

Promise helped her in the stress of a great temptation, and gave her just the moral "push" she needed to decide her to break an ignoble silence. The gifted authoress is inclined to think that in some of her early work the purpose is obtruded overmuch; some of the characters are "cardinal virtues personified."

"Writing in those days," she says, "came in a vehement rush. My steed ran away with me, and I had not learned to handle the reins. None the less, I hope each work may have had some little purpose to carry out in the world of books."

One of Miss Giberne's most successful small books has been *Tim Tiddington's Dream*, which, appearing as a penny booklet before a general election some years ago, had a large circulation. Many of her smaller books, such as *Least Said, Soonest Mended*, were written for working-men and their wives, and the author's insight into the needs and difficulties of this class is very striking. After the publication of *Five Thousand Pounds*, a working man in a large manufacturing town, who had read it, was heard to say, "Ah, she knows we! That's just how we'd do if we had the money!"

Science has shared with fiction the labours of Miss Giberne's pen. She inherited from her father a taste for scientific study. Among the subjects he undertook, as part of his children's education, were astronomy and botany. Miss Giberne has a very clear recollection of an astronomical lesson that she received when only seven or eight years old.

"My father," she says, "was explaining about the distance of the earth from the sun, and stated that the earth was some three millions of miles nearer the sun in our winter than in our summer. I was naturally puzzled; but, as he sat not far from the fire, and I, a small child, stood close by, he pointed to a fly

on his knee, and said, 'Look, Aggie; if that fly were one inch nearer the fire would it feel any hotter?' That settled the matter. I never again felt any difficulty as to the fact of greater cold combined with greater nearness."

This art of graphic illustration Miss Giberne herself possesses, and to it in a great measure may be ascribed the fact that her scientific books seize the imagination of her readers, young and old, and make indelible impressions. Her first scientific work, *Sun, Moon and Stars*, published in December, 1879, is to-day one of her most popular books, and is reaching its twenty-fourth thousand, a remarkable success for a work of the kind.

In answer to a question as to what first determined her to write on such subjects, Miss Giberne kindly gave me the interesting story of its genesis.

"In January, 1879," she said, "I went to Mr. Seeley, the publisher, and told him that I was tired of writing nothing but tales; I wanted to do something else. 'What do you want to do?' he asked pleasantly. I told him of a scheme I had had long in mind, to simplify astronomy for beginners, and he took up the subject warmly. We talked it over together, as we have done many a time since with other subjects, and as we continue to do. The matter was soon settled. I wrote half a dozen chapters, sent them to him, and received cordial encouragement. In June the whole was completed. Dr. Pritchard, then a stranger to me, read the proofs at the request of a mutual friend, and at once offered to write a preface."

Popular science handbooks are now published in large numbers; but when Miss Giberne's *Sun, Moon and Stars* appeared, such books were rare. Its wonderful success encouraged her to follow it, two years afterwards, with *The World's Foundations*, then

with *Among the Stars*, *Father Aldur*, *The Ocean of Air*, *Starry Skies*, and later, with *Radiant Suns*, a sequel to *Sun, Moon and Stars*. *The Ocean of Air* was regarded by Dr. Pritchard as superior to *Sun, Moon and Stars*. Recently *This Wonderful Universe* (S.P. C.K.), a small book intended for working men, has appeared.

Miss Giberne's latest book, *A Modern Puck*, claims, its writer modestly says, "to be no more than a mixture of fun and fancy and fact"; but never were the wonders of natural history introduced more charmingly. The homely simplicity of the ever-new fairy-tale is blended with the lore of dogs and cats, ants, bees and spiders, in such a way that even those who frankly "hate everything that is not story" will delight in it and imbibe wisdom unawares. We can well believe that Miss Giberne—to use her own words—"thoroughly enjoyed writing *A Modern Puck*."

Writing for girls is always a real pleasure to her, and far from being wearied by the claims of her large circle of readers, she affirms that she never had more keen delight in her literary work than during the last winter, when she was engaged upon an historical story to begin in the next monthly part of *THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER*.

We need scarcely say that Miss Giberne's life at Eastbourne is a busy one, though study and literature are not allowed to monopolise her. She finds time to pay country visits, to travel, and to meet often those who enjoy her friendship. We can well believe that they form a large circle, for an interesting personality, a wide culture, a ready sympathy, and a desire to be helpful, even to those who have no claim upon her, are this gifted writer's distinctive qualities.

ISABEL SUART-ROBSON.



TO THE EDITOR OF "THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER."

DEAR MR. EDITOR,—I very much wish to thank many of the Readers of "THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER" for their kind loving sympathy, shown to me in many ways. For instance—Flowers, Books, and kind letters,* all telling of the sympathy they feel for me in my shut-in, suffering life. Many of the kind senders gave no address, so that it was quite out of my power to thank them, otherwise than through "THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER." Even with those who put full address, it was impossible to thank each one for so kindly writing to me. I have felt very sorry at being unable to thank them, and say how very grateful I am to them.

I so much wish to let each one know how much I have been cheered and comforted by their thoughtfulness, and I do pray that each in turn may be blessed, cheered, and comforted, according to their need.

None of these dear ones will ever know down here what their sympathy and cheer have been to me and my dear ones also; but I hope by and by to tell these unknown friends how much they have helped me on, giving me renewed courage, to try to bear more bravely all God has given me to bear. Many of my correspondents have to lie upon beds of pain, just waiting patiently for the call, "Come up

higher." Like myself, they have so much of pain and weariness, so few pleasures, and life is just a struggle to be patient, trustful, and submissive, yet having within them the only true "Peace which passeth all understanding," and which "the world can neither give nor take away."

Many of God's suffering ones can do nothing with their hands, but just bear up by our prayers, those whose lives are given up to doing God's work, telling out the glad tidings, soothing the sick, cheering and pointing them to the only true Comforter; leading their thoughts away and above the weary, pain-racked bodies to the home awaiting them, where no pain or sorrow can ever enter. I do hope that each reader, who has so kindly shown so much sympathy, may read this, and understand thoroughly how very much I thank them and appreciate the kind thought which prompted them to show it. All this is a very great surprise to me, and so unexpected. To many this is the only way I can show my gratitude, and thank them, although I know so well they wish for no thanks.

I sincerely wish to do so, and it will be a great satisfaction to feel that each one will know what pleasure they have given, and how much they have helped me by their appreciation of my essay. I cannot be too grateful to God for giving me the greatest joy I could ever know, that is, when I read in many of the letters how my essay had helped them,

and given back the trust and hope in God, which had almost left them, and they felt ready to give way to despair.

All this has taught me how many kind hearts there are in the world. It is always my earnest prayer that I may be able to help others, if only by my prayers. My heart is just full of praise to God for using my essay. He so often uses the very meaneast and feeblest of His creatures to bring honour and glory to His name. The essay was written with much prayer, every line being a prayer, a pleading for a blessing to those who would read it, if ever it should be printed. I constant/asked for guidance what to write, so that the words were given me from God, and to Him be all the praise and all the glory.

He has used the words He gave me to bring honour to His name, and to comfort, help and cheer many of His weary downcast ones.

The sweet letters upon this are to me very, very precious and very sacred, and in many of them are promises of prayer for me, for which I thank the ones who promise. I do need those prayers so much, for patience to conquer all murmurings and irritability.

May God ever bless and keep each one, and comfort those dear suffering ones who have helped and comforted me.

Yours gratefully,
MARY R. LAW.

7, West Street,
Hertford,
Herts.

* These letters, etc., were sent direct to Miss Law by kindly readers who were touched by the tone of her Prize Essay, "My Room," which was printed with her name and address attached.—Ed.