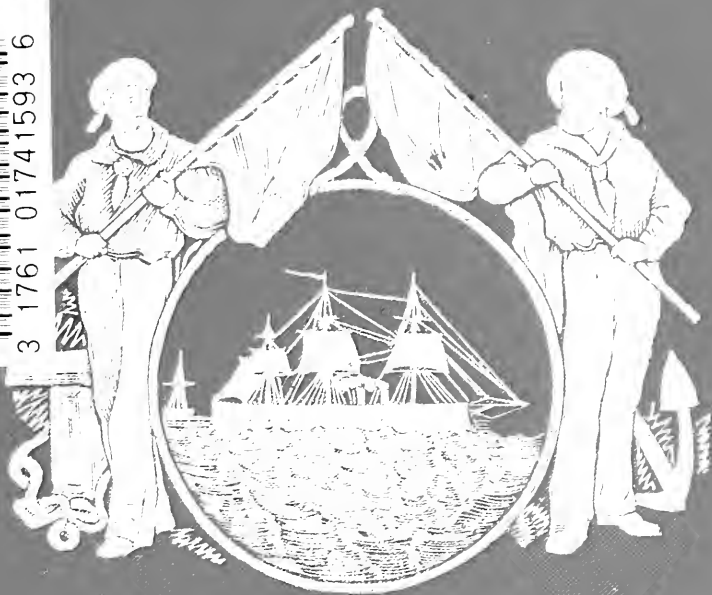


OUR BLUE JACKETS

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*MISS WESTON'S LIFE AND WORK
AMONG OUR SAILORS.*

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MISS AGNES WESTON,

OUR BLUE JACKETS.

A NARRATIVE

OF

Miss Weston's Life and Work among
our Sailors.

BY

SOPHIA G. WINTZ-

POPULAR EDITION.

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"Soll das Werk der Meister loben,
Doch der Segen kommt von oben."—*Schiller.*

"To Queen, to Country, but much more to Thee,
My life to give, who gav'st Thy life for me."

PREFACE.

THE writer of these pages trusts that this short history of one of God's great workers may encourage and strengthen the hearts of others similarly engaged, and stir up those of our Christian readers who have as yet done nothing for Christ, to seek henceforth "to do *something* for Him who has done so much for them." The object of this sketch is simply to bring glory to Him who has condescended to use such a humble instrument for accomplishing His purposes; *only* to exalt the Master, and not the servant. Much practical experience is laid before the reader, with the hope that it may in some measure be a help and benefit to those

desiring information as to the method adopted by Miss Weston, for securing success in her great undertakings.

“If I have spoken aught which is mine, forgive Thou, and let Thy people forgive,” * and Thou, O Eternal Father! shalt have all the praise and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

* St. Augustine, “De Trinitate.”

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CHAPTER I.

EARLY LIFE.

AGNES ELIZABETH WESTON, a name well known now to every seaman in the Royal Navy, was born——some readers will no doubt imagine at Portsmouth, or at some other great Naval arsenal, where seeing the “jolly Jack Tars” daily roaming about the town, she became stirred at an early age with the desire to do something for their bodily and spiritual welfare;—but, charming and natural as such an introduction to her life and work would be, the very opposite was the case; indeed, throughout this short sketch we shall often be forcibly reminded of the truth of the words, “My ways are not your ways, neither are my thoughts your thoughts, saith the Lord.”

She was born in London, in the midst of

the bustle and turmoil of the great metropolis; but long before she was able to join either in its business or pleasures. her father, a barrister, and a man of considerable scientific knowledge and attainments, removed to Bath, and devoted himself almost entirely to astronomical and scientific pursuits, in which his family took a keen interest and pleasure. The Fellow of several learned Societies, but withal an humble and devoted Christian, his delight was to consecrate his talents to his Master's service, and to lead "from Nature up to Nature's God."

Such were the early influences and surroundings of Agnes Weston; and as she has often said, in speaking of her childhood's days, "Woe to me, if with such a father and mother, and such home influences, I had been aught than a child of God and a worker in His vineyard!" Although the child of many prayers she was for some years a source of great anxiety to her parents: the strong will and impulsive, passionate temper had need of much careful training.

Her father was much impressed by the words of a professor of phrenology, who whilst staying at his house observed her organic development, and prophesied that her career would be a remarkable one; he even went so far as to say, that a crisis would occur in her life, when she "would turn decisively either to the right or left would choose to be great either in the service of God, or in that of the world." In after years her father would recur to this and say, "Agnes might have been an instrument for evil instead of good, but, thank God, it has been otherwise."

Has descent anything to do with vigour and power of character? If so, her energy and strong impulses may be accounted for through a long line of ancestors, many of whom have intermarried with the noblest families of England: the family pedigree passes back without a broken link to the time of the Conquest, when the old Norman founder of the house kept feudal state in Normandy, and came over a Baron, in Duke

William's conquering army. Rewarded afterwards with lands and manors, he became Raoul de Bailleul de Weston. Although the estates and manors have passed into a noble house, through the female line, it is most interesting to look down the old pedigree, and to see the force of character, sometimes for evil and sometimes for good, which has distinguished generation after generation; and now in the 19th century we have in the subject of this sketch a "chip of the old block;" may not some portion of her dauntlessness and energy of character be due to the old Norman ancestors who knew how to win lands and honours, and to keep them?

Childhood and youth passed quietly away in study and home life, when in 1856, at sixteen years of age, a change took place in circumstances immediately surrounding her, through which the twilight, dawn, and then sunshine, of Divine Grace was to fill her soul. Up to this time she had been eminently careless and dead to all spiritual things; unlike some

who have had a glimmering of truth always shining in their hearts, she "cared for none of these things," and the forms of prayer, and reading of God's Word night and morning, gone through punctiliously by many, were utterly neglected by her.

The change that took place was in the ministry of the church which she always attended: the Rev. James Fleming, B.D., now Canon of York and Vicar of St. Michael's, Chester Square, was appointed to the incumbency of All Saints' Chapel, Bath. His preaching was clear, faithful, and vigorous—Christ first, last, and midst; and doubtless it told upon numbers in that congregation. He little thought that there was a heart in the breast of a young girl who attended his ministry from Sunday to Sunday, with whom the Lord's Spirit was striving, and who on her part was striving against His power. In all the congregation there was hardly one more careless and thoughtless, and at the same time more determined to keep out the truth, than she was.

“I was obliged to go to church,” she writes, referring to this period, “but I was determined not to listen, and oftentimes when the preacher gave out the text, I have stopped my ears, and shut my eyes, that I might neither see nor hear. I put away the truth deliberately from me, and the marvel is how the Good Shepherd followed me up.”

But Mr. Fleming’s earnest preaching, by the power of the Spirit of God, combined with the influence of a Christian friend and the prayers of Christian parents, slowly but surely did the work. She began to listen, and to think; God’s Word was no longer a sealed book. For hours she used to wander about in the fields Bible in hand, and many a night she laid awake in agony of soul. For months her spiritual state can only be described in the Psalmist’s words, “Deep calleth unto deep: all Thy billows and Thy waves have gone over me.”

How various God’s dealings are! Some, like Lydia, are brought at once, calmly and gently, to the feet of Jesus; others through

storm and turmoil and great mental conflicts. Satan seems to rage as his prey is plucked from him, and again and again all seems lost, and the soul swallowed up in a hurricane of agony, remorse, doubt, almost despair.

Such was the case with the subject of this sketch, she sought peace, she seemed to find none. At times she felt happy, tranquil, and safe; then again the storm burst, and all foothold seemed swept away. Doubts, misgivings, even sceptical delusions, crowded her soul. The terrors of the Law were upon her: of the Gospel she as yet knew little or nothing, when at last, after some years, under the same faithful Christian ministry and teaching, peace came; it was "like a river," and that tempest-tossed soul at last seeing Christ, looked to Him, and little by little saw clearly that He had been "made sin for her, that she might be made the righteousness of God in Him." But we must not forestall; this sunny period belongs to a future chapter, the blackness, darkness, and storm to this.

“I knew that I was lost,” she writes at this time, “but although salvation through the blood of Jesus was clearly preached, I did not see how I could be saved, and, like many another, my life was a mixture of terror and anguish of soul, carelessness and amusement, and so-called ‘good works.’ Oh that I had unbosomed myself to my minister, or to some Christian friend! but my hard, proud, reserved spirit said, ‘Anything but that,’—and I paid the penalty, by years of unrest and uselessness.”

Was it as a solace to the burdened heart, or a frantic effort to turn the mind to something else? I know not; but about this time she suddenly threw herself, with all her irresistible energy of purpose, into the study of music and organ playing. This instrument, of all others the king, had a great fascination for her, principally from the difficulty of mastering it; but nothing short of this would satisfy her. From the kind guidance of a friend who taught her the first rudiments, she passed under the professional teaching

of J. K. Pyne, Esq., organist of the Abbey Church, Bath. He took unfeigned interest in her progress. Hours passed like minutes at the fine old organ, and oftentimes the poor organ-blower struck work and cried for mercy before the enthusiastic performer had had half enough.

After studying for some time under Mr. Pyne, he suggested that she should aim higher, and if possible place herself under the teaching of that celebrated organist and composer Dr. S. S. Wesley, of Gloucester Cathedral. Dr. Wesley was puzzled : he was not accustomed to train ladies, and especially amateurs, of whom he had a very small opinion ; but at the earnest request of his friend Mr. Pyne, he agreed to meet Miss Weston in a certain church in Cheltenham, and see what she was made of.

Arrived at the church first, she at once made her way to the organ loft, and commenced playing one of Bach's pedal fugues. Dr. Wesley entered unobserved, and sat down in a pew and listened attentively ; as soon as

the fugue came to a close, he walked into the organ loft, and without introduction said, "I have heard enough, I will teach you; but do you wish to learn as an amateur?"

"No," was her immediate answer, "I want as sharp training as you would give to a professional."

"You shall have it," said he, smiling grimly; "come back with me to Gloucester, and I will ask the Dean and Chapter to allow you to study on the cathedral organ."

Scarcely a day now passed for some weeks that she was not found rousing the echoes of Gloucester Cathedral, practising morning, noon, and till long after dark, spite of all the ghostly stories narrated by vergers and fellow-pupils.

In connection with this she tells the following incident. Dr. Wesley was one evening giving her a lesson in the Cathedral after dark; no lights were allowed except in the organ loft, and their feeble glimmer made the huge nave look black, vast, and mysterious indeed. She had just begun to play

when a messenger arrived with the request that Dr. Wesley would return home at once, on important business. He left with the promise to be back directly, adding as he went down the stairs, "I hope you will not mind my locking you into the Cathedral: we are not allowed to leave the doors unfastened."

Despising all supernatural fears, she laughingly rejoined, "Oh no, I shall be perfectly happy and comfortable until your return," and at once set to work vigorously practising at a difficult bar of the music before her, not giving the ghosts or dead men's bones lying all around another thought.

Suddenly, however, she heard some muffled footsteps slowly and stealthily advancing up the side aisle of the Cathedral: they came nearer and nearer, until they paused in the side chapel, at the foot of the organ-loft stair. Feeling sure that it could not be Dr. Wesley's tread, she listened in dismay and horror, till, as she described it, "all the stories which I had heard of the ghost of

the crusader, which was supposed to haunt the venerable pile, rushed into my mind."

She sat paralysed for a moment; the next, determined not to give way to such childish fears, threw aside the curtain, and saw—no one!

It was only the wind whirling in and around the cloisters and the recumbent effigies in the aisle, which had caused sounds similar to muffled footsteps. Ashamed of herself, she hastily went on practising, but Dr. Wesley on his return soon detected that something had occurred, and laughingly wrung from her an unwilling confession that she had been after all the victim of the ghost.

On her return from Gloucester, her father, much pleased at the strides which she had made, presented her with an organ of her own, which was built in London, and put up for her use in the new country house which he had just completed on "Lansdowne," near Bath; of which, as it was Agnes Weston's home for many years, it may be well to give our readers a short description,

Situated on the summit of one of the highest hills, the down stretching for miles behind it, it fully justifies the name of "Ensleigh"—End of the lea—bestowed upon it.

The view from the lawn or windows on a clear summer's day is not easily either described or forgotten. The ground suddenly descends, and the eye is carried over a fertile and beautiful valley, to a fine range of hills, and on again from range to range, till, about twenty miles off, the panorama is closed by the chalk downs of Wiltshire, and the edge of Salisbury Plain, while far below rise the towers and roofs of the old city of Bath. The spot was well chosen, and commanding a glorious scene of a thoroughly English type. Grand as is the mountain scenery of Switzerland, for daily, happy, calm, and peaceful enjoyment, what can be compared to the hills and dales of the west of England? Well is it for us when our lot is cast amid such scenes! and as health and vigour of body are generally the accompaniments of country exercise and air, *this*

country house was no exception to the rule, and has bestowed its gifts richly on Miss Weston, in vigour, and strength of body, which eminently fit her for the trying and busy life into which God has led her.

We allude to this home of her former life because it was in the true sense of the words a happy and a beautiful one; and it was with many a lingering look of regret that she relinquished it in after years, at God's call to work elsewhere for Him.

Glancing back on these early days of sunshine and cloud, how delightful it is to see the Lord's guiding hand in all, and how remarkably, step by step, does He train and fit the instrument for the exact kind and nature of the work which He has in store for it; truly we can see His wisdom guiding, arranging, and overruling even the smallest events.

The wise Master-builder visits Nature's quarry, and first selects the stone which He requires for a certain part of the building, by blasting and rough chiselling He removes it

from its bed, and continues to form and mould it into shape.

We shall see further on in this sketch of Miss Weston's life and labours, that all which characterised her early days—her energy and activity, the delight which she took in music, and consequently the knowledge of it which she attained—were all part of the plan by which she was fitted for Christian work ; the fierce mental storms through which she passed, the slow passage from darkness to light, enabled her to sympathise in after years with many a sailor who, less reserved than herself, has poured out his soul on paper, or face to face, and the visiting, teaching, etc., in which she engaged up to this date (about 1865), failed to satisfy her, or give her any rest, real rest, for her unsatisfied soul.

Ten years is a long time to grope in twilight and dawn, but truly, as St. Augustine said, "Thou hast made us, O Lord, for Thyself, and the soul is restless till it resteth in *Thee*."

CHAPTER II.

SMALL BEGINNINGS.

SOME of us who are lovers of mountain and moorland scenery can well remember tracing the stream from its source amidst fern and heather, winding its way like a silver thread down the mountain side, gaining volume and strength as it goes, brawling over rocks and boulders, or sleeping in quiet pools in the valley below, receiving fresh supplies on every side, and at last, after fertilising and blessing the country through which it passes, discharging itself, a river, into the ocean beyond. What a picture this is of the Spirit's work in the soul! Quietly and lovingly, here a little and there a little, He leads step by step, until at last self becomes nothing, Christ everything, and the happy believer is launched into the ocean of redeeming love.

In 1868 we find Agnes Weston no longer groping in the dark, no longer afraid to utter truths which she had not realized herself, but actively engaged in unfolding to the young, the sick, and the dying, in Sunday School, Hospital, and Bible-class the unsearchable riches of Christ.

In speaking of her own conversion she has always said that she could never definitely mention any day, hour, or even month, when she was conscious of being born of God; but like many others she can look up with confidence, in the full assurance of faith, and, in the words of one whose outward experience was the same as her inner one, say, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see."

In the early part of the year 1868, through the kind interest of the Chaplain, the Rev. E. J. Wright, she received permission to visit the patients at the Bath United Hospital, and so much were these visits valued and looked forward to, that it was arranged that she should give a short Gospel address in

each of the men's wards once a week. On these occasions, after addressing them altogether, she would go round from bed to bed, and speak to each man personally, accompanying the words with little gifts of flowers and books, which were much prized by them.

In her Hospital Journal she relates many a touching incident of one and another brought to God by these means. One afternoon, while she was conducting her short service in the Albert Ward, a poor fellow terribly crushed by an accident in the stone quarries was brought in. The trail of his blood lay on the floor over which he had been carried, and a deep, solemn hush fell on speaker and listeners as he was laid on a bed at the further end of the ward. The doctors, who with matron and nurses gathered round him, pronounced it to be a hopeless case. Distressed beyond measure, Miss Weston asked permission to speak to him. It was granted, with the remark that "as he would never be conscious again in this world, it mattered little what she said to him."

With an upward glance for grace and guidance she sat down by his side, behind the screen, and putting her hand gently on his shoulder, she repeated the first text which came into her mind: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." After a short pause she repeated it again. He moved slightly, and big tears rolled down his rough cheeks. This was the only answer which she received: but who can say what passed at the moment between that soul and its God?

Another entry is very interesting. "August 29th.—Visited the hospital. A poor fellow was lying in the "Edinburgh" Ward, near his end. He mentioned Miss Marsh, and the loving words which she had spoken to him, and sobbed bitterly as he told me of his wife and little children, whom he felt that he was about to leave. I tried simply and earnestly to point him to Jesus, as the object of his faith. Our conversation was broken off by men from

the other wards trooping in to the service, but before I left he said earnestly, 'I've *decided* to trust in Jesus.'

Another short entry is also interesting, as showing how God blessed her in this work. "Friday, Sept. 28th.—Addressed the patients in the Albert Ward from Genesis xxviii. A poor man with both legs broken was lying on a bed near me. He was a tender-hearted fellow, and told me much about his children and their devotion and love to him, and he listened with the interest of one to whom the words were new as I showed him the Holy Spirit's record, that 'as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him,' and asked him how he had returned this love and tenderness?

"'I've been a bad fellow,' he simply said, 'but I'll love Him.'

"Passing to the next bed, there lay a poor collier, with his face disfigured and blackened by an explosion of gunpowder. He seemed glad to see me, and repeated Miss Marsh's little prayer, which I had taught him the

week before : ' O God, wash me from all my sins in the Saviour's blood, and I shall be whiter than snow. Fill me with the Holy Ghost, for Jesus Christ's sake, Amen.'

" He said, ' I am very near death, but I am not afraid of it now : I have got Jesus.' "

These and many other incidents from real life she wove into tracts, and thus began to use the pen which is now such an instrument in her work. They were published by Mr. Drummond in the Stirling Series ; by the Religious Tract Society ; Messrs. Partridge and Co., and others. Her simple and yet clear way of bringing forward Gospel truth was much liked, the tracts obtained a large circulation, and are still doing work for God. Ever busy, and ready to enter into any fresh enterprise, she nevertheless still continued her work at the Sunday School. Every unruly class, both old and young, from infants to unmanageable boys, were handed over to her in turn, and the more unmanageable they were, the more she delighted in, as the Curate expressed it, " licking them into shape."

At length the senior boys' class developed into a class for working men. Some married men having expressed a wish to join, the members swelled until they reached the average of one hundred each Sunday afternoon, divided into two classes. In this important and interesting work she received the cordial sanction and co-operation of the Rector of Walcot, the Rev. Canon Bernard, who allowed her the use of the parish schoolroom. After a while a mission-room in the east of Walcot offering itself, she rented it, and henceforth all her work was centred there,—Working Men's Bible-classes and Prayer Meetings, Temperance and Band of Hope work.

She often speaks of her old friends the working men, and of their earnest prayers for her in their little meetings, as the foundation of much of her after work for God.

In her journal for 1869 she frequently alludes to them thus: "Tuesday, May 23rd. —Prayer meeting: 12 men present; prayed most earnestly for a revival in their midst, nor did they pray in vain. The result was soon

apparent: many were stirred up; a house-to-house visitation was proposed, and the more earnest-minded set to work to visit their fellow-workmen and to induce them to come to the meetings."

"Wednesday, June 18th.—The meetings still continue large, still earnest prayer is offered up. God has indeed been good to us; many a man has testified that he has given his heart to Christ."

Although much interested in all kinds of temperance work, it is a remarkable fact that she did not herself become a total abstainer for a very considerable time. Like many others, she contented herself with pointing the way, speaking against the evils of drink, and advocating the total abstinence cause, although not practising it herself.

She tells the story of the manner in which she was induced to sign the pledge in the following graphic words:—

"I had been working in the temperance cause for some time, inviting others to follow a course which I had not entered on myself,

when suddenly I was pulled up short in a very unlooked-for and unmistakable way. At the close of one of our temperance meetings, a desperate drunkard came up to me, wishing to sign the pledge. He was a chimney sweeper, and well known to us all. I was eager to get hold of him, knowing his past history, but as he took the pen in hand, he suddenly looked up into my face, and said enquiringly, 'If you please, Miss Weston, be you a teetotaler?' Somewhat disconcerted by this direct appeal, I replied that 'I only took a glass of wine occasionally, of course in strict moderation;' upon which he laid down the pen, and said, 'Well, I think that I will do just as you say, take a glass sometimes in moderation.' No entreaties of mine could prevail upon him to sign the total abstinence pledge, neither could he keep within the bounds of moderation; he went back to his old life, saying that 'he would do as the lady did.'

"That night," she adds, "I saw my duty very plainly, and I enrolled my name in the

pledge book, heartily wishing that I had done so before this poor fellow came forward."

The total abstinence question in its medical aspect is clearly laid down by eminent medical men—who prove conclusively that although intoxicating drinks may be a luxury, they are no necessity, that they contain nothing for the building up and sustenance of the body, on which they simply act as the whip or spur to the jaded horse, taking out his reserve strength, and putting nothing in. It is needless to speak on this point, and yet the personal testimony of each worker as to physical strength is very valuable.

After ten years of abstinence, during which Miss Weston says, to use her own words, "Although I have worked harder with brain, muscle, and nerve than I ever worked before, travelling thousands of miles, frequently holding two meetings a day, and standing at the helm of the large ship entrusted to my care, I may safely say that I have never enjoyed better health. Rest and food are the only doctors which I have had to employ."

Would that all Christian workers would enroll themselves against this great national sin, on the broad principle so clearly laid down in God's word: "It is good neither to eat flesh nor drink wine, nor *anything* whereby thy brother stumbleth or is offended, or is made weak."

After enrolling herself in the great temperance cause, we very naturally expect to see her throwing herself heartily into it, and such was the case. The 2nd Somerset Militia assembled every year at Bath for training, and all the evils connected with the gathering of such a body of men were very apparent. In conjunction with the Chaplain, and with the Colonel's full sanction and approval, Coffee and Reading Rooms were started for the use of the men, and were largely patronised. Every evening a popular meeting was arranged for them, consisting of songs, readings, and addresses, which were much appreciated. Miss Weston also undertook a Sunday Bible-class, which was well attended, and the testimony of one of the officers was

given in the following words:—"Since Miss Weston has taken the men in hand, and kept them out of the public houses, they are not like the same fellows."

Among her entries at this time stands the following:—"Monday 10th May.—The Militia Reading Rooms have been crowded this evening with men, including many non-commissioned officers. I gave an address on 'An awakened conscience.' Many remained behind to our Prayer Meeting, and many signed the pledge."

The close of the training was commemorated by the Colonel giving her permission to present each man with a Testament before they were disbanded. They were drawn up on the parade ground, and after a few earnest, simple words she passed from rank to rank, accompanied by two Sergeants carrying the books, and placed one in each man's hands.

Thus the good seed was sown in the hearts of these militia men, to bear fruit unto life eternal.

Since the devotion of her whole time to

the Royal Navy, this interesting work among the men of the 2nd Somerset has been taken up and developed by her sister. Would that in every town where our Militia Regiments assemble such work for God could be carried on.

Our readers will see for themselves how, looking to God for each day's work, she was led on step by step to greater and still greater things. Does any small beginner despair? Let him take Agnes Weston's motto, and "Doe ye nexte thyng."



CHAPTER III.

MONTHLY LETTERS, OR "BLUE BACKS."

MANY have asked, "How did Miss Weston commence her work among sailors?" The answer is simple, and it is a commentary on the passage, "I will lead the blind by a way they know not." The seed was a very small one, and the work which has grown out of it is very great; but we can the more clearly trace the hand of God in it all.

"In the early part of 1868," she relates, in one of her printed statements, "I wrote a letter to a Christian soldier then on passage with his regiment from England to India in H.M.S. *Crocodile*, one of Her Majesty's troop ships. He read and re-read it, and finding comfort and help from its words of Christian sympathy, he showed it to a seaman. The

seaman's eyes glistened as he handed back the letter, with this remark,

“That is good, we poor fellows have no friend: do you think that that lady would write to me? I would give anything to receive a letter like this.’

“I am sure that she will,’ replied the soldier; ‘I will write and ask her.’

“He did so, dating his letter from Suez. My heart was rejoiced at finding something, ever so small, to do for Jesus, and I replied at once. That letter was the germ of all my present work in the Service. For any ability in the letter-writing way I have to thank the Carus-Wilson Soldier's Friend Society, who supplied me with the names of Christian soldiers with whom I could correspond. This Society still carries on the same good work among our soldiers, and are glad of the help of Christian ladies wishing to consecrate their pens to Jesus.”*

The result of Miss Weston's letter to this

* Hon. Secretary, Mrs. Fyffe, Netley House, Victoria Square, Clifton, Bristol.

Christian seaman was a grateful and happy reply, enclosing the names of many sailors situated as he was, who would be glad of a letter also. One wrote, and another wrote, every week the correspondence grew larger and larger.

One poor fellow, on board a ship at Rio, became a very frequent correspondent; his letters used to come by the mail with the regularity of clock-work. At last he wrote telling of his bitter disappointment at being transferred from his homeward-bound ship to one stationed in a foreign port.

"What should I do now," he said, "without your letters? they drive away my trouble, and make Jesus seem so near to me. Do write to me again soon; my heart is almost broke at having to stay out here; but God's will be done. My old ship sailed out of harbour yesterday, homeward bound; we all manned the rigging to cheer her out. I could not cheer, there was a big lump in my throat."

A few months passed, and a pencil note in

a trembling hand came from him, in which he said,

“I am very ill, down with fever; but Jesus is near me: I know that I have everlasting life through His blood. Something seems to tell me that I shall have to wait to see my dear ones on the other side, and there I shall meet you too. I send you four shillings in stamps to help to carry on God’s work among my brother sailors.”

A letter was written in answer to this by the next mail, but he had entered the haven of rest, as he said to his mates in the hospital, “I’m going home by a shorter cut than by old England.” That letter came back, with the one word, “Dead,” written across it in red ink.

A letter is a very precious thing to a sailor far away from home. When the mail-bag arrives, those who have letters are the fortunate fellows, and those who have no friends feel very lonely then. Letter-writing to our sailors was certainly supplying a missing link, and greatly helping and en-

couraging, in their up-hill life, those who had become Christian men. It is well known that Jack is generous and kind-hearted, easily led to the right or to the wrong. It can therefore well be imagined how his heart is touched when he receives an unexpected letter of sympathy and encouragement from a friend in Old England, and that friend a Christian woman.

Such links bind our sailors to their country, and are valuable not only as regards the men personally, but also in a "Service" point of view; because everything that can raise the sailor's self-respect, and make him feel that he is cared for, thought of, and prayed for, makes him more contented with his lot, and consequently a better seaman.

The correspondence with sailors grew immensely; one man written to on board any ship would send the names of other shipmates, who wanted to be on the roll; some of the naval chaplains also, hearing of this correspondence, began to take an interest in it, among whom was the late

Rev. Richard Price, R.N., at Devonport. He kindly volunteered to procure names of Christian men at that port, which he did through some of the Readers of the Royal Naval Scripture Readers' Society, in which Society, at that time, he took a prominent part.

Although many years have since passed, and many of these workers, including himself, have been gathered home, this Society still carries on its work for the Master on board our ships of war, seeking by their Readers to gain a personal influence over the men, in order to lead them to Christ. All interested in our Royal Navy should help this Society, and enable it to enlarge its usefulness.*

Friendships, lasting, in many instances, through life, were made with hundreds of Blue Jackets in this simple way.

"We never light our pipes with your letters," wrote a sailor, "because you thinks about and cares for us."

* Secretary, Captain Campion, 4, Trafalgar Square Charing Cross, London.

Indeed, so great was the demand for written letters, that Miss Weston found it necessary to supplement them with a monthly printed letter, which enabled her to speak a friendly word to a very much larger number than she could have reached by her pen. During the first year of issue, 500 copies a month addressed to individual men were sent. In February 1872, 1500 copies of the letter were forwarded each month. The number rose steadily to 2,000, 2,500, 3,000 a month, and still names poured in from all parts of the world, and the circulation rose from 3,500 to 4,000, at which figure it now stands.

These letters are called by the men "little Blue Backs," on account of the blue cover in which, most properly, they are sent into the Navy. There is hardly a bronzed and weather-beaten Blue Jacket in the Service who would not answer, if he were asked whether he knew Miss Weston's Blue Backs, "Why, yes, they comed aboard my ship every month, all the time we were away."

Her desire is to speak to each man *alone*,

and by the letter this is accomplished. Thousands of sailors read them because they come straight from Miss Weston and home, and their naval colour recommends them everywhere.* The title reads : " A Monthly Letter addressed to the Officers, Seamen, Marines, and Marine Artillery of the Royal Navy at Home and Abroad." Below this title is an appropriate device of a Bible, sceptre, and crown, and the monthly text, on which generally the letter is based.

A sailor wrote to Miss Weston, " I thank God that I ever saw the outside of your little 'Blue Backs.' I must tell you all about it because it will encourage you to send them to all my mates in the Service. I was very miserable on account of bad news which I had received from home : some one very dear to me had pitched me over, so I determined to throw up everything, and to drown my misery by a fling on shore. On my way

* Any annual subscriber of *LJ* can receive a copy of this letter monthly, post free, on notifying the same to Miss Weston.

to ask for leave, I passed one of the mess tables, on which lay a 'Blue Back,' just arrived by the mail. I took it up, and read the text on the cover, 'There is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.' It hit me hard, and, ashamed of myself, I turned back, and sought and found that Friend, who has been my all in all ever since."

An officer thus racily described the advent of a packet on the West Indian station:—

"I took the parcel of 'Blue Backs' on the lower deck of our ship, and distributed them among the ship's company. It happened to be Sunday afternoon, and they all rushed at me with, 'Me one, sir!' and 'Me one, sir!' so that I had to stand against a gun, in order to keep off the crowd.

"I went round the decks again half-an-hour afterwards, just to see what they were doing with them; it would have cheered your heart to have seen the sight,—groups of men sitting cross-legged on the deck around one, the best reader probably, who was seated in the midst, reading the letter aloud to his listening mess-

mates. I went back to my cabin to thank God for those preachers in blue jackets, and asked Him to bless readers and listeners."

Miss Weston's heart's desire is well-nigh accomplished. The whole of the Navy now receives these little messengers monthly; they are sent to the Royal Naval Hospitals at Haslar, Plymouth, and Chatham; the Coast-guard Stations have been added, and through the kindness of the Trinity Board she also sends to all the English lighthouses. Touching letters of gratitude, enclosing a few shillings in stamps, have been received from these solitary outposts, and many lighthouse keepers have come to the Sailors' Rest to shake hands, and to say that since receiving the little packets they have seen their way made clear, by faith in the blood of Jesus.

Soon after the commencement of the regular issue of the men's letter, Miss Weston found it necessary to bring one out for the boys of the training ships also.

Some lads from H.M.S. *Impregnable* came

to her one day as a deputation from the rest, with this request,—

“Please, ma’am, do you think that you could write us boys a letter all to ourselves? we don’t understand the men’s.” The thought seemed a good one, and the boys’ wish was carried into effect. In January 1874, five hundred copies a month for the boys were issued; the demand became great, and they rose to two thousand copies a month, and are a great source of delight and interest to the lads, of which there are some two thousand at Devonport, and several hundreds at Falmouth on board H.M.S. *Ganges*, at Portsmouth on board H.M.S. *St. Vincent*, and at Portland on board H.M.S. *Boscawen*.

A specimen of any of these letters can always be obtained post free on application to Miss Weston, at the Sailors’ Rest.

The “Blue Backs” are sent away month by month in sacks full to the post office, from thence to be distributed all over the world to every ship in the Service, wherever the

white ensign flies. The grim monitor and the tiny gun-boat alike receives its Gospel and Temperance budget regularly. They have travelled even into frozen regions amidst eternal snow and ice, and have reached the highest latitude ever attained by man.

Before the last Arctic expedition left Portsmouth, the men asked Miss Weston how they were to get their monthly letters, as no mail packets run between England and Smith's Sound. The riddle was soon solved by a seaman, who exclaimed,

I'll tell you, I have it ; Miss Weston can get letters ready for, let me see, two years ahead, and then, come what may, we're sure to have enough. They can be put up in packets for each month, and stowed away in a couple of chests, one for each ship ; we'll take them, and they can be served out once a month : 'twill be almost as good as if a mail came out from Old England."

This advice was acted upon, although it involved a good deal of work ; each ship,

H.M.S. *Alert* and H.M.S. *Discovery*, took a small chest full, and the "Blue Backs" were regularly distributed and read; and we trust and believe in the awful darkness of that Arctic winter, that these silent messengers spoke many words to cheer and help the men, and to guide them to Jesus the true Light.

Miss Weston often receives letters full of lamentations from Blue Jackets on distant stations if the packets do not arrive regularly. The difficulties encountered in keeping a constant look-out on the movements of all H.M.'s ships are immense indeed! the Sailors' Rest list is like a kaleidoscope, never twice alike, and with every care they will go wrong sometimes.

She often relates a touching incident which she met with at Portsmouth; it shows the blessing, under God, which these "Blue Backs" may become, and the value set upon them.

She had asked permission of the captain, which he kindly gave, to pay a visit to H.M.S. *Duke of Wellington*, flag ship, and to

give an address to the ship's company. The meeting with the men, which was held on the main deck, was a very interesting one; at its close she was asked whether she would visit the sick bay, to speak a word to the men who were not able to come to the meeting. Gladly assenting, she went round, speaking a word or two to those confined to their cots. "On leaving the sick bay, I came," she says, "on a man who was better, and sitting at a table turning over the contents of his ditty box. The sailor's ditty box is the one little piece of property belonging to him, in which he can keep his home treasures. The young seaman emptied his gradually, taking out photographs, dried flowers, a lock of hair, and some letters. As I passed him he held out a "Blue Back," and said to me,

"Do you remember that?"

"Certainly," I answered, and taking it in my hand I saw by the date that it was two years old.

"I got that out in China, aboard the *Rinaldo*," he answered, in reply to my in-

quiring look, 'and I thank God that you ever sent it to me. I was one of the wildest fellows in the Service, but that letter showed me just what I was. I went to Jesus for pardon, and now I'm a happy man ; I would not part with that letter for five pounds,' and he put it again in his ditty box, turning the key, and said slowly, 'When I die I should like it to be buried with me.'

The letters which Miss Weston receives yearly from all parts of the world may be reckoned by thousands. A few brief quotations, without giving the name of ship or writer, may interest the reader.

"H.M.S. —.

"DEAR CHRISTIAN LADY,—I sit down to write these few lines and to tell you of the good work which is going on on board of our ship. We are hoping and praying to God for its advancement : may He pour down His Holy Spirit into the hearts of those who are trying to lead a better life. The monthly letters are a great help to us, and keep us

strong and happy ; that is what we want to be, for the sake of those around us, so that we can show them the good example of what a Christian ought to be, and to induce others to join our little band. We must rally round one another and carry our flag before us, and let it float with a good breeze ; the main thing is to be always trusting in Jesus, is it not, dear friend ? He will keep us from evil.

“Your ever sincere friend,

“L——.

“H.M.S. ——.

“DEAR MISS WESTON,—You cannot think what joy it caused to my heart when I received your letter and read its contents. I fear I am troubling you too much by writing to you so often, but it seems good to me to sit down and tell you the goodness of the Lord, and how His work is reviving on board of our ship. He does answer our prayers. May God bless you in your labours, and give you the desire of your heart.

“Yours truly in Jesus,

“S——.”

"MY DEAR CHRISTIAN FRIEND,—I was very pleased to receive a letter from you so soon after my arrival out here, and also pleased to know some one remembered me at the throne of grace. I was so very glad to read July's monthly letter about the 'Wordless Book.' You ask me, dear friend, in your letter, if I am a Christian. I am happy to be able to answer 'Yes,' for I am very happy, and rejoicing in the Lord. You will be glad to know the sailors often sing and talk about what they have heard at your meetings when the ships were at home. I enclose a subscription for the Gospel letters.* May God's blessing be with you all.

"I remain, your friend,

"B——."

"H.M.S. —."

"DEAR FRIEND,—On account of illness I am invalided home from this station. I am

* The cost of printing and sending Monthly Letters, salary of Evangelist and Bible-woman, postage, Flower Mission to Royal Naval Hospital, relief of destitute seamen, etc., averages £500 a year.

sorry to leave my ship and shipmates, especially my Christian companions, and they too deeply regret my having to leave them, and offer many prayers for my safe journey home. Home! the sound of that word makes me look at the side of two pictures. I left home a young beginner in drunkenness, but, thank God, your books and men are sending me back a sober, temperate, and Christian man, and my heart rejoices at the thought of the welcome I shall receive at home now.

“ I remain, your sincere friend,
“ F——.”

Sankey's hymns, from the simplicity of the chorus at the end of each verse, and the bright tunes to which they are set, are great favourites with Jack. The men will often sit in a circle round one who plays the concertina, and sing “Hold the Fort,” “The Home over There,” “Safe in the Arms of Jesus,” and many others; those who do not know the words chiming in at the chorus; and who can say how much blessing may be the result?

A special effort has lately been made to supply our ships of war with these hymn-books, and it is pleasant to record that the sailors on board of Her Majesty's ships have now an opportunity of singing these hymns wherever they go, as they carry both music and words with them.

A kind friend of sailors in Edinburgh has employed her pen in writing poetry, which has been much appreciated by them. The following touching lines were written during the long dreary winter spent by the fleet in Besika Bay, when the disappointment of spending Christmas far away made the detention irksome. Indeed, the reader can imagine how warmly these leaflets were received, read, and sent home to wife or mother. Some beautiful verses by the same writer will be found in a latter part of the book.



CHAPTER IV.

TEMPERANCE WORK.

DRINK has always been the seaman's snare,—the cause, as many a commanding officer has stated, of nearly all the crime in the Service. To see the fine, manly, stalwart form of a man-o'-war's man reeling up the street, all his manliness gone, and the kindly, pleasant-spoken fellow turned either into a drivelling idiot or a rough swearing bully, is a spectacle sad enough to make men and angels weep. As a fearful and terrible hindrance to the Gospel, Miss Weston has (ever since the sharp lesson learnt on the subject in past days) felt it her bounden duty as a Christian worker, to move this great stumbling-block out of the way.

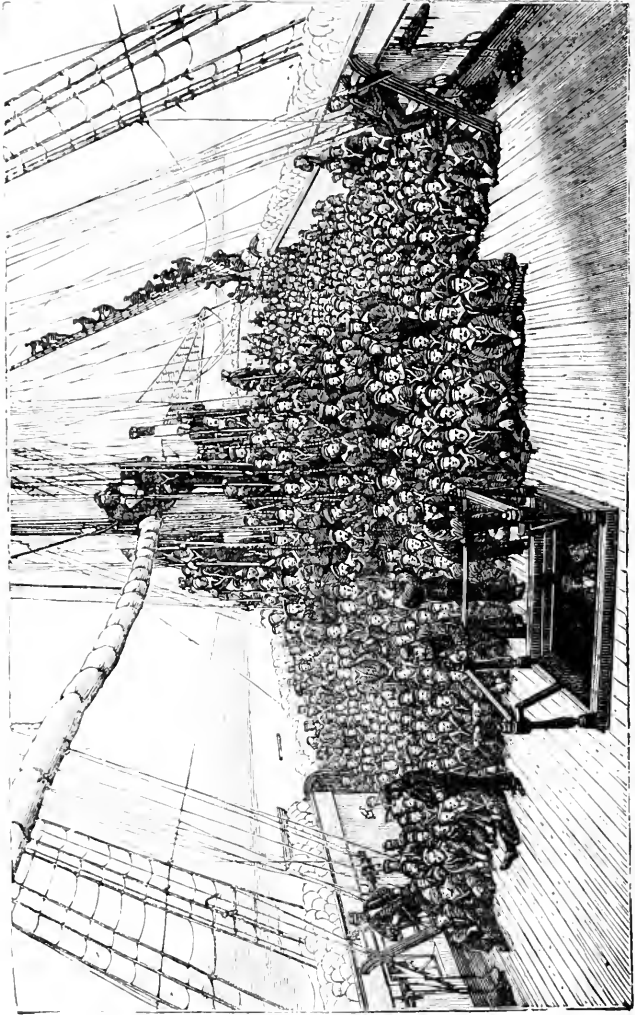
In the year 1873, the National Temperance League having undertaken temperance work

in the Royal Navy, she willingly promised to superintend and carry it on for them.

She says: "I had long been working among our sailors, when I began to feel how it would further the cause if I could carry on, as a handmaid to the Gospel, some definite kind of temperance work among them. I therefore took up the cause with double zest, feeling that the Lord's blessing would be with it."

The first step was to get permission to speak to the men on board their ships. The difficulties were almost insurmountable; the etiquette and rules of the Service, as well as strong prejudices, were all against her.

At last a friend came to the rescue in Admiral Sir W. King Hall, K.C.B., then Admiral Superintendent of the Dockyard at Devonport. He characteristically told her that he would do what he could, and use his influence with the commanding officers at Devonport, on one condition, viz., that she should first give a short address to the dockyard's men at their dinner hour, at which



MEN AND BOYS GATHERED ON ONE OF H. M. TRAINING SHIPS LISTENING TO AN ADDRESS BY MISS WESTON

both himself and his chaplain would be present, to see what she could do.

“If I am to be surety for you,” he said, “I must first hear you myself, for you see, you might go on board and say things that we could not allow to pass, and then we shouldn’t know what to do with you! If you were a man we could soon walk you over the ship’s side; but unfortunately a lady is not so soon disposed of.”

True to his word, a meeting of dockyard’s men was convened, and the result was that the word was passed on to all the ships in the harbour—“Don’t be afraid to let Miss Weston come on board and speak to your ship’s company: I’ll stand security for her.”

This kind help from the Admiral, himself an earnest worker in the temperance cause, did much to smooth the way, and the National Temperance League’s organising agent followed it up by waiting on each captain for special permission to hold these meetings,—personal work which Miss Weston

could not possibly have done herself, but which has now become unnecessary, a note to the captain of any ship being usually quite sufficient to obtain the needful permission. Numbers of anecdotes might be told, for these meetings held on board ships of war by a lady are unique.

Amongst her earlier efforts she held one on board H.M.S. *St. Vincent*, one of Her Majesty's training ships for boys, lying in Portsmouth harbour. Let us picture it for a moment.

The work of the day was over; it was a clear, bright moonlight night; the captain had given permission for the meeting to be held late in the evening, that the muster might be general. Taking his stand on the poop by Miss Weston's side, he kindly opens the meeting with a few manly, straightforward words of counsel and interest; "then," as she graphically describes it, "I gave them all a good talking to. The moon struggling through the clouds, the shadowy tracery of the masts and rigging, the out-

lines of the old *Victory* and the *Duke of Wellington*, the lights gleaming from the ports on the water, and the crowd of young Blue Jackets below, was a scene never to be forgotten. There were at least five hundred upturned faces, all listening with eager attention to every word that was spoken, and coming forward in crowds at the close to sign the temperance pledge."

We will describe another meeting, on board H.M.S. *Vanguard*, then lying in Plymouth Sound. It was a fine sunny day, the captain had given a cordial assent, and a kind friend had offered to take her in his own boat. It has been truly said if you want to see Jack in his element you must pay him a visit on board his ship. We follow this boat as it sped over the three miles of dancing waves which lay between the shore and the man-o'-war's anchorage.

As they neared the *Vanguard*, one of the rowers exclaimed, "Hallo, she's getting up steam;" they pulled for their lives, determined that if possible the ship's company

should not be balked of "Miss Weston's yarn" if they could help it.

On arriving alongside another difficulty presented itself; orders having been received to get up steam and leave the port, the accommodation ladder had been shipped and stowed and the ship towered aloft with no mode of access except the rope ladder used by the seamen. Here her kind friend came to the rescue, scaled the ship's side with her card in his hand, and presented it to the commander, who with true British courtesy exclaimed,

"Miss Weston alongside? tell her she shall be up in a moment. Out with the accommodation ladder again; there will yet be time for the meeting."

It was not long before she stood upon the deck, receiving smiles of welcome, and apologies for the apparent breach of faith; a telegram from the Admiralty, ordering the *Vanguard* to proceed to sea, had caused all this commotion.

Now then for the meeting: "sharp" must be the word; where shall it be held? A

place was arranged on the upper deck battery, among the guns, and the boatswain's mate had orders to pipe the notice, "Miss Weston's come aboard to give a lecture in the upper deck battery." His hoarse cry and shrill whistle resounded through the ship, and soon came a rush of feet up every companion ladder, and the crowds of eager faces which gathered round showed that Jack's intention was to see and hear everything. Some sat cross-legged in front, others kneeling, the remainder standing behind them, and the smaller fellows perching themselves on the shoulders of the standing ones.

A few earnest, manly words from the commander, and Miss Weston addressed them, not in a long set speech, but in a simple, natural way that they could see came from the heart, showing them the evils of strong drink, the crime, wretchedness, death, and, worse than all, ruin of soul, which it led to, and the blessing of having nothing to do with it. Then the pledge-book was placed on one of the enormous guns, and those willing

to enrol themselves were invited to sign their names, looking to God for strength to keep their brave resolution. About forty signed the book, and all was over ; descending into the boat the ladder was again shipped, and the noble ship weighed anchor and stood out to sea.

The importance of gathering such large numbers of men together, almost an impossibility on shore, cannot be over-estimated ; and it has given Miss Weston a hold upon the Navy which she never could have gained in any other way.

There is yet another incident in connection with this work, which she often describes, to the great amusement of her hearers.

“ I found myself one day on board H.M.S. *Topaze*, of course by the kind permission of the commander. He was most interested in the proceedings, and was present himself ; the crowd of Blue Jackets were grouped before me on the lower deck. After addressing them, anxious not to lose an opportunity of taking the names of those who wished

to enrol themselves on the *Topaze's* books, I asked permission to do so, which was freely granted; but the difficulty still to be solved was the want of a table. I looked round, and seeing, as I supposed, a bread-tub with its bright polished bands standing near, I asked whether I might be allowed to use it as a table.

“‘Certainly,’ was the answer, with a smile; ‘but it’s the first time it has been put to such a use. Now, men, a couple of hands to roll out the *grog-tub*.’

“Amidst cheers and laughter the *grog-tub* was rolled out, and a capital table it made, on which more than sixty enrolled their names. One young sailor came forward and signed his name; after doing so he laid down the pen, and significantly rapping the tub with his knuckles, said, ‘There goes a nail in your coffin, old fellow!’

“After all that wished to do so had entered their names, the commander took up the book, and running his eye down the lists, significantly added, ‘Sixty odd nails to-day;

if they all hold firm I won't give much for the old grog-tub's life.'”

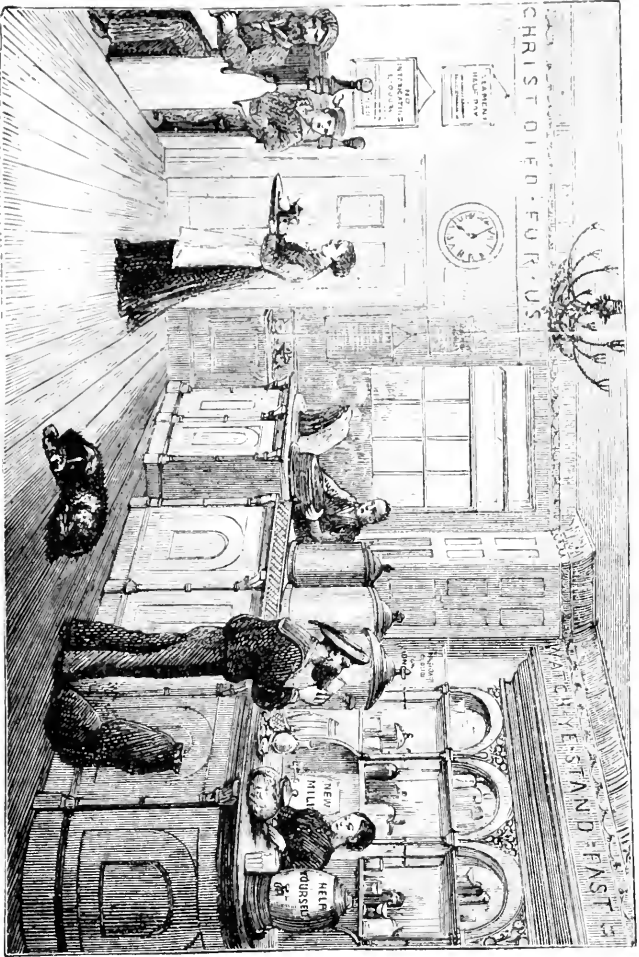
Time and space fail to dwell much longer on this portion of Miss Weston's work to reach the men, and to influence them for good, to induce them, for the sake of the wives and little ones at home, and, above all, for the sake of their never-dying souls, to give up the drink which has been, and is, the ruin, body and soul, of many a one who once promised well. She has held meetings on board very many ships in the Service, oftentimes speaking to them on deck with the wind whistling through the rigging, or going off in the teeth of a gale of wind, caring little for the weather, so that she might keep her appointment and not disappoint her sailor friends.

The Committee of the National Temperance League, in their Report for 1876-7, make a statement as to the Naval Branch of their work superintended by Miss Weston; it will be as well to quote their own words:—"Your Committee have pleasure in reporting that

the temperance work carried on in the Royal Navy under the careful direction of Miss Weston is in a most prosperous condition. At a recent meeting in the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, which was presided over by Admiral Baillie Hamilton, and Vice-Admiral Sir W. King Hall, K.C.B., Miss Weston received a richly-merited vote of thanks for her earnest efforts in behalf of the brave men who are engaged in the defence of their country. In the course of her address, she said, 'At first the branches might be counted on one's fingers, but they have risen steadily year by year. At present they stand at 235, of which 212 are what are termed Floating Branches, and as the total number of ships in the Service does not exceed 230, it will be seen at once how greatly the Navy is influenced by the National Temperance League's naval work.'

At the time of writing these lines a wider area has been covered; there are now 200 Floating Branches, besides those on shore in the Hospitals and Coast Guard; thus leav-

ing only about thirty ships to be filled. Miss Weston's great desire has always been to get a Temperance Branch on board *every* ship in the Service, and had it not been for the many and constant changes in the Navy her desire would ere this have been accomplished.



REFRESHMENT BAR, SAILOR'S REST.

CHAPTER V.

STORY OF THE PURCHASE AND FITTING UP OF THE SAILORS' REST AND IN- STITUTE.

IT has been well and truly said by a powerful and deep thinker, that "God's people should not live by the year, the month, or the week, but by the '*day.*'" Daily bread, daily grace, daily strength are given, but no more. God's word and personal experience combine to teach the same simple and blessed truth, a truth which, if known and lived in, would lift a load of care from a thousand anxious hearts in a moment. A day's trials, sorrows, temptations, and work seem very little to cope with, but those which are hanging over us to-morrow or next week—they are terrible indeed, and yet the words are true for all,—

“Moment by moment,
Let down from heaven ;
Time, opportunity,
Guidance are given.”

The heading of our chapter speaks for itself, and it will, I hope, show what mighty things God can bring to pass when *all* is committed into His hands.

Miss Weston's personal work among sailors at Devonport commenced in a very simple and unostentatious manner. Whilst staying with a friend in the neighbourhood, her attention was drawn on the Sunday afternoons to the immense number of sailor boys on leave from the training ships, who were wandering aimlessly about the streets, getting often into bad company and habits. "Somebody's boys" needed care on shore; she felt that many a mother was thinking of her son and praying that he might be kept from evil; and most of these lads seemed drifting about like rudderless ships at the mercy of every wind and wave.

Anxious to get a hold on them, and to use her influence for God, she inquired of some officers in the Service the best way to assemble them together. They were not

very hopeful as to the possibility of gathering these young salts ; and truly remarked,

“They are as restless when they come ashore as birds let out of a cage ; they like to roam about, and you will never be able to collect them.”

The difficulties truly seemed great ; nothing daunted, however, Miss Weston made up her mind that she would not give up the young Blue Jackets until a thorough trial of the plan had been made, and by means of notices distributed among the boys on board ship, she invited them to meet her in a large public room in Devonport for singing and reading on Sunday afternoons.

The first Sunday came, but, alas ! after two hours' weary waiting and watching, only one lad appeared, who was too frightened to stay when he found that he had not one of his shipmates to bear him company. The following Sunday not one came, although hundreds were roaming about the streets. After spending four Sunday afternoons in this unsatisfactory manner, she was forced to

come to the conclusion that what her naval friends had said was perfectly true.

Much discouraged, but determined not to give it up, she returned home, and "took it to the Lord in prayer;" and with prayer and faith came wisdom and guidance from above, and help from an unexpected source.

The friend in whose house she was staying most kindly offered the use of her kitchen for the meeting, with tea and cake as an attraction. Volunteer help also presented itself; two earnest Christian men, one an *employé* in H.M. Dockyard, the other a member of the Metropolitan Police, offered to go out into the streets, and if possible to bring the lads in. They did not work long before they succeeded in getting a dozen; the tea, cake, and warm kitchen were each in their way powerful magnets. The dozen doubled and trebled. Hymns were chosen, sung, and talked over, some simple Bible story was read or told, prayer was offered up, and before many Sundays had passed, it was becoming clear that the kitchen would soon

be too small. The lads would sit on the window ledge, among the cups and saucers on the dresser, even inside the grate, so crowded was the room from the rapidly increasing audience.

Among all these lads one of the greatest pleasures was to find some who were real, earnest, active Christians, "living Christ" among the stir and bustle of a naval life. Among this little circle was a fine young sailor, seventeen years of age, named Arthur Phillips. Sunday after Sunday he was always at the meeting: nothing hindered him except actual duty. As regularly as the clock struck three, he might be seen with his happy sunburnt face, coming up the garden path, accompanied by two or three messmates, whom he had persuaded to accompany him. His bright smile was sunshine indeed, as with a joyous laugh he would say,

"Well, we are crowded out; we shall soon have to ask God to give us a larger place, Miss Weston!"

The last time he was able to come is still fresh in the memory of all present, when he brought the news that he was drafted into a sea-going ship; and tears stood in his eyes, as, after the little prayer-meeting, he bade all "good-bye," with the words,

"Never mind, it is God's will; my Saviour will be with me, and as soon as we come into Plymouth Sound again I shall be up at these dear old meetings like a shot."

Dear lad, his was indeed a simple, earnest faith, and to his prayers may be traced all the great work which was the outcome of that small kitchen meeting.

Some months passed, and he did not return. A letter at length arrived from his captain, containing sad news indeed.

Arthur Phillips was no more. Captain Henry D. Grant's letter is well worth recording; we give it *verbatim*, as it shows plainly the Christian officer, as well as the Christian boy.

"While in command of H.M.S. *Triumph*, then forming a part of the Channel Squadron

at Liverpool, on the 15th of July, 1874, I received a report from Commander Inglis that a young ordinary seaman, named Arthur Phillips, had just been taken up from the chain locker—DEAD. He added, 'He was one of my smartest royal yards' men, and such a good lad.' Subsequently he informed me that, without making ostentation of religion, he was well known as a pious lad, and that it was supposed he had met with his death while on his way to the bag racks, where he had been in the habit of going during the dinner hour for retirement and prayer. From subsequent enquiries which I made I found that he was a joyous young Christian, and his influence over the men, I was told, was remarkable. Many an oath was stopped on a man's lips, and bad expressions were apologised for, when it was noticed that Phillips was near. We can well imagine the love and faith in his heart as he was tripping down the ladder for his usual place of prayer, when, at the foot of the ladder, an open hatchway (the hatch of the

chain locker having been accidentally left open from the *Triumph* having parted her cable the day before in anchoring, and the crew working for several hours previously at the cables),—and Arthur Phillips was ushered into glory. Not a mark was on his body, no bones broken; simply the shock, and the face was calm in death. Some would lament that such a bright young life was so suddenly ended; but the Lord knows best: He takes His young servant to His reward, and his very death may be found in the day when all the mysterious ways of Providence are disclosed to have been the means of bringing other souls to Christ. The ship's company erected a tablet to his memory in Bebington Cemetery, near Rock Ferry, Liverpool, with the following inscription:—

IN MEMORY OF
ARTHUR PHILLIPS,
Seaman of H.M.S. "Triumph,"
AGED 18 YEARS,

Who was killed by an accidental fall on board the said ship on the 15th July, 1874, during the visit of the Channel

Squadron to Liverpool. His remains are interred near this spot, and this memorial is erected by his shipmates to testify their esteem for the consistent Christian conduct he always manifested.

“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.”

“When thou wast under the fig tree, *I* saw thee,” said Jesus to a praying soul; and just as truly is the Saviour present when the “bag racks,” the “main top,” the shelter of a gun, becomes the place of prayer. These Bethels and Peniels, thank God, may be found in many a corner of England’s floating fortresses.

Time rolled on; the kitchen meeting swelled until it entirely burst its bounds, and Miss Weston was able to secure a room in a very good situation, close to one of the landing-places, and this large room was filled with boys every Sunday afternoon, for the meetings were becoming better known among them. Although the first difficulty of getting them together was surmounted, there were others equally great. Sailors as a race

are proverbially restless; Jack has a good share of quicksilver in him; but a sailor boy has a double amount,—the restlessness of his profession and the restlessness of the boy. It had been said to Miss Weston that even if she did get the boys, she would never keep them if any large number gathered. She gives herself an amusing story of one of her painful experiences in this line.

“On one occasion,” “about two hundred boys were assembled, and I was to address them. While occupied in singing they were pretty quiet, but the reading and speaking were to follow. I was not then as experienced as I am now in the art of dealing with sailor boys, and I forgot that the cardinal point is first to engage their attention. I opened my Bible, searched for chapter and verse, while my audience, not being interested, began to think of beating a retreat. I heard a slight noise, looked up, and the whole assembly was in motion,—some running over the backs of the benches like cats, some slipping underneath. In less than a minute the room was

cleared, except about a dozen on the front bench, who had not been quick enough to fall in with the rest. I was of course put on my mettle to keep this small remnant of the scattered forces, and did so. The sailor boys had taught me a most valuable lesson,—that the grand thing is to get the attention of your audience; and I must say for our lads that once gain their attention, and a more interested audience cannot be met with.”

As this work widened and deepened, the question was constantly asked by one and another,

“Can’t we have a place to which we can come in the week,—a temperance house; in a word, a ‘public house without the drink,’ close to the Dockyard?” for there were plenty, alas, of the other kind of public houses up and down the street. The temperance men clamoured for a temperance head-quarters, and the Christian men for a religious head-quarters, and they carried the day.

“But for the pressure brought to bear upon me by the men,” Miss Weston has often remarked, “I do not know that I ever should have started the Institute.”

So step by step the way was cleared, and the thought entertained of opening a place free from intoxicating drink, which the men and lads could make their home when they came ashore,* and where Miss Weston would be able personally to carry on direct work for Christ among them without let or hindrance; and if it were God's will He would surely open the way, and send the means. Earnest prayer was offered by many Christian seamen and others, who were longing to see such a building for the Master's service in the main street of Devonport.

At last in the autumn of 1874, a house became vacant in Fore Street, which, as its name implies, is the main thoroughfare of the town, leading direct to the great

* It will be clearly seen that this basis is entirely distinct from that of Sailors' Homes in general; no strong drink of any kind is permitted to be sold, or brought into the premises.

gateway of the Royal Dockyard. It was truly the very house for the purpose, scarcely a dozen steps from the Dockyard gates, substantially built in the good old-fashioned style, with timber and material enough in it for any two modern houses, extensive premises at the back, and a frontage passed and repassed by all who went in or out of the yard. It seemed indeed, as was truly the case, that the place had fallen vacant in answer to prayer.

But where was the silver and the gold with which to purchase it? "The silver and the gold are mine, saith the Lord."

In reply to a short appeal in the columns of the *Christian*, Miss Weston in a few days received a sufficient sum to pay the whole of the first year's rent, and to the faith which "laughs at impossibilities and cries, It shall be done," this was a sufficient indication that the fifties would grow into hundreds, and the hundreds into thousands, until the work should be accomplished.

It was a gloomy afternoon in October,

when, accompanied by a friend who had been with her in the work and is still labouring with her, she stood within those walls, destined to bring so much joy and happiness, mixed with hard work and many trials of faith to herself and others. A glance showed it to be what auctioneers call "a place of great capabilities;" but everything would have to be altered,—old warehouses to be cleared away, a coal-shed and small yard converted into a hall, an oil-store into a sailors' dining and sitting-room, and the dingy old shop, wreathed with cobwebs, transmogrified into a bright attractive bar.

In her own account of the affair, Miss Weston says :

"Fully persuaded that this would be the place, were the money forthcoming, I wrote a letter to the *Christian*, describing the need, and the way to meet it. At the same time, in order to secure the house, I took it on my own responsibility for a year. The response to that letter in a few days' time was a sufficient sum to meet that twelvemonth's rent.

and then the money commenced to flow in."

Many a touching tale could be told in connection with the gathering together of that noble sum of nearly £6000 which bought and fitted up the Sailors' Rest and Institute. The boys in the training ships put their coppers together, turned them into gold, and sent them to Miss Weston; the men from the most distant foreign stations sent their savings, often with the request that the sum might be entered as "grog-money" (*i.e.*, money given by the Admiralty in place of grog), saved, and devoted to the Lord's service. Officers and ships' companies sent handsome sums. Also from England, Scotland, Ireland, America, India, New Zealand, Switzerland, and Italy came the needed supplies.

As each contract had to be signed, the right sum was in hand, and borrowing or running into debt was never for a moment thought of; there was always enough in the treasury, though seldom much over. But while trusting simply and implicitly, Miss

Weston did not shirk putting her shoulder to the wheel; while the workmen laboured at Devonport, she travelled hundreds of miles through the length and breadth of the land, to lay the case before the Christian public. Her clear, simple, true-hearted statement met with much hearty sympathy and response; soon the dust and confusion cleared away, and through the goodness of God, embodied in the one shilling from the sailor boy's mother, as well as the £200 anonymous donation, the place was finished, as Nehemiah says, "by the good hand of my God upon me;" and was accordingly opened, not by a grand meeting, an inaugural dinner, or a flourish of trumpets, but by prayer and praise.

The front of the building is its smallest side. Some have expressed themselves a little disappointed at its exterior appearance; but the two tablets of Portland stone let in over the plate-glass windows tell their simple story in letters of gold to every passer-by:

"This building was opened May 8th, 1876,

for the glory of God and for the good of the Service."

Let us pause awhile before we step under the carved doorway, and look at the prettily-arranged windows, with their tempting-looking catables reflected in the bright mirrors behind, and flanked by white and gold china barrels with silver taps, bearing the harmless inscriptions of "New Milk," "Lemonade," "Ginger Beer," etc., while a brilliant little fountain sings the praises of cold water. Handsome lamps stand out from the stonework on each side of the windows, while within, opal globes springing from a handsome brass cable, throw both a soft and brilliant light on the pavement, making all look cheery and inviting.

We will linger no longer on the doorstep; with a light touch the swing door gives way, and Miss Weston's Public House without the drink stands before us. Tea, coffee, daily papers, and a hearty welcome, in place of ale, spirits, and half-tipsy men, are a pleasant exchange. Some may think that a moderate

allowance of beer served to those who desire it would be an advantage, and would make the place more useful. None answer this more decidedly than the *non*-abstaining seamen who frequent the Institute in large numbers; the question has frequently been put, with the view of eliciting their opinion, "Do you think that it would be a good plan if we had beer here in small quantities, so that any man who wished it could have half a pint?" The answer has been most emphatic: "Don't you have it; it would ruin the place if the drink was brought in; we don't want beer when we can get all that's on tap here."

The bar is innocent of beer and strong drink, but none the less cosy; two or three sailors are lounging against it, chatting and enjoying themselves thoroughly; the three brilliant copper urns, containing coffee and cocoa, are being constantly tapped; plenty of good things cover the counter, while behind the servers mirrors and coloured glass make up a bright background. A steam closet, containing, besides dishes for

hot joints, speaking-tubes, and a lift communicating with the kitchen, settles and tables capable of accommodating fifty people a beautifully-illuminated scroll running right round the ceiling, some nautical pictures hanging on the walls, a parrot, and a musical box playing a lively tune, complete the refreshment bar, which is used by many hundreds, including sailors, soldiers, dock-yards' men, sailors' wives, and others every day, and is a busy scene from 5.30 in the morning to 12 o'clock at night.

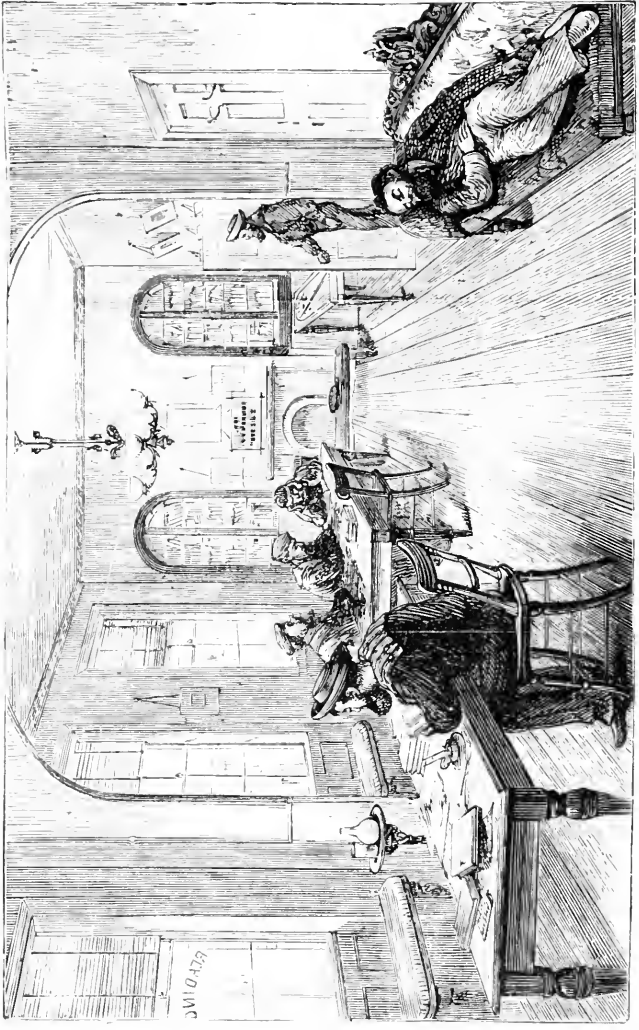
Leaving the bar, we open a side door, which leads into a room which is Jack's special favourite,—a small smoking room. Many a yarn has been spun with an "old ship," over nothing stronger than a pipe and a cup of coffee, and many a merry tune has been played, and hornpipe danced, in this room.

Ascending the stairs we come to the Reading Rooms, public and private, divided by a revolving shutter, which when necessary disappears into the ceiling, and leaves one fine

room the entire width of the building. Some book-shelves, filled with books of all kinds, pictures, comfortable seats, a bagatelle board, and plenty of religious and other papers make this room a very popular one, especially on Sundays, when many of the men ashore from Saturday till Monday come there for a quiet read. On the same floor is the Bath-room, fitted with three hot and cold baths, and an Office, from whence all the *Monthly Letters* are despatched, Temperance supplies sent to all parts of the world, and a firm hold kept on absent sailors.

Above this floor is the kitchen, an institution which can make or mar in most establishments, more especially in such a place as the Sailors' Rest, where so much depends on a good *cuisine*. Large and bright, with plenty of fresh air, there is always a bustle here, and the cooking is never done with, from early morning to late at night.

Coming down the stairs again, we pass Miss Weston's temporary rooms, the least convenient and comfortable in the whole



READING ROOM, SAILOR'S REST.

house, which she has fitted up and furnished herself.

Below these again are two rooms opening one into the other,—the sailors' dining and sitting rooms, one in which the boarders and others can have a family meal all together, the other a room where they can sit and read and write quietly, or if they have kept the "middle watch" take a good sleep on the settles. On account of coziness these rooms are very popular among the men, and a small library, and bright pictures round the walls, give to them a very attractive appearance.

It is worthy of notice that while religious, temperance, and secular papers lie side by side on the tables, the religious papers are quite as much, if not more frequently read than the secular ones. Some are afraid to scatter religious papers in workmen's clubs; but surely the mistake lies not in placing the papers on the tables, but in bringing pressure on men to read them; they will read them if left free agents in the matter. On Sundays only, the tables are cleared of all secular

papers and books, illustrated religious magazines and Sunday books being substituted for them; these are delighted in by the men and boys, who are fond of anything in the picture line.

We descend again, and come to a long passage on the ground floor, which leads us to the dormitories, originally some tumble-down cottages standing on a plot of ground behind the house; they have gone through many metamorphoses: they are now a fine set of buildings, one block five stories high, each of the beds being divided off into little private cabins, much prized by all, especially by the Christian men, as they have no quiet place which they can call their own on board ship.

It is interesting to trace, by the names inside and out, the history of each cabin and cot. One bears the name of *Ruby*, and another of *Diamond*, after Her Majesty's ships of those names; another has the grand name of *Undaunted*, and another *Volage*; these were given by the ship's companies

of the respective ships, and named by the men after them.

Another is called "Little Nan," another "Harry," in memory of some dear ones gone before.

Another bears simply a text of Scripture, as, "My life is hid with Christ in God," given by the Duchess of Manchester and Mr. Stevenson Blackwood,—who testified to the glorious words as having been the means of his conversion,—and so on.

It is a noble work to have provided for our sailors these safe and happy shelters from the sin and temptations of low lodging houses, and the fifteen or five pounds so invested will surely return good interest to the givers here and hereafter. There is nothing that a Blue Jacket enjoys more than a nice clean comfortable bed ; his hardships are often great ; broken rest and damp clothes sometimes for days together, make a man look forward to a good sleep on shore with childish delight. Comfortable cabins are therefore a very important item at the Sailors' Rest.

At right angles with the Institute, and to the rear, is the Gospel Hall, entered by a passage from the street, and also by a private entrance from the Rest; here meetings are held every day, and when the whole plan of the building is completed, this Hall will be supplemented by a larger one, capable of holding double the number, namely, some six hundred people.

Our next chapter will show how Miss Weston's various plans for the temporal and spiritual welfare of our seamen have succeeded, and whether the Institute on which so much thought, time, and money has been expended, has prospered; whether the men have really used the place, or whether, like shy birds, they have only looked at it and flown away.



CHAPTER VI.

FIRST YEAR'S WORK AT THE SAILORS' REST.

WHEN the traveller reaches the top of a hill, from which he can look back upon the road over which he has journeyed, and sees how it has led him to the height on which he stands, he is more than repaid for all his toil. "The way has been rough," he says to himself, "but I am glad that I came."

After the first year of work at the Sailors' Rest, Miss Weston and her helpers could say the same ; many things had to be learnt through the teaching of that hard master "bitter experience ;" blunders had to be corrected and retrieved, and much learned and much unlearned. Woe to the simple heart who, starting a Home, Institute, British Workman, or Refuge, imagines that with the building and fitting up the worst troubles

are over ! Generally difficulties only then commence ; especially if the staff chosen for the work are not exactly suited to their posts ; a testing time is sure to come in one way or another.

Before a cable is supplied to any of our ships, it is always subjected to a severe strain to see whether its links are sound or defective ; and before it is fit for service the weak links must be removed, and stronger ones put in.

The mill, if it does its work thoroughly, grinds the corn and throws out the chaff ; and the fire purifies the gold : so, under God, with the work and the worker ; troubles and mistakes beget experience, and truly experience is a priceless possession, that no man can take away.

After all the labour and bustle of fitting up and altering, the opening day came at last. Bright and beautiful dawned Monday, May 8th, 1876 ; the doors were thrown open at 5 o'clock in the morning, and business commenced without ostentation or display ;

the opening ceremony being the simple fact, that the previous evening the Gospel Hall was filled by Christians of all denominations, who in earnest, heartfelt prayer asked for "the blessing of the Lord that maketh rich," on the building and the builders.

This simplicity was in accordance with Miss Weston's wish ; she has frequently expressed herself very strongly on this point to friends who have consulted her about grand opening ceremonies in these words :

"Had you not better put off the grandeur until your anniversary, *then* you can tell of what you *have* done ; *now* you must speak beforehand of what you *think* you are going to do ? 'Let not him that putteth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.'"

The 8th of May, 1876, was a glorious day, one of the brightest of that sunny month ; the servants were up with the lark ; but the coffee was hardly hot, and the bread and butter and cakes scarcely cut, before an impatient knocking outside made it very evident

that there would be no lack of customers on that day. In they came with a rush, and for an hour the popular saying was true that "one might have walked upon the men's heads,"—sailors just going to catch their boats, dockyard's men going to their work in the yard, policemen come in from their night's round, were all glad to get a cup of hot tea, coffee, or cocoa, and a roll; and during the remainder of the day there was but little cessation from the stir and bustle of the morning. All classes, especially those employed by Government, came to buy, to eat, and to drink.

This first day was a memorable one indeed to all the household; the outside and the inside of the Institute were besieged with curious spectators, who, not satisfied with simply seeing everything, wanted to taste everything as well. Although this great rush has happily ceased, thank God the popularity of the place has not diminished. From the commencement also the sailors made up their minds that it should not be a

“red tape” place ; and this they soon settled in a very characteristic manner.

The day preceding the opening, three man-o'-war's men presented themselves, and asked to see Miss Weston ; “they had been watching the building going on for some time,” they said, “and had made up their minds that they would be the three first birds to roost there.” The objection was raised that the building had not been opened.

“Couldn't you throw the red tape overboard for once, ma'am?” they all answered, “for we've all three got leave from our captains on purpose to sleep here to-night.”

The red tape was thrown overboard, and has never been restored again. The men showed themselves deserving of the kindness, for when the attendant returned from taking them over to the dormitories, he said,

“We've got three birds of the right sort here to begin with ; when I showed them their room they shut the door, and in a minute I heard one of them reading. I listened : it was from the Bible, and then they knelt down

and prayed ; it did my heart good to hear them."

Their photographs are still hanging up ; and they have, like the birds, returned to roost in their own nest whenever they could manage to do so.

It was calculated that over 127,000 visits for the purchase of articles were paid to the refreshment bar alone, during the first year. The dormitories strictly kept for sailors and marines had 10,488 sleepers from May 1876 to May 1877 ; and notwithstanding all the heavy expenses of a large Institute, the working staff (consisting of a manager and several servants), everything was defrayed, including gas, coals, incidentals of all kinds, newspapers, etc., out of the takings in the bar, leaving a profit of £113 16s. 8d.—nearly 2 per cent. on the original outlay. This may seem small compared with many coffee and cocoa houses, but it must be remembered that the heavy cost of a large Institute had to be borne by the refreshment bar, and it therefore should be compared with similar

institutions, and not with the simple cocoa house or coffee tavern.

Miss Weston, in her account, naïvely remarks, "Jack is a shy bird, and is apt to give a wide berth to any place where he thinks that he will be preached at, or made a teetotaler of; and as these were the main objects in starting the Sailors' Rest, the difficult problem had to be solved how, keeping these great points clearly in view, it could be made a financial success, and a self-supporting place. It was a task of great difficulty, at times seemingly impossible!

No pressure as to attending meetings is brought to bear on the men, but the Hall, with its bright gatherings and plenty of music is close by; they can easily step in, if only for five minutes, and the most powerful of all magnets to the sailor—good singing—is provided for by a large and efficient choir. In the bar, among the syrups and variety of good things, lies the pledge-book, with pen and ink reposing coaxingly by its side; kind, cheery words are spoken by the servers (all

total abstainers), which go very far with Jack—and lead to many a signature; thus quiet work is ever going on for the Master, and one and another, once drunkards, are now leading steady and Christian lives.

Feeling the great importance of establishing the Institute on the soundest and best principles, and bearing in mind that there were many institutions in the town needing annual support, Miss Weston resolved from the commencement that the Sailors' Rest should be made in some way or other to stand on its own feet, or else the shutters must go up, and the Hall alone be used for evangelistic purposes. That valuable institution, the School of Cookery at South Kensington, lent its aid to the culinary department, and all its lessons were gone through by her fellow-worker, so that a thorough personal knowledge of practical matters was arrived at, and inasmuch as "knowledge is power," a highly satisfactory return was the result.

The work therefore consists of *two* departments, but both linked indissolubly together,

—the *Gospel Hall*, with its evangelistic work, prayer-meetings, Bible classes, gatherings for sailors' wives and children, temperance work of various kinds ; and *The Institute*, with its refreshment bar, reading, recreation, smoking, dining, and sitting rooms, containing papers, books, and writing materials ; these *two* departments are kept distinct, and yet united ; conveniently near, and yet not interfering with each other. The Gospel work in the Hall, and the practical work in the Institute, instead of hindering, have helped each other. Direct Gospel work, in the way of meetings or Bible classes, is *not* carried on in the Institute, neither is secular work carried on in the Hall. We often find that where the Apostolic injunction, "Let all things be done decently and in order," is disregarded, confusion is the result, and not only confusion, but harm,—men are scared away from a place when they might be attracted to it, and religious subjects forced upon them become unpalatable. The difficult question, how a place, whose main object is spiritual work, can be made

popular to men of all shades of character, has been apparently solved at the Sailors' Rest, as the numbers frequenting it will clearly show; and this result has been arrived at one of God's best gifts, simply by using what Lord Kintore calls "sanctified common sense,"

The spiritual results have been most satisfactory; there are numbers who can date the "first step forward in the right direction" from the day when they came into the Sailors' Rest the worse for liquor, were spoken to kindly by the attendants, and made to feel that there was hope for the hopeless.*

The following incident from real life out of many others is worth pages of theorising.

A sailor, half-sober, sauntered one evening into the bright bar. Throwing down half-a-crown on the counter, he called out to one of the servers to give him a glass of half-and-half, "and mind you make it stiff," he added. Instead of looking grimly at him

* These points have been forcibly brought out as the result of two years' experience, hoping that they may be of service to others engaged in similar work.

and reproving him, she at once said, with a woman's tact,

"We haven't your sort of half-and-half, but would you like to try some of ours?"

"Yours!" was his response; "what's that, then?"

"Well," she said, "will you have something hot or cold?"

He smiled. "You seem to have more than cold water; I'd like a jorum of something hot."

"Well, would you like a cup of coffee?"

"Yes, that I would," he answered; "it's a long time since I've had much in the coffee line."

Looking at him again, and thinking that she would bait the hook still more, she said, "Are you a Devonshire man?"

"To be sure I am,—a West countryman to the backbone," was the prompt answer.

"Then," she said, "you'll like a little Devonshire cream in your coffee?"

This carried the day; Jack's eyes fairly danced in his head, as he said, "I've been

round the Horn, and I don't know where beside, but it's a long day since I and Devonshire cream have met. Thank ye, missus, kindly," and he sat down to enjoy the first cup of coffee he had tasted for many a day.

When he had finished it, she brought him back the half-crown which he had thrown down, saying, "Can't you give me a penny instead of this?"

"A penny!" he exclaimed. "You don't mean to say that you are only going to charge a penny for all this, and the Devonshire cream into the bargain? Well, if Miss Weston gives away things like that, she'll soon have to shut up the place."

It was explained to him that on every cup of coffee a profit of at least a halfpenny was made; and he went away to tell his shipmates to come and try the new-fangled public house which he had found. Thank God, this visit, and this cup of coffee given by a kind and Christian woman, was the beginning of a new life to him; he became a temperance man, and afterwards gave his heart to the Lord

Jesus Christ, besides persuading many of his shipmates to give up drink.

"All along," as he said, "under God, of that first kind word and cup of coffee."

One of the difficulties in working an Institute for sailors, or indeed for any class of men, is to ensure freedom and an absence of stiffness, with a firm and efficient government; to make a man feel at home, and yet to check any license. The experience acquired at Devonport seems to show that men, at any rate of such distinct and peculiar characteristics as seamen, are happier under the management of one of themselves than a civilian. A sailor knows the habits, trials, and ways of a sailor, as no one else can; he can greet them in their own peculiar manner, and make them feel at home, that is, if he is a man of the right stamp, kind and yet firm. No doubt this would hold good through all classes, and the best managers would be the cream of the community whose good is aimed at, supervised by a person of superior rank.

As the refreshment bar of the Sailors' Rest was intended to be one of the engines for rendering the place independent of charitable support, it was thrown open to the public, but only seamen and marines were permitted to go beyond it; this plan has likewise answered, its drawbacks are few, its advantages many. It has provided a "public house without drink" for all passers-by; it gives a comfortable house of refreshment not only to the Blue Jacket, but also to the Blue Jacket's wife; the refreshment bar is frequently crowded with sailors' wives, not to mention the inevitable baby, especially on half-pay days when they return from the dockyard, where hundreds go to draw their monthly allotments; these women formerly had few places of resort for rest and refreshment save the public house.

This opening of the bar has done its work in pounds, shillings, and pence also; £1,998 was taken over the counter during the first year of work, and Jack always feels that whenever he wants something

either to eat or to drink he has but to step in and have it at a moderate rate.

The boarding system, which has its great advantages, is in active operation also; two rooms upstairs, very bright and cheerful, with pictures round the walls, chairs, lounges, papers, and books, are labelled "Scamen's Dining and Sitting Rooms." Here meals are provided at fixed hours in the one, the other is appropriated to the use of the boarders, who can read, smoke, write letters, sleep, or aught else. It is pleasant when many men are on leave, and especially on Sundays, to see the tables crowded (often two or three relays coming on one after another), flowers in vases, the manager in attendance, one or two sailors with great pride carving for the others, and their delighted expressions of, "Well, isn't this nice! it's just like home."

The sight which demonstrates most clearly the number of men of different classes in the Service whom the Institute embraces, and to whom it is hoped it will be a blessing, is to be seen between 11 and 11.30 p.m., when

ships are in port ; the bar is crowded with men, frequently the smoking-room also, and they are sitting up the stairs ; a strange medley they are,—some sober, quiet men, others wild young fellows, “bad hats,” many half seas over, laughing, talking, whistling, running about without shoes and stockings, singing, dancing hornpipes, etc.

The manager and the men under him (for all the women are taken off before that late hour) have enough to do, and a very large demand is made on their forbearance.

Here a man is turning out his pockets, and giving his loose cash, watch, etc., to the manager, to keep till morning, receiving a receipt in return ; there, a party just come in are discussing coffee and pasties, a noisy seaman is being coaxed and persuaded to go to bed, while a lively set of young fellows call out,

“Last boats just off, good-night, all,” as they disappear to their rooms. Very frequently all the bed tickets are gone, and shake-downs have to be improvised, while

those dreadfully the worse for drink are told that they can have nothing but a shake-down in the smoking-room: at last, at about 1 o'clock, the noise gradually ceases, and the place is quiet for a few hours.

One evening the manager was returning to the Institute, when he saw a dark figure stretched across the threshold of the entrance to the Gospel Hall; he went up to see what it was, and found a sailor lying there stiff and senseless, with his head hanging down on the pavement. He touched him, tried to stir him up, but there was no movement or sign of life; hurrying into the house, he called out two Blue Jackets, who took him up as if he had been a corpse, carried him in, and laid him down in the smoking-room with something under his head. His breath smelling strong of spirits, revealed the cause of his malady, in the one significant yet saddest of words in the English language—"drunk;" he was taken care of, and the next morning when he came to himself, looking round the room he said, in a bewildered way, "Where am I?"

“Where are you?” answered a shipmate, “why, in the Sailors’ Rest, to be sure.”

“Well,” he said, “this beats all I ever came across,—the publican turned me out, and the tectotalers have taken me in : I shall go aboard and tell them all about this.”

Jack never forgets a kindness ; he did so, and so well did he tell his story that numbers of men at his recommendation visited the Institute to try it for themselves, and best of all, the man in question gave up drink, and, it is hoped, became a really Christian man.

Sailors are proverbial for giving nicknames to persons and things, and if a place is popular it is sure to have a name that passes current among them.

An officer in the Navy was once speaking to some men on board his ship, telling them that they were going round to Plymouth, and that he hoped they would go to the Sailors’ Rest, instead of to the grog-shops ; one of those spoken to afterwards asked him whether he knew the name by which it was called in the Service.

He said that he did not.

“Well, sir,” answered the sailor, “we call it the ‘Three C’s;’ we say one to another, ‘Well, Jack, are you going to the Three C’s to-night?’ We don’t mean any harm by it, sir, it’s a real good meaning; it means Coffee, Comfort, and Company, and if a man’s got good coffee, comfort, and plenty of good company, it goes a long way to keep him from what’s wrong.”

Thank God, houses which might well put up the sign of “Three C’s” are increasing everywhere, and are powerful instruments in keeping our working-men, as well as sailors, from drink and sin; and not only this, but are in God’s hand the means of bringing them to Christ; for when the drink is turned from, then how frequently the stone of stumbling is rolled away, and the soul led to the Saviour.

We now come to the more strictly religious work in connection with the Hall at the back of the building. Capable of holding two hundred people, it has many times had three

hundred packed into it. Owing to the social nature of the sailor, who when on shore cares to go nowhere unless with his wife and friends, the Hall is generally thrown open to the public; this does not in any way affect the Institute, as the Hall possesses its own entrance from the street. Up the passage brightly lighted and paved with coloured tiles, streams the crowd when the doors are opened, and meetings go on every day and night in the week. The sailors have their own private entrance from the Institute into the Hall, and it is pleasant to see them dropping in by one's and two's as the choir commence singing some of the hymns which are so popular among them. Seats are specially reserved for them, the only thing which sometimes disappoints the casual observer is the absence of that naval uniform which landsmen admire so much, but which sailors are always glad to doff for plain clothes, when they come ashore. A daily prayer-meeting, lasting exactly three-quarters of an hour, has been unceasingly kept up

since the opening of the building, and is undoubtedly the backbone of all the work.

Miss Weston has organized all the services, so that they may go on with or without her ; only occasionally taking meetings herself, thereby maintaining the pleasure and freshness which her presence always brings with it. By means of a "Worker's Plan" published every three months, speakers or leaders for the various meetings are arranged ; an evangelist in charge sees that all goes well, and is able to fill the post if anyone is unavoidably absent.

We briefly give a summary of a week's work in this little Hall.

Such is the general routine ; each week, month, and year is girdled with the golden band of prayer, and the result has been shown in crowded meetings and many conversions to God. Occasionally this programme is interrupted by a week of special services, but otherwise, winter and summer, cold nights, hot nights, and wet nights,

people come together to hear the "truth as it is in Jesus."

No doubt great blessing has come from the broad Catholic basis on which the work stands. A member of the Church of England herself, Miss Weston holds to the truth that in "union is power and blessing." On one night the platform is occupied by a clergyman, on another by a minister, on a third by a layman,—frequently an officer in Army or Navy,—on a fourth by a working man, who with a heart burning with love to the Saviour longs to tell his fellow-workmen that "He is able to save to the uttermost," and the earnest words of some of those artizans will never be forgotten. Thus all differences, all denominationalism is laid aside, and Christ, and Christ alone, is proclaimed as a "Prince and a Saviour" at all these services.

Sailors write from all parts of the world, some saying that they should never forget such and such a beautiful hymn sung by the choir, that the words had led them to decide for Jesus.

One, in sailor terms, exclaimed, "I was hard hit one evening at one of your meetings by what the speakers said,—hadn't any rest for days; now, thank God, I've found it in Christ."

Another, writing from China, says that the words of one of the hymns sung by the choir the last night he was on shore are ringing in his ears still, and that he has since given his heart to the Lord; and yet another writes from an ironclad in the Sea of Marmora, and says:

"I came upon a number of my shipmates singing Sankey's hymns; I asked them where they learned them, and they said at the Sailors' Rest, and thank God some of them can sing with the spirit as well as the voice."

An interesting feature of the work is the sailor lads, who throng the Hall every Sunday afternoon from three to five o'clock; the meeting consists of a great deal of singing, short pithy addresses with plenty of anecdote, and prayer. Several workers fitted for it take up these meetings, and much fruit

has been reaped; they are the outcome, as indeed the Sailors' Rest itself is, of the kitchen meetings mentioned in a previous chapter. Many lads have been led to Christ and are witnessing for Him on board their ships.

A petty officer acquainted Miss Weston of an interesting fact that had come under his notice. He said, "I was going round the ship when I came upon a dozen boys with a ship's lantern; I thought they were up to mischief, and watched them without their seeing me. The boy with the lantern held it so that the light shone on his book; it was the Bible; he read a few verses out of it, then shut the book, set down the lantern, and they all knelt round it in a circle, and one and another prayed. I found that they met like that every night, and I thought it would do your heart good to hear about it, miss, as it did me to listen to them; they are boys who come up to the Rest, and they say they learned to love Jesus there."

Again, in the Royal Naval Hospital a little lad lay dying; he was happy, for Jesus was

with him; and he said to a marine whom he knew,

“After I am dead you go to the Sailors’ Rest, and tell the ladies and the boys how happy I was, and that I have gone to Jesus. I was as bad as other boys, but one Sunday I passed by; they were singing, and the hymn reminded me of the Sunday-school at home. I went in, and there I learnt to love and trust Jesus.”

There were few dry eyes among the boys when the soldier stood up, and in a simple, manly way told the story of the happy death of their young shipmate.

Another dear lad, George Dyer, was drowned in Plymouth Sound, aged only seventeen years; he was always at these Sunday meetings with his happy face; he loved the Bible and prayer, and there is every reason to believe that he is now with Him who redeemed him.

Sudden death is common among our sailors; the fearful catastrophe and loss of the *Eurydice*, which has been dwelt on by Miss

Weston in one of the specimens given of the *Monthly Letters*, has thrilled the great heart of the country. How we should work, or, if we cannot work, pray, for the brave men who man our iron walls! noble, manly fellows they are, and when Christian men, not far from the high standard of Him who was *sans peur et sans reproche*.

Not to indulge, to humour, or to put them out of their place, has Miss Weston set this Institute on foot; but to make them self-reliant, sober, self-respecting,—above all, earnest Christian men, men who would not be afraid to do and dare anything for their Queen, their country, or a brother shipmate; who would not be ashamed to own “whose they were and whom they served,” but who would be afraid to say the wicked word, or to do the wicked action;—these are the men who are the bulwarks of their country, fearing nought but God.

One interesting event at the Sailors' Rest will illustrate this, and we have done. During the fearful storm of October 14, 1877, a small

merchant vessel, with a crew of twenty men, went right upon the Plymouth Breakwater; in a moment she was dashed in pieces, and all on board, including the captain's wife, and her little baby, were swallowed up by the raging sea. I had said all, but one man, a Finlander, named Albert Blom,—who was in the cross trees looking out for the Breakwater light, which, alas, he could not see, through the rain and spray,—was washed from wave to wave.

Clinging to a spar, he had faint chance of life. How human nature held out it is hard to say; but he was young and vigorous; for seven hours he drifted about at the mercy of the waves, and, worse still, he was carried past ship after ship. He tried to make those on board hear, but the wind carried his voice away; at last he drifted past H.M.S. *Turquoise*: he cried out with all his might, for his strength was just gone.

A noble heart, such as beats under many a blue serge, was keeping watch that night,—John Emmanuel Barnes; he heard the faint

cry for help through the roaring of the hurricane, and quickly apprised the officer of the watch ; but what could be done ? The captain could not sanction the lowering of a boat in such a gale, sacrificing probably eight lives for one.

What was to be done ?

John Emmanuel Barnes was ready to risk all to save the drowning man ; hurriedly fastening a rope round his waist, and divesting himself of all superfluous clothing, he jumped into the surging sea ; swimming under water, for the waves almost stunned him, he approached the dark object floating on the water ; a break in the clouds, from which the moon shone out, revealed an upturned face pale as death, and the figure of a man dressed in oilskins.

He pushed a floating spar towards him, and, clinging to it, signalled to those on board to haul them in ; rapidly they reached the ship and were more than half-way up her side, when, losing consciousness, Albert Blom loosened his grasp and fell back into the

water, exhausted and well-nigh gone. Barnes once more jumped after him into the boiling billows, and this time brought him safely on board.

When this seaman was complimented for his gallant conduct, and the question was asked,

“What induced him to run such a fearful risk?” his noble answer was,

“Because I was not afraid to die, sir.”

This man was a Christian, and a total abstainer. The next day he brought Blom to the Sailors' Rest to be taken care of, for he had neither food nor clothing; it was a touching sight to see the gratitude of the saved man towards the brave sailor who had rescued him from a watery grave. He watched his retreating figure from the window, and counted the hours until he should return.

Meanwhile every care was taken of the poor foreigner; money was collected, and a fresh outfit purchased. After a week's absence Barnes returned, and those who witnessed the scene will never forget the meeting of the two friends. Albert Blom being a Fin-

lander, and only imperfectly understanding English, was unable to join very fully in the chat going on around him; he was sitting by himself in the Reading Room when the sound of Barnes' voice reached him; he jumped up, and with one bound cleared the staircase, rushed into the Bar, and like a foreigner threw both his arms round his rescuer's neck, and kissed him on both cheeks.

Barnes good-humouredly unclasped his arms, and putting both his hands on his shoulders, shook him as he would a Newfoundland dog, and looking earnestly in his face said,

“Blom, my boy, how are you? I've been praying for you ever since I've been away; you know I've saved your body, but I sha'n't be happy till I've saved your soul too: do you ever read your Bible?”

Many evenings after that the men were to be seen turning over the pages of the Book of books, in deep and earnest converse, and before Albert Blom went to sea again, he left abundant proof, to use his own words, that “God

had not washed him up on the doorstep of the Sailors' Rest in vain, for he now trusted in Jesus as his Saviour, and loved the open Bible." Barnes, too, has sailed to the other side of the world in one of Her Majesty's ships, and is not ashamed to confess Christ crucified wherever he is.

Such are the sailors that the country wants, and such are the men that would fight her battles, if need be, with cool courage; men that possess the piety and determination, without the fanaticism, of the old "Ironsides;" men that love their Bibles and prayer; who can say "No" in the hour of temptation; who will stand to their guns in the day of battle; who are described in the words in which the Holy Ghost pictures a soldier of old: "A devout man, one that feared God with all his house, and prayed to God always."

APPENDIX.

SINCE the publication of this book in its larger form, God has enabled Miss Weston to carry on and develop her work among sailors with greater and still greater success. A branch house opposite the gates of the great steam-yard, Devonport, has been established, and is doing well. As many of the largest ships are docked and repaired in this yard, the men much needed a place of call as they passed to and fro between the town and their ships. They have quickly adopted the house, and have made it their home, significantly naming it "*The Little Sailors' Rest*," though its more dignified title is "*The Homeward Bound*." A glance at the balance sheet in the last year's report will show that it is self-supporting, and with its bright bar, smoking and reading rooms, and forty beds, has proved a valuable adjunct to its great parent in Fore Street.

It has always been a marked feature of the work, that far from seeking and desiring to extend her borders, Miss Weston has, so to speak, had openings thrust upon her, in so striking a manner, and God's will so clearly and plainly shown, that she had but one course open to her to go forward, thanking God and taking courage, certain that He would supply the silver and the gold, and also the physical and mental power necessary for so great a strain upon body and mind. Among the many tokens of God's favour and blessing has been the starting of a small Sailors' Rest at Portsmouth. It has long been strongly felt in the service that Miss Weston's work would not be complete unless she got "a good anchorage" at Portsmouth, that great naval port which has been called "the second birthplace of every sailor." After much prayer and some deliberation, a singing saloon, called in nautical

language a "sing-song," in one of the main thoroughfares in the town fell into her hands, and from the very stage which used to resound with the devil's songs, the songs of Heaven ascend, and many a wild, reckless fellow has been redeemed by Christ and set free from sin, and has started on the road to glory.

This little hall was only rented as an experiment, but has "taken" so unmistakably, men crowding to temperance and gospel meetings held there, that two houses adjoining have been secured and fitted up with a refreshment bar, reading and game rooms, and beds. The place is very tiny, and only *pro tem.*, but notwithstanding these disadvantages, manifest blessing has rested upon the venture, and much good fruit has already been gathered from this little branch at Portsmouth. Before long the sapling will become a tree, Miss Weston having secured through the kindness of a gentleman of standing and influence in the town, a site in a most commanding situation, upon which will shortly rise another large "*Sailors' Rest and People's Cafe*," estimated to cost not less than £5000 or £6000. At a certain hour in the afternoon, crowds of seamen from the dockyard and harbour may be seen making their way to this neighbourhood, which is pre-eminently "the sailors' quarter," the houses of the married seamen lying all around, and every attraction in the shape of theatre, music hall, public-house, etc., being scattered in the path of the young seamen; this new and large *Sailors' Rest* is therefore bound to be a success.

At Portland, and some other ports, Miss Weston is beginning to do something, and the work all over the world has trebled in extent: Miss Weston has helpers now at almost every port; many "*Sailors' Rests*" have been started abroad, aided by her as far as possible with funds. Now where shall we find the secret spring which enables her calmly and peacefully to embark in all this work, and to undertake all these respon-

sibilities with cheerfulness? It is to be found in her blessed experience, of which she often speaks with rejoicing, of the indwelling presence of Christ in her soul; she has received Him as her King, has consecrated herself unreservedly to Him, has placed the government entirely on His shoulder, and finds in her daily life that He takes all care, all responsibility: that His presence makes a very Heaven within, and that when the will is brought into union with His will, then really the growth of Christian life begins, with the blessed assurance that the progress shall be "FROM GLORY UNTO GLORY."



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