me, started the mothers' meeting. Two yard sticks, a table, and two account books were all we needed beside.

In one book there were two columns for each week, one for the amount *bought*, say 2s. 6d., the next for the amount *paid*, say 6d. The following week 2s. was entered in column one, thus showing at a glance how much each member owed. Every woman had a number. For some unknown reason they liked very much to have an early one, and members were moved up as there were vacancies. Each woman was given a yard of calico, at about twopence per yard, to make a bag to which was sewn her number. A payment of one penny each week was paid towards an annual treat, of which I will speak later.

For the encouragement of girls leaving school I may say that I began the mothers' meeting at seventeen and three-quarters, but a very dear old married lady was at the head. Another friend, a very little older than myself, did the accounts on a most admirable system.

Proceedings commenced with a cup of tea and two biscuits for each woman. Two

ounces provided thirty cups of good tea. Each woman brought her own cup every week to avoid the trouble of washing up. The tea was made in an urn from the school, and we provided a sugar basin and milk jug. We handed round the gingerbread and Osborne biscuits in paper bags. A pound was the quantity bought; three-quarters of a pound of sugar and a pint of milk, was the average quantity used. The total cost was 1s. 2½d. per week. The tea made it a more sociable gathering. About 2.30 the goods sold had been measured off and payments entered. Names were then called over from another book and a note made of any who were sick. A story book was read for half an hour and a lesson followed for another half an hour—incisive, interesting, with illustrations from real life. They frequently chose the subjects they would like for a course. One year we had "Great pictures and the lessons we may learn from them." Other years addresses on "One fault and the opposite virtue," the substance of addresses given in church by the Rev. H. R. Heywood. A course on the "Epistle to the Romans;" "Good women of the Bible" (the last subject was by special request of the women), "The Sermon on the Mount," a course on the Creed, the substance of lectures given at Oxford by Canon Gore.

A small book, *Kept for the Master's Use, Creed and Character*, by Canon Scott Holland, were the foundation of two other courses. Every lesson was most carefully prepared and adapted to the women and illustrated by local events, etc. The lady who gave the lessons never attempted to read anything aloud, knowing that would never attract their attention. It is always best to choose subjects and make them your own, reading up anything that bears upon the subject, and looking out during the week for illustrations from real life. At 3.30 the work was put away, the doxology was sung and prayers were said for missions in Africa, Calcutta, etc. (as well as very short prayers the women had learnt by heart); a prayer for their husbands, children, etc., followed, and any who were ill were mentioned by name. One lady stood at the door and shook hands with each as they left. I have omitted to say that a short talk of five or ten minutes preceded the reading. This gave an opportunity to tell them any special church or parish news. If we had been away we could tell them about the place where we had stayed. After a church congress an account of what had taken place was given instead of a lesson. A visit to Oxford, London, or the seaside; the death of any great churchman, or the preferment of a well-known man, gave us plenty to talk about, and it was not at all unusual for the women to ask to hear more instead of the story. In this way their interests were widened. Mis-

sionaries, the bishop, and various clergy, etc., were mentioned by name in the prayers. Each one seemed to like to feel they were helping in this work.

They thoroughly enjoyed hearing about places and people at a distance.

In reply to a question what kind of reading they liked best the votes were as follows, as far as I can remember: Two police news, one foreign places, four places like London, Oxford, or the seaside, twenty news about our own church or poor men who have risen. I am sure no young girls need hesitate about helping at a mothers' meeting, for they would say over and over again, "Oh, I do like a bit of life and a bit of fun." Jokes from Punch and amusing stories were thoroughly appreciated.

I don't think I have ever enjoyed any afternoon parties more than the delightful afternoons at the mothers' meetings.

Once a year we had a day in the country or by the sea, and one year we were able to go away for four days, the total cost per head being only 10s. (including 3s. 6d. railway fare).

On one day a drive and a tea was given to them, this being the annual custom when we went away for a day. With this exception they paid their own expenses.

Since then I have seen mothers in town and country parishes, and heard favourable and unfavourable remarks in the meetings. Individual interest seems to be most appreciated. Many times I have heard working women say, "I shan't go no more; you may go or stop away for anything anybody cares. They don't so much as say good-afternoon to you separately. It's just one good-afternoon as they come in, and if you're a bit late never a word; there's not a bit of life about it." On the other hand such a little satisfies them. Some home-made toffee on the 5th of November makes the day seem quite an important one, and a penny birthday card is often framed, not for the value of the card, but "to think of her remembering."

I suppose there are very few people who do not feel interested in young girls, but there is a special charm to older women of the working classes (many of whom live alone in one room) in a prettily-dressed fresh young girl with cheery, gracious manners. Young girls do not hesitate to teach in the Sunday-school, even when they have literally no aptitude for imparting what they know; but I think it is often realised that a young girl with a desire to please—although possessed of no special gifts—might cheer and brighten older people at a mothers' meeting, etc., in a way better than many of us twice their age. At a tea-party of old people, the enthusiastic ejaculation, "Bless her" or "Bless him," is generally applied to the more youthful entertainers.

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