



COMPETITION FOR "STAY AT HOME GIRLS."

SECOND PRIZE ESSAY.*

DEAR MR. EDITOR—

Since reading in the summer number of the G. O. P. the announcement of the competition for stay at home girls, I have wondered much whether or no I should make an effort and write an account of how my days are spent. Sometimes I have thought mine is such a quiet life, that when compared with the lives of other girls who have many friends, and many opportunities for social intercourse, and whose days are filled with a round of visiting, studying and pleasure taking; mine, with its daily routine of work would appear somewhat dull and dreary; but I am glad to say that it does not appear so to me, for I am always happy and contented, and I believe the truest happiness is to be found in striving to do our duty faithfully in whatever sphere of life God may have placed us.

I am the daughter of a Methodist Minister, and as the custom is in our Denomination we are often moving from place to place usually living three or four years in one Circuit. I like travelling about and living in different parts of the country, though it has its drawbacks. It takes a long time to get used to the new people, also the different customs in various parts of the country in connection with our Church work. While my actual home duties are about the same in whatever part of the country we may be, my duties in connection with the Church vary in the different circuits, according to the class of people we find, for I hold myself in readiness to fill any vacancy in the Church that I possibly can, believing that a Minister's daughter should be as energetic and as ready to assist in any branch of Christian work as the Minister himself. There is one department in all Churches that never seems to be sufficiently supplied with workers and that is the Sunday school. Wherever I go there is always the vacant class waiting for me, and in two schools I have filled the position of secretary, because no one else could be found willing to undertake the work. Then in two places I have had to take charge of the choir, and have been organist for six years. At present I am living in a large colliery town in South Wales, and have been here just long enough to get nicely settled, and to feel at home with our people. At first everything seemed very strange to us, for though our services are in English, and our people speak the English language as well as their own, we found it very difficult to understand them, and in many respects they are very different from the people we have always been accustomed to, but fortunately for me as the phrenologist informed me when he examined my head I can adapt myself to any circumstances, and so I have settled down as comfortably as if I had been born in Wales, and I am quite happy and contented amongst my Welsh friends. I always think when we are going to a new Circuit that at last I shall have a little leisure time, and be able to devote a certain portion of each day to studying, improving myself in music, or in doing fancy work; but I

have not yet arrived at that stage, and at present I am busier than ever, and my time is even more taken up than it ever was before.

My home life is a particularly happy one, we are four in family, father, mother, and one sister who is away in business, so that all the home duties and privileges fall to my share. We do not keep a servant, nor have any help whatever in our housework. Mother and I between us do everything, even the washing. As far as possible we are methodical, and do a certain portion of work each day, but sometimes we have to postpone it if there is anything special at the Chapel for that is always our first consideration. Monday is set apart for the week's washing, which is rather larger than we have been accustomed to, for everything gets so very dirty in these colliery districts, one day is taken up with the ironing, Friday is the day for thoroughly turning out the bedrooms, Saturday of course means a general cleaning up downstairs, while the other two days are fully occupied with special work, of which there is always plenty to be found in every home. It seems almost impossible to describe minutely the work of each day separately, there are so many little things to be done in every house, that take up a great deal of time, and yet leave nothing much to show for it. I am a fairly early riser, and always commence the day with a cold sponge bath, for which healthful habit I am indebted to the teaching of "Medicus" in the G. O. P.

Breakfast is the first consideration, then family prayer, after which the usual day's work is attended to, but not without many interruptions. Sometimes we have callers, or there is some shopping to do or a business letter to write and take to post, for no one but those intimately acquainted with a Minister's work, know of the many letters that arrive constantly needing attention. I do most of the business correspondence, and nearly all the Circuit writing which is considerable, for Methodist Ministers are not Pastors with but one Church to superintend, they always have several in a Circuit some of them many miles from their home, and a great deal of the business is then carried on by correspondence. Then too we have to keep a strict account of all the work done in one Circuit, of the income and expenditure of each chapel and school, and copies have to be forwarded to the District Meeting and to Conference. All this means hours of work for me, beside which we have a large magazine circulation to attend to, a Circuit plan to make every quarter which occupies several days according to the size of the Circuit, beside many other things too numerous to mention.

All this serves to take up a great deal of my time so that when I have special housework to do such as spring cleaning I am obliged to rise a few hours earlier in the morning. I always whitewash the ceilings and sometimes paper the walls, and I can also paint the house in a creditable manner when needed; these, I

often say are my accomplishments and though perhaps not so ladylike as some I find them exceedingly useful. Beside the general housework and washing we do our own dressmaking and of course plain needlework, this includes all my sister's as well, for she has no time to do her own; sometimes we get a few hours in the morning when we are dressmaking, but usually our sewing is done after three o'clock when housework is finished. I never do any fancy work for want of time. I knit all the stockings and winter gloves for the family, this occupies my odd moments. The only time I sit down and remain idle is just after dinner while father has a nap, and mother and I indulge in a cup of tea and half an hour's reading, and sometimes an hour before bedtime.

My evenings are much taken up with Church work. One is the Preaching service, another the Mutual Improvement class, while on Wednesday evening I often attend three services, Catechumen class, Band of Hope, and Choir practise. I am the assistant leader of the Catechumen class which is a preparatory class for training our scholars before they join the Church. I am also the Vice President of the Band of Hope, this office I accepted because there was no one else to fill it, we are very short of workers, and on two or three occasions I have found myself there alone, and have had to give out the hymns, play the harmonium, pray, make a speech, and keep order, the latter being the most difficult of all. I am not the organist of our present Church, but I have to play at most of our week-night services, and sometimes on the Sunday. During the winter I give an essay at our Mutual Improvement class, and I have several times read a paper at a Circuit, or Sunday School Convention. Then I have my visiting to do among the members of our Church, and there are often social gatherings, and tea-meetings in connection with the Church, and during the summer months there may be a picnic or two, these are my times of recreation and enjoyment. Sunday is a very busy day, I attend school morning and afternoon, preaching service twice and finish up by attending a prayer meeting, and in the course of seven years I have only been absent on an average one Sunday in the year.

Space forbids me to speak of our flower garden and lawns which I keep in order, or of an occasional mountaineering expedition with father, or of the pleasure of entertaining old friends who visit us sometimes, or of the letters I write to absent friends, or the delights of a short holiday in the summer when I can be spared from home which is not every year; but all these pleasures combined with my daily work convince me that a life well spent is worth living, and that no girl need wish for a more peaceful and happy life than the one I am living.

I declare the statements in this paper to be true.

Aberdare.

"Rose."

* These essays are printed without revision of any kind. The two remaining Prize Essays will be published in our next monthly part.—Ed.