

affairs. She thought that Michael meant exactly what he said and no more. She was very glad that she had given him this happiness, and that he hoped to see her again before long. And she looked forward to this time also.

She ate little at luncheon—a fact which Aunt Ella observed.

"I hope no mischief has been done," she thought. "But if she has any

fancies she will lose them when we get back to London."

After luncheon she asked her what her letter had been about.

Beattie blushed.

"He only wrote to say good-bye," she said.

"I should like to see the note, my dear," said Aunt Ella. And Beattie handed it to her.

Mrs. Swannington glanced at it.

"Perhaps it is as well he has gone," she said. "You mustn't believe that nonsense about his happiness. Besides, now he has gone away he won't think any more about us, you will see. But mind, if he does, I will have no correspondence. Of course your writing to him is out of the question, and if he should presume to write to you again, I must insist on your showing me the letter at once."

(To be continued.)

GENTLEWOMEN WHO DEVOTE THEIR LIVES TO THE POOR.

PART II.

THE MISSES SKINNER, FRIENDS OF GIRLS IN BUSINESS.

THE women workers who form the subject of this sketch are two sisters, gentlewomen of independent fortune and high culture, and the work they have devoted themselves to during the last quarter of a century is the giving of joy and rest to the overworked and weary girls who toil for daily bread in the shops of London and other great cities.

I will tell you what induced them to undertake such an important task.

It is now a quarter of a century ago that these two ladies paid a visit to London during the hottest month of the year, and on going back to their pretty home in Babbacombe, Devonshire, they were haunted by the wan, weary faces of the girls in the various houses of business at which they had been shopping.

They set themselves resolutely to consider whether anything could be done to render the lives of these girls healthier and brighter by breaking through the dullness and monotony of their "daily round," and the longing that sprang up in their hearts was, "Oh, if we could give some of these girls a breath of our sea air and a run on Babbacombe Downs!"

Regarding this longing as an inspiration, they at once looked about for a way in which

it could be made practical, and the result was that they took a cottage close to the Downs and secured a matron; they made the house pretty and home-like and fitted up six beds; they made the purpose of the cottage known in several journals together with a sketch of their plans: for example, a subscriber of one guinea would have the privilege of giving a recommendation ticket to any business girl of good character in whom she was interested, and thus reduce the girl's payment from twelve shillings to five shillings a week, and enable her to get a fortnight's holiday for £1 6s. 9d., including the railway journey there and back at single fare.

Without a subscriber's "recommendation ticket" the cost would be two guineas. The payment by the girls themselves of a certain sum was considered by these ladies a necessity, in order not only to prevent its being looked upon as a charity, which would have spoiled the whole, but to keep up the girls' self-respect and soothe their sensitive pride, for they possess largely both these qualities.

As a rule neither sick people nor convalescents are received at the home of rest, which is meant to be a real holiday home to prevent illness, not to cure it.

The establishment of this home was the first attempt in England to brighten the lives

of shop girls, by giving them a chance of recruiting their strength and teaching them the effect of happiness and rest in a beautiful climate.

It was scarcely less a blessing to many rich people, for it opened out a means of being useful to girls toiling for daily bread without hurting their self-respect.

The arrival of the first guests was naturally looked forward to as an event of great importance, and Miss Skinner and the matron were at the door to receive and welcome them; they were five girls from a house of business in Regent Street.

From that day to this the work has gone on without a single check to its success. After two years the home was removed to one with fifteen beds, and this proving too small the house next door was taken, and for several years they worked with what Miss Skinner calls "a thirty bed power." To-day the home consists of two beautiful houses standing side by side in the same grounds on Babbacombe Downs, with a magnificent view over the bay, and capable of accommodating a hundred guests or visitors as they are called; one house is known as Ferny Bank, the other as Ferny Combe.

The Misses Skinner are anxious to make it known that the aim of their work is not to provide a superior boarding house with merely improved physical comforts for business girls, though these are scrupulously attended to, but that it is an effort to put beauty, joy, colour, warmth and light into their lives, to create varied interests, to rouse up dormant energies and to stir up hope within them.

It is with this distinct object that every detail has been made as beautiful as possible, and books, pictures and music all pressed into service.

Miss Skinner says that the lives of girls working for their bread are often stunted and monotonous, and this is why she and her sister desire to help them out of the dull routine and lift their lives to a higher level. The perfect beauty of the place with its freedom from the vulgarity of many other seaside resorts helps to effect this in a very marked degree.

It is not easy to imagine what a holiday of two or three weeks in this beautiful place is to a girl whose life in London or other great towns is one fierce struggle in more ways than one. How it rests her tired eyes and wearied



"THE DRAWING-ROOM OVERLOOKING THE SEA."