

are book-stores, and here they cost about twice the published price.

#### OUR MEETINGS.—No. IV.

##### THE MOTHERS' MEETINGS.

These are the offspring or offshoot of the Infants' Friend Society, the ladies connected with which, feeling the desirability of such meetings to supplement their work, and enable them to keep a permanent hold and influence over the mothers coming under their care, and who too frequently at the end of the month drifted away and were lost sight of, determined, if possible, to commence them. For a long time they remained in contemplation only, most of the ladies being too much engaged to be able to undertake a regular weekly attendance, and those having leisure not being willing; but after a disappointment in the fact of the withdrawal of a lady who had promised to undertake the work, two ladies came forward and offered to conduct the meetings between them. A special committee meeting for the purpose of organising and starting them was therefore called on Nov. 11, 1875, and one guinea subscribed by the ladies present for the purchase of a few pairs of scissors, needles, tapes, cottons, buttons, and a few strong toys for the use of the young children whom the mothers cannot leave at home. This was supplemented by a grant of two pounds from the Infants' Friend Society, and various smaller subscriptions from friends, for the purchase of materials; since which it has been self-supporting, as, although sometimes there is little or no money in hand, there is always a good supply of materials in stock, which will eventually be turned into cash.

On the following Monday, the 15th, the meetings commenced with two mothers, the number increasing to twenty-two during the first month. A third lady joined the others in conducting them, and these ladies have continued their work (with intermissions) ever since, one of them having never been absent from a single meeting. The names of some seventy-eight mothers have been entered on the book, but a good many have fallen away from not receiving as many gratuities as they expected, and from removals; some also attend other mothers' meeting every alternate Monday, so that the average weekly attendance is only twenty-four. This by no means discourages the ladies, as so much good has so evidently been done to those who do attend, that we trust the good seed has not been sown in vain in the hearts of those also who have drifted away.

They meet in the schoolroom at two o'clock every Monday afternoon, Mrs. B—— (the lady who is never absent) conversing with them pleasantly for the first half-hour till the other two ladies join her. It is astonishing how much the mothers prize this first half-hour, and how they open their hearts and reveal their sorrows and joys to this quiet, gentle lady, and seek her advice in all circumstances. A few weeks back one of the ladies suggested that the meetings should only commence at half-past two, since she and the third lady could only join them at that time; but the mothers themselves negatived the proposition by saying, "Why shouldn't we have our half-hour's talk with Mrs. B—— the same as before?" several saying, "That is the best part of it." This lady visits them frequently

at their homes, and much enjoys it, ministering to their wants and necessities in many ways herself, and frequently also through the Bible nurse, whose duty it is to attend to all who are sick, and who is always present at the Monday meeting.

During this first half-hour of social chat the work is brought out of the cupboard, put in order, and got ready; the mothers' payments for materials received, entered on their cards, and in the book, and their payments to the Blanket and Sheet Society received. They are encouraged to bring from home any article requiring to be repaired, and large bundles of pieces are kept in store to be given them for this purpose. They can also bring their materials, and be instructed in the cutting-out of any article they require to make. Materials are also supplied them at a low figure, for which they can pay by instalments, the article becoming their property only when fully paid for. This rule is not strictly carried out, many of the regular attendants having been allowed to take home a much-needed article when only a trifle has been paid upon it, and it speaks well for the mothers' honesty and integrity, that in every case they have honourably continued the instalments till the whole was paid.

About half-past two the other two ladies arrive, and after a few friendly words, one of them commences reading some interesting story of a good moral and religious tendency, such as those published by our valuable Religious Tract Society. At half-past three the narrative is laid aside, and the singing of Moody and Sankey's hymns commences. These the mothers are allowed to choose for themselves, to the number of three, and this they look forward to as a great treat; and as many of them are very good singers, and a young lady presides at the grand piano in the school-room, they often have a short but pleasant little concert to themselves, during which troubles and sorrows seem all forgotten, and eyes sparkle, and faces look bright, animated, and happy. Bible reading by the other lady follows, she giving an interesting little address to them on what has been read. The Bible nurse then closes with prayer, the Bible reading following with the benediction, then comes the folding up and putting away of work, and the reluctant departure of many of the mothers, who feel those two hours and a-half to be the most sacred and happy of any in their lives. Many, we are sure, have cause to thank God that they were led to attend. Some have been brought to the knowledge of the Saviour, others are seeking Him, and some have been led to adopt the principles of total abstinence themselves, and to pray for, and seek to influence aright others whom they know to be addicted to drinking; and all have been benefited.

There is quite a rivalry of the right sort among them as to who shall keep their baby nicest; all bring them looking nice and clean and fresh, and often with pretty little fancy pinafores on, which they keep for the occasion. The mothers themselves also are generally bright, clean, and neat, and as special notice is taken of this, it greatly encourages them to keep all their children and their homes clean also; and thus the husbands are benefited, and encouraged to stay at home sometimes instead of spending the earnings at some "house at the corner."

It is surprising how good the children are during these meetings, the elder ones quietly amusing them-