

She bit her lips and half turned away.
 "I have no heart. I have told you so before. Why can't you believe it?"
 "Because I know it isn't true. You think your love is buried in Jack's grave, but I believe you are altogether wrong, and you are only letting yourself be a tool of fancy. If you would only try to master it, and let the dead past bury its dead."
 "Do you mean forget?" she asked in a sudden hard tone.
 "No, certainly not, but be more reasonable in your grief."

"You don't understand what you are talking about," she replied loftily. "I am going in," and she tried to draw her hand from his.

But instead of letting go, he tightened his hold and drew her close to him, folding her in his arms.

"I think you'll change your mind, and find out which of us is right some day," he said, a little huskily. "And meanwhile, I must be content to serve you."

His voice broke, but he quickly

mastered it. "I feel sure you will love me some day, Madge. If I didn't I think I should go mad, or something."

He kissed her two or three times on the lips, and because she was abashed by the light in his eyes, her face softened.

"But I'm not going to bother you," he continued. "Don't be anxious. You shall go your way and I will go mine, since you wish it."

Then he loosened his hold and she disappeared quickly, into the house.

(To be continued.)

GENTLEWOMEN WHO DEVOTE THEIR LIVES TO THE POOR.

INTRODUCTION.

"If each man in his measure
 Would do a brother's part,
 To cast a ray of comfort
 Into a brother's heart;
 How changed would be our country!
 How changed would be our poor!
 And then might merrie England
 Deserve her name once more."

Favourite lines of the late Duchess of Teck.

JUST as none of us know fully the infinite needs of the populations of our great cities, so neither do we know the vast and varied character of work undertaken in order to satisfy these needs, or at least to diminish them and make them bearable.

Whether the people be poor, or overworked and weary, lonely, or sick, or blind, or in prison, they are known to, and sympathised with, and helped by noble-hearted women, who devote themselves to the class they best understand and can best minister to.

Like ministering angels they visit the helpless little ones and the very old people, making their attics and cellars warm and bright with their presence; or they raise Homes of Rest for the weary in mind and body; or they are eyes to the blind. Others again visit the sick and care for their children while they are in hospital; some take the drunkard by the hand and help her to give up the vice; or they visit the criminal in prison and give her something to hope for. They also provide remunerative work for those who have lost their place in the world; others leave their own beautiful homes to live entirely among the people they want to help, that they may teach girls to live honourable lives, and train them to be good wives and mothers. And last not least there are women of high position who devote life and fortune to those children whose sorrows and diseases render them loathsome even to the mothers who bare them.

We may well thank God, Who has put it into the hearts of women of means and position to be brave, kind, wise and gentle in the cause of women less favoured than they, and whose sorrows and miseries would be intolerable but for the loving hands held out to them by the army of women workers.

If these articles should be the means of increasing the number of workers, even by a few, the writer would be thankful, and so would our Editor, whose sympathy with every class of need is well known.

PART I.

LADY LOUISA ASHBURTON.

"Christ is the Head of this house;
 The unseen guest at every meal;
 The silent listener to every conversation."*

* These words are printed and placed in every room in Lady Ashburton's block.

IT is very difficult to see at a glance all that is being done by good, noble-hearted women for the poor and the sorrowful in this London of ours, not only because of its amount and variety, but also because of the quiet way in which most of it is performed. Of one thing, however, we may be quite certain, viz., that each worker is using her special gifts in trying to make the world better, happier and brighter, and succeeds, even though she herself may not see the result with her own eyes.

Now and then, when we are allowed to look personally upon what these women-workers are doing, we stand amazed at the giant proportions and far-reaching influence of their work.

This thought is uppermost in my mind when thinking of Louisa Lady Ashburton. She looks so delicate and fragile, that you fear a rough wind may blow her away, and yet the power and influence she wields for good over those for whom and among whom she works is simply wonderful.

I am always very interested in the origin of work, and I like to know the impetus which set it going.

One can understand Lady Ashburton's good and beneficent work on her own estate at Addiscombe, near Croydon, but it was difficult to give a reason for her vast work in the Victoria, Albert and Central Docks, where she had no estate. It is of this special work I want to speak first.

Lady Ashburton was led to this part of East London by what looked very like an accident, only that we know nothing occurs by accident.

Some eleven or twelve years ago she was present at a drawing-room meeting held on behalf of the London City Mission, at which one of the speakers alluded to a good work going on at Tilbury Docks. She wished to see it, and it was on her way there that she passed the Custom-house station of the Victoria Docks. All who know this neighbourhood are aware of the many public houses which face the men with open doors as they pour out of the docks for their meals.

As she was driving past she was appalled at the number who made their way direct to one or other of these houses. She stopped the carriage, and without any hesitation attacked the men with the question, "Why do you go to the public-houses for your meals?"

"Because we have nowhere else to go," they replied.

"Would you go anywhere else if a place were open to you?" was her next question.

"Just you try us," was the answer.

I need hardly say that she did not continue her drive to Tilbury, for she felt that here lay her work; here was the platform on which to exercise the talents with which God had entrusted her.

She was very much in earnest, and by March in the Jubilee year she had built a mission-room and a coffee tavern, both of which the late Duchess of Teck opened.

During the Jubilee week she also erected a tent on an empty space behind the new buildings, in which four thousand teas were given and spiritual refreshment as well. The tent stood and continued to do good service until rough winds blew it down and left Lady Ashburton with a mission-room holding only two hundred people, a number far short of those who sought admission.

She then bought land and pulled down the houses on it, and in their place erected the present block of buildings known as the "Ashburton Block." It consists of a coffee tavern, sleeping accommodation for fifty men, a library, a house of rest, a small suite of rooms furnished quite simply for Lady Ashburton, who occasionally stays here to be in the midst of her work, a class-room and the beautiful mission-hall, which will accommodate eight hundred people. It is built on what is known as Plaistow Marshes, and therefore cost a great deal to build.

In digging for a foundation they found at the top nothing but mud, but below they came upon primeval forest; thirty feet down they came to trees, and the foundation was sunk thirty-three feet until clay was reached.

Piles were driven in and the spaces between filled with concrete, and the building stands as firm as a rock, although houses in the neighbourhood shake every time a train passes.

The hall is paved with blocks of wood and built of pine-wood. The carving round the windows alone cost £200. I believe it is no secret that Lady Ashburton sold a very valuable picture for £7000 to defray part of the expense of building this hall.

Services are held here every night, the address being given by some earnest, eloquent Christian preacher, while the choir, instrumental and vocal, is of a very high order.

We were present at one of these services, the congregation of men and women was large and exceedingly earnest. At the close many of the people came round Lady Ashburton as round a mother, not in any way familiar but with reverence.

It was pretty to hear them all address her as My Lady, just as though she were the only lady in the world to them, and when I made this remark to her she said quite simply, "Well, I suppose I am."

Our next visit was to the coffee tavern. The two large dining-rooms looked so clean, pleasant and comfortable with their green, brown and white dado, sanded floor, polished urns, marble tables and good, steaming-hot, wholesome food.

They accommodate comfortably two hundred and fifty, but at each of the mid-day meals there are frequently four hundred. We