

were there at twelve o'clock. The food was brought in as I have said very hot, and the men came pouring in as orderly and quiet as possible. Each walked up to the bar asking for what he desired, laid the money down and took his portion to one of the tables where he sat down and ate it; the rapid, neat way in which each person was served was admirable; there was no hurry, no pushing, no loud talking, no grumbling. Each man knew exactly what he wanted and which part of the bar to go for it, and with the correct sum in his hands to pay for it.

You remember the men's answer to Lady Ashburton when she asked if they would get their meals elsewhere than at public houses if they had the opportunity. It was "Just you try us."

Well she has tried them and for ten years daily this has been their answer.

But all this time you do not know of what the meal consists nor the price paid for it.

A pint of good soup, 1d., made of fresh bones, scraps off the fresh carcasses, the rinds of hams and plenty of fresh vegetables. A thick round of bread, 4d., familiarly known as a "doorstep"; a steak puddings, beautifully made, 4d.; a saucerful of potatoes, 1d.; six ounces of roast meat, 4d.; a plate of cold ham, 2d.; a small plate of pickles, 4d.; a plate of good hot tapioca, 1d.; a plate of jam pudding, 1d.; a large mug of cocoa, 1d.; a cup of tea or coffee with milk and sugar, 4d. A luxury known as the 2d. tray consists of a teapot holding three half pints of tea, a tiny milk jug and sugar basin, 2d.; a good plate of fish, 1d.

By a quarter to one the meal is over and the rooms made clean and fresh for the men who leave work at one. All the food brought in now is fresh and hot, and as the clock strikes the mid-day scene is repeated. The men who take advantage of these meals are, as a rule, dock labourers, stevedores, sailors waiting for ships, and men whose occupation has been or is on the water.

Practically food is being served here all day and I might say night as well, for no man coming in for food is refused lest he should drink instead. Experience shows that if a man is well fed he does not crave for stimulants. Breakfasts are served from six o'clock in the morning, and often as much as 4s. 2 is taken just for halfpenny-worths of cake at that early hour.

Our next visit was to the bed-rooms, varying according to size from 4s. to 6s., a week or so much a night—all of course for men. Each room contains a bed, washstand, table, Bible and inkbottle.

The new cubicles have pinewood panels, which is a great improvement on paper walls. There is a good bath-room at the men's disposal. There is also a library which is not appreciated greatly by the men, the books being of a character they do not understand, but they love Chambers' Journal, Dickens and kindred works. All the rooms were clean and comfortable, though I should have liked all the pieces of carpet up.

The smoking-room is very good, with a bagatelle board and a lavatory attached.

Ten servants do the whole work of this big place—the women's rooms being at one end and the men's at the other. Before speaking of the management of this work I should like you to see a branch of it which is carried on two miles further east, opposite the central station in the Albert Docks south side. It is known as the dockers' dining and coffee rooms. It is a large iron building capable of seating four hundred men; here on an average two thousand are supplied every day; they consume about one hundred and fifty gallons of tea, coffee and cocoa, for which they pay a halfpenny for a half-pint.

For the sum of twopenny they get a plate

of cold ham or cold meat; one hundred and fifty such are sold at the tea hour alone. So good is the attendance that they serve four hundred people in thirteen minutes.

During the winter months the favourite food here is pea soup, of which fifty or sixty gallons a day are consumed at the cost of a penny a pint.

This building is also used as a shelter for men while waiting for a call to work; they sometimes have to stand about for hours, and a shelter is a great comfort to them.

Neither are the men's spiritual needs forgotten, Gospel services having been held here twice a week during the last three years, and thousands of men have been reached in this way.

Nor does Lady Ashburton's work stop here; there is yet another centre at Manor Way, North Woolwich, close to the Dock Gates; this is on similar lines to the work at the Custom House, there being eighteen beds for seamen, a large coffee and dining room and a mission hall for the workers in the docks.

Barrows are also laden with provisions and sent round to the dockers while at their work.

One thing I must say—nothing is wasted. Pieces left are given to the very poor outside, and nothing that has been handled ever goes into the stock pot.

Just think of the magnitude of the work Lady Ashburton has been carrying on during the last ten years without in any way pauperising those she has helped; and yet she often gets depressed and wonders if she is in the right place doing the right work. One would like to remind her at such moments of the improved health, habits and social condition which regular wholesome food has brought about, and the power it has given to the men to resist drink; one would like to call to her mind the number of seamen who have been saved by her watchful helpers from falling into bad hands the moment they put foot on shore, and to bid her think of the Gospel message which during the last ten years has, through her means, been carried to many thousands who in their turn have conveyed it to the far-off parts of the world.

From what I have seen I should say that the reverence these seamen and dock labourers have for the delicate, fragile woman who has thrown herself heart and soul into their lives is rich in influence for good.

Certainly she must not feel depressed, but rather let the remainder of her life be one long hymn of thankfulness to the good God and Father of all, Who has permitted her to be the good angel to a large portion of His people who just needed what she has been able to give.

Just as it was no accident that she should find her work in this district, neither is it by accident that she has found such honourable, capable, Christian lieutenants. Needless to say that the success of her work is in a great measure owing to their untiring, unceasing service, spending and being spent in what they firmly believe to be God's service and their lady's.

Mr. Hill, who has the entire charge of all the dock district coffee taverns and dining rooms belonging to Lady Ashburton, is a keen business man, and knows to a fraction how much an article should cost and the best market from which to obtain it; the amount of his work physical and mental is startling, yet he never loses his head, nor gets into a muddle, nor finds himself short of material. I need hardly say that he in his turn has good faithful workers; there is for example, Mr. Reid, who with a large staff is engaged in the Albert Dock centre, and there is Mrs. Hill, his wife, at the North Woolwich centre.

I have never seen a manager so altogether

honourable and capable, but to my mind he is overworked.

Then there are Mr. Bradshaw and Mr. Skuse, both of whom are Lady Ashburton's lieutenants in the mission halls.

I think the question which every one would like answered is—Are the coffee taverns and shelters self-supporting? Yes they are. Take last year as an example. After every expense was paid Lady Ashburton had £400 profits towards the expense of her mission work.

You would think that the work I have described would be enough for one woman and one lifetime, but there is more to come, and although laid in a very different scene it is carried on in connection with the dock district.

On her own estate at Addiscombe, in the midst of rose gardens and beautiful country, she has built three homes each perfect in its way; the first, built in 1883, is known as the Nest, occupied by children between the ages of six and fourteen; boys one fortnight, girls the other; thirteen can be received at one time. A second, built in 1884, called the "Rest," is for men and women; one fortnight occupied by men and the next by women.

Within this is what is known as the Prophet's Chamber, set aside for a weary clergyman or lay helper greatly in need of rest but too poor to pay for it. It is a combination of sitting and bedroom with every comfort required by such a worker; and lastly we come to the "Dove Cot," built in 1886, for mothers and babies between six and fifteen months old. The sleeping room in this home looked very sweet with its ten white cots and pink and white curtains for the "little angels without wings," while on the wall hung the appropriate text, "Under the shadow of Thy wings."

Each home is two storeys high and complete in itself and built with due regard to sanitary arrangements. Everything in them and about them is most attractive. There is a competent staff of workers, a matron, gardener, boy and four servants.

Mr. Bradshaw is the lieutenant here, everything being in his charge. Lady Ashburton allows £700 a year for these homes, and this takes in all expenses; Mr. Bradshaw considers that the average cost of each guest per week is 4s. 6d. The only expense to the visitor for a fortnight's change and rest is a railway return ticket reduced to 10d. by the railway company.

These homes are filled mainly by people from the dock district among whom Lady Ashburton works, at least they have the first choice. They are for the tired, weary, over-weighted men and women and their delicate children—people who with all their work can barely make two ends meet, and certainly have no means of paying for a holiday.

It is easy to imagine how they value this lady's thoughtful care which provides them such a rest. All are known personally to Lady Ashburton or her lieutenants as honest, hard-working people to whom a rest like this is almost essential. The rules are very few and simple and by no means irksome. I was amused to see that no hair oil was permitted.

About seven acres are attached to the homes; a private road is made from one end to the other from the three homes to that built by Lady Compton for training servants. Lady Ashburton gave the ground, and the home, built under the direct superintendence of Lord and Lady Compton, now the Marquess and Marchioness of Northampton, is admirable in all its appointments. The work going on here is very good and practical under a very sensible matron, and is becoming well known for the good training the girls get. Most of them come from the East End of London.