

Where Holy Scripture is used in the manner of Cardinal Newman's Anglican sermons, or as by Dean Church and Canon Liddon, men will not complain of, but will heartily welcome, the Bible in the sermon.

W. EDWARD CHADWICK.

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ART. VII.—TEMPERANCE "SPADE-WORK": IN THE SOUTH LONDON POLICE COURTS.

**L**ORD ROSEBERY has talked of the need of "spade-work" in politics. There is a kind of "spade-work" which is amongst the best results of the Temperance movement. It may be found elsewhere than in London—in Liverpool, for example—but I shall take my example from London, and from that part which is in the Diocese of Rochester.

Placing our trust in statistics, we congratulate ourselves on the decrease in the number of criminals in the Metropolis, but a few days spent in the South London police courts afford such unpleasant proofs of the crime, vice, and misery still existing that we are compelled to think that, after all, we have not very much cause for satisfaction. Truly, we might pass some weeks in the police courts without seeing a prisoner charged with murder or robbery with violence; but day after day there is the same depressing procession of men and women arrested for degrading offences committed, in most cases, while the prisoners were under the influence of drink.

Every morning, at about half-past nine, a number of people may be seen outside any of the South London police courts waiting for the doors to be opened. Some are standing listlessly on the curb, others are walking slowly up and down, and a few, not wishing it to be thought that they have any business at a police court, are on the other side of the road, surveying, with an assumed air of interest, the goods displayed in the shop windows. Many of these people are prisoners who were bailed out on the previous night; others have heard that a "pal" has been arrested, and are come to see how he fares; the remainder is composed of witnesses, and men and women attracted to the court by curiosity.

When the doors are opened the prisoners out on bail enter and surrender. They are not placed in the cells, but taken to a waiting-room, where they sit, in doorless boxes somewhat resembling the dressing-rooms of a swimming bath, until the time comes for them to be taken into court.

In the meanwhile "Black Maria," the familiar police-court

van, has arrived with her load of prisoners, collected from the various police-stations in the district, and nearly all the cells are now occupied. Looking through the inspection-hole in the cell-doors, we see prisoners of all types. Here is a dirty, beery-faced, middle-aged man, described by himself as a labourer, although his right to that designation cannot be recognised, for it is only when he is in prison that he works. He is to be charged with begging.

In the adjoining cell is a well-dressed, gentlemanly-looking lad of about nineteen. He had been to a smoking-concert on the previous evening, and, for the first time in his life, drank too much. Coming out into the night air he grew noisy, and, refusing to take a policeman's advice to go home quietly, was arrested. Now he is overcome by remorse, and filled with shame at the prospect of his parents reading in the papers of his disgrace.

In another cell is a thin, pale-faced, shabbily-dressed man, who has been out of employment for several weeks. On the previous night, in a fit of despair, he had jumped into the river, but had been rescued by a policeman.

The magistrate is now hearing applications for summonses and advice. Applicants follow each other in quick succession. A respectably-dressed girl of about twenty asks for a summons for assault against her husband, who struck her on the face with his fist. Her application is granted, and, lowering her veil to conceal her blackened eye, she quits the witness-box.

Fully three-quarters of the applicants are women, and, in the majority of cases, they have a grievance against their husbands. One is anxious to know if she may burst open the door the next time her husband shuts her out. Another complains that she had made her husband an apple-dumpling for dinner, but that, as it did not meet with his approval, he threw it on the fire, and supplemented the proceeding by thrashing her. The strange thing is that the woman appears to resent the treatment accorded to the apple-dumpling more than the assault upon herself, and, upon reflection, decides not to take out a summons.

The applications having been disposed of, the first prisoner is placed in the dock. She is about thirty years of age, and is carrying a one-year-old child. A policeman enters the witness-box and rattles off: "At 11.45 last night, your Worship, I saw the prisoner creating a disturbance outside the Elephant and Castle." He adds that she was drunk, refused to move on, and used obscene language. On arresting her she bit his hand, flung herself down on the pavement, and had to be taken to the police-station in the ambulance. This evidence is denied in a loud voice by the prisoner, who characterizes it as

"a pack of lies," and, excitedly pulling off her jacket, invites the magistrate to "see where the brute tore my bodice." She is given the choice of a fine or a fortnight's imprisonment, and in an impudent manner declares her intention of going to prison, adding scornfully, "I can do that bit on my 'ead." Nevertheless, when she has passed from the magistrate's presence, she pays the fine.

Cases similar to the above can be seen daily, but there are others, almost as numerous, which are far more worthy of sympathy. Here is a boy charged with "sleeping out." He has no home, and his parents are habitual drunkards. What is to become of him? Who will save such a lad from a criminal career? Happily there is a friend at hand. The magistrate passes the boy on to the police-court missionary, who takes him to the Boys' Shelter Home, 134, Camberwell Road, S.E. This institution is a part of the organization of the Rochester Diocesan Branch of the Church of England Temperance Society, whose police-court mission was mainly founded, at the suggestion of a journeyman tailor named Rainer, by the late Canon Ellison.

The first missionary began work in South London in 1876, and before the end of 1880 three more were appointed. To-day it has missionaries working in the police courts at Lambeth, Southwark, South-Western (Battersea), Greenwich, Woolwich, Rochester, Chatham, Kingston, Richmond, Wimbledon, Mortlake, and at the Surrey and South London Sessions. Two women missionaries, whose stipends are paid by the Diocesan C.E.T.S. Women's Union, also work in these courts. The magistrates have, on many occasions, expressed their warm approval of the good work done by the South London police-court missionaries, and the Society now receives not only commendation, but financial support from every court where it has a missionary. A few months ago Mr. E. W. Garrett, the magistrate at the South-Western Police Court, writing to Mr. Evan Griffiths, the Diocesan Secretary of the C.E.T.S., said: "I have great pleasure in testifying to the great and valuable assistance rendered to the magistrates sitting at this court by the missionaries appointed to attend here by the South London Police-Court Mission. The missionaries do their work with great zeal and discretion, and I have great confidence in them. Without their help it would often be difficult and almost impossible for the magistrates to give a youthful prisoner one more chance of redeeming his character and becoming an honest citizen."

A still more conclusive proof of the value of the Society's work is the letter, appealing for funds for the Boys' Shelter Home, which was signed by *every* South London police

magistrate, and appeared in the *Times* and other newspapers.

The Boys' Shelter Home was opened in February, 1896, to provide a temporary shelter for lads, above school age, who had been rescued by the missionaries from the danger of drifting into a criminal career, and since then some six hundred boys have been sent to it by the magistrates. Had it not existed these boys, whose offence in many cases was simply "sleeping out," would have been sent to prison until suitable homes were found for them.

In the course of last year 109 boys were brought to the Home from the police courts. Twenty-eight of these were placed in situations, twenty-one were transferred to other institutions, seventeen were restored to their parents or friends, ten enlisted in the army or navy, six were provided with outfits and sent to sea, and twenty-seven left of their own accord. Under the heading "left of their own accord" are included boys who ran away. The number of runaways would have been much smaller had not the council ordained that every boy in the Home was to be vaccinated. On the morning that this order was issued thirteen boys decamped. Anti-vaccinationists must not claim that this incident is a triumph for their cause, as it was simply the fear of a little pain which prompted the lads to evade vaccination.

Many of the inmates of the Boys' Shelter Home have been brought up in the midst of crime and vice of the most shocking description, and it is therefore somewhat surprising to find that the offences with which they were charged were comparatively trivial, and frequently the result of sudden temptation. For instance, one homeless boy was walking barefoot along the Thames Embankment when he saw on the steps leading down to the water a pair of boots belonging to a boy who was bathing. He appropriated them, was arrested and charged. Another youngster was brought before a magistrate for selling newspapers which had been stolen by another boy, who saw them laying in the doorway of an unopened shop. The latter distributed them among other boys, who sold them in the streets. A third inmate, who had been turned out of doors by his parents, was charged with stealing three eggs from a van.

As already stated, many of the boys who are admitted to the Home have simply been charged with "sleeping out." Some of these are the sons of respectable people able and willing to support them. Quite recently two boys made their way to London from Scotland, and were found by a policeman asleep in a doorway. The magistrate passed them on to the missionary, and before they had been in the Home a day

Mr. Griffiths discovered that one of them was a respectable youngster who had been led away by his companion. His parents were written to, and eventually, to their great joy, he was sent back to them.

Another very recent case was that of a boy who told the police and the magistrate that he had been turned out of doors by his stepmother, who, he declared, was such a bad-tempered woman that his father had drowned himself in a pond. He also stated that he had been wandering about the London streets for six weeks. On being brought to the Boys' Shelter Home he repeated this story to Mr. Griffiths, who, however, suspected that the boy was not speaking the truth. "Show me your boots," he said; and on the boy raising his feet he saw that the soles were perfectly sound. He also noticed that the boy's clothes were fairly clean. It was very evident that the youngster had not been six weeks on the tramp. He questioned him closely, but the boy maintained that he had spoken the truth. Nevertheless, in reply to further questions he let slip the name of a certain town. This was a clue. Mr. Griffiths telegraphed to the Vicar of that place asking if a boy was missing from the town. On the following morning a reply was received. A boy was missing, and the father was going up to London to see if the lad at the Home were his son. The father arrived during the morning, and the description he gave of his son, who had, however, only been missing for two days, satisfied Mr. Griffiths that it was his boy whom they had in the Home.

The youngster, who had half an hour previously assured Mr. Griffiths that the story he had told was true, was then called into the room, and was considerably surprised to see his father sitting there. "This doesn't look as if I had drowned myself in a pond," the father remarked, and forthwith questioned his son as to his reason for running away. The boy then burst into tears. He admitted that he had always been well treated at home, and confessed that for some time he had been stealing coppers from his employer's till. One day he stole half a crown—the first piece of silver he had ever taken—and a few minutes after he had committed the theft he saw his master and the head shopman looking at the till and speaking about it. Thinking that they had missed the half-crown he became frightened, and, slipping out of the shop, ran away to London. The boy returned with his father, and has since written to Mr. Griffiths thanking him for his kindness.

Letters are continually received from old boys. A lad who left the Home in 1896 to enlist has recently written from South Africa. "I have been getting on all right since I left the

Home," he declared, "and when I come home I will come and see you." Another wrote from a man-of-war cruising around Japan. He had heard that a boy who was at the Home with him had joined the Royal Navy, and wrote: "If ever he gets on the same ship as me you can say that I shall stick to him through thick and thin." A third old boy, in the Royal Fusiliers, wrote from Burma, which he calls "No white man's land." The frequency of sudden death and the necessary rapidity with which burial follows it in the pagoda-dotted land had evidently made a deep impression on his mind. "No soldier," he wrote, "ever knows when his last hour has come; he is singing with joy and happiness one minute, and a few hours after he is below the ground, lying at rest." He concluded with "fondest love and wishes to you all at home."

Every boy on being admitted to the Home is compelled to have a bath—a luxury which is rarely appreciated—and is then sent to bed, while his clothes are subjected to the very necessary ordeal of fumigation. If, as is frequently the case, his clothes are exceedingly ragged or dirty, they are destroyed, and a respectable second-hand suit given to him. The first work he is put to is sawing, chopping, bundling, and selling firewood, and he remains thus employed until a fairly accurate opinion of his character has been formed. Should it be a favourable one a situation is obtained for him, unless he prefers to join the Army or Navy.

The South London police magistrates said, very truly, in their letter to the press, that it is on the lines of the Boys' Shelter Home that the problem of "Hooliganism" is to be solved. The results achieved by the Society have been very good, but they would have been still better had the work not been hampered by the want of suitable premises. The Home is an old house and, it must be confessed, somewhat dilapidated; but the Society has now an opportunity for purchasing the site, and if the required sum, £5,000, be obtained, a new and larger building will be erected.

The Boys' Shelter Home is, however, only one branch of the South London Police-Court Mission's work. Men, women, and girls are continually being saved from utter ruin by the timely help of the missionaries.

Cases such as the following are common: A servant-girl "got into trouble," and was dismissed by her mistress. Ashamed to go to her parents, who lived in the country, and having no real friends in London, she wandered about the streets until a policeman found her "sleeping out," and took her to the police-station. She refused to give any information concerning herself, and consequently the magistrate remanded her for inquiries to be made. When she

quitted the dock one of the missionaries, an elderly man, had a quiet talk with her in the female gaoler's room, and obtained from her the information she had hitherto withheld. He wrote to her parents, but, as they declined to receive her, he made other arrangements, with the result that when she was taken before the magistrate on remand she was discharged. Many girls, arrested for petty thefts and bound over under the First Offenders' Act, are visited at their homes by the women missionaries.

The South London Police-Court Mission by no means restricts itself to helping "first offenders." The oft-convicted man or woman is not regarded as hopeless, and many of both sexes have been induced by the missionaries to lead respectable, law-abiding lives. A recent case is that of a young woman who had so frequently been convicted of being "drunk and disorderly" that she spent twenty-two months out of twenty-four in prison. At the expiration of her last term of imprisonment one of the missionaries met her at the prison gates, and, before her former associates could get hold of her and give her drink, induced her to go home with him. His wife gave her some respectable clothes, and they kept her until she had come to the conclusion that it was quite possible for her to live without beer and gin. She was then sent to the country, and eight months later wrote to the missionary, beginning: "Sir, just a feu lines to you i am still the same i was i am still a tetelor and intend to keep so by the help of God." The postscript was: "Dear Sir i am only just a feu door from the plocie-station and they would not have far to take me you know." Evidently she was very proud of having lived for eight months close to a police-station, without having been compelled to pass a night in one of its cells.

The wives and children of convicted prisoners find in the missionaries real friends, and many are the pathetic letters which they write to them. "I am writing a few lines," one letter began, "to know could you possibly get or deliver a message to my husband it will do him a world of good and I feel so anxious about him he looked so ill in court and I know will worry terribly about me and our dear little children. I will enclose a note and if it is anyhow possible let him have it if not read it and let him know somehow this suspense is awful and I know I do not feel it a atom more than he will as there never in this world was a better or kinder husband or father. He has been more sinned against than he has sinned and far more to be pitied than blamed."

Many women send open letters to the missionary with the request that if they cannot be delivered he will read them and repeat their contents to their husbands. "I am so sorry for

you, my dear hubby," one poor woman wrote, "but you must try and bear up for our sakes. I wish I could take your place. I would willingly do so. Do not worry in the least about us dear one as we are alright."

It sometimes happens that a man of education appears in the dock through no fault of his own. A man who could speak French, German, Spanish, Italian, and English was recently charged with "sleeping out." For twenty-five years he had been employed in the City as a foreign correspondence clerk at, for the greater portion of the time, a salary of £300 a year. He was discharged through ill-health, and, being unable to obtain other employment, was soon reduced to a state of poverty. The magistrate sent him to the workhouse, and the police-court missionary at once interested himself in him. Having found that the man's story was true, he applied to the *Guardians* for permission for him to absent himself for three weeks in order to look for work. The leave being granted, the missionary provided the man with a new suit of clothes, and quickly obtained employment for him.

In many other ways the South London Police-Court Mission is doing excellent work, not only for prisoners and their families, but for the State also, and the following letter, received by Mr. Griffiths from the Bishop of Rochester, testifies that it is fully appreciated by those who have unrivalled opportunities for judging it: "I met nearly all the police-court magistrates of South London the other night, and it was very delightful to hear the unanimous and most emphatic witness which they bore to the value of our police-court missionaries. I have seldom heard such decisive testimony on any subject."

HENRY CHARLES MOORE.

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### EASTER.

**A** GAIN we see, nor doubt, the flowery signs  
 Of Spring's return to hill and field and dale;  
 Willows with tenderest green in wavy lines  
 Move to the music of the April gale.

And mark clear-pencilled on the April blue  
 The blush and gleam of peach-flower and of plum;  
 Clover and violets every green mound strew,  
 Tulip and hyacinth in the gardens bloom.