

ver. 14), do not tell in favour of the rich man. Moreover, the setting of the story, connected in ver. 1 ("He said *also* unto the disciples") with the preceding chapter, where it is shown that the publican and the sinner must be considered, as well as the self-righteous Pharisee, all tells in the same direction.

And whatever may be thought of the interpretation of the phrase *τῆς ἀδικίας*, it is certainly actually applied, in each of the three cases, to something which we are told to use or learn from, not to condemn or despise. Not only worldly resources, but the steward of a worldly régime and the judge of a worldly polity, have their higher aspects and lessons. The worldly steward, if wise, will (as we take it) exemplify better principles than those of his merely worldly master; as the worldly judge, though faulty, will yet embody attributes which have their place in the character of God himself.



A "Hill Difficulty."

By Miss A. E. WOODCOCK.

A BISHOP, in a recent speech, is reported to have spoken disparagingly of "those district visitors who neglect to use their minds as well as their bodies, and who waste valuable time in rushing about their parishes exchanging greetings and platitudes with their poorer neighbours." There is much food for thought in this view of the district visitor, specially to those of us who, being district visitors, desire to see ourselves as others see us. But though some of us still "rush," and even consider our strength lies in anything but in sitting still, yet surely the old type of district visitor is slowly but surely giving way before a newer and, in some cases, wiser dispensation.

To take an instance. An elderly lady said the other day, "I have been a district visitor for sixty years." Her hearer gazed at her in surprise, which she mistook for admiration, and she added in a gratified voice: "Yes, I had a district in this

town when I was seventeen!" At seventeen girls nowadays, however enthusiastic, would be considered quite unfit to face the awful problems of gross and deadly sin that most town visitors have to face sooner or later. Surely we have improved in the matter of "age limits" at least!

There is, of course, much that can be studied beforehand by the would-be district visitor, even if a special training should be impossible for this difficult work, for difficult it is most certainly. District visiting seems essentially a woman's work (under the clergy of her parish), for only a woman can carry with her that atmosphere of "home," that power of making things look nice, even, if asked, of helping practically sometimes herself.

As we get less enthusiastic, and even worn and wearied with the monotonous round, which takes so much time and labour, seeming to yield little or no return, we sometimes lose sight of the fact that the so-called "cases" are really our brothers and sisters, who are tied and bound with the chains of drunkenness and immorality; that they can only be loosed from them by the grace of God, which we "must learn to call for by diligent prayer," and that no pressing them to join societies or guilds is of any use at all without that grace. "This kind cometh not forth but by prayer and fasting."

As regards the district itself, the difficulties at first seem endless, especially if you have lived in a village most of your life.

A district is given you with a number; you are taken round it once, then you start work. Before you have been at it for many months you are surprised, not at the lack of morals in many of the houses, but at the presence of them in any. For men, women, and children are living, moving, and having their being in dilapidated houses standing in courts into which, in many cases, the sanitary inspector has never been. From bitter experience I know this to be a fact. "My dear," said a disapproving friend, "Aunt Mary used to go to her district with a Bible under one arm and a Prayer-Book under the other; when *you* go it seems to me you take a notebook, and want to know 'how many in family,' and how many rooms in each house, and all sorts of

dreadful things." But, really, it is impossible to go first "with your Bible and Prayer-Book" until you find out the conditions under which your people's lives are lived. It is a farce to speak to them of the love of God, of the brotherhood of the Church, when, for instance, you find a damp stone-floored room downstairs serving as a bedroom, because, "you see, upstairs the ceiling be falling down, and, as I says, you can't watch it when you be asleep, so we sits up there by day with our quilting-frame."

Like Nehemiah's workers of old, we are often compelled to build our wall with a weapon in one hand for attack (not a Prayer-Book!). There are the landlords, their agents, the inspectors—all have to be dealt with, for those most interested are afraid to speak for themselves. The promise is to us, as to Nehemiah: "Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren."

I believe in tracts; people read them who cannot find time for heavier reading. A mother I know always reads one as she is nursing and putting her baby to sleep. She has no time, she says, with her little family of six, all through the day, except these few minutes. But an even greater advantage is that they involve a personal visit each week to each house. Most of us know how immensely difficult it is to gain admission sometimes. A friend of mine told me of a house where she had tried in vain and in vain to get the owner to open the door wide enough for her to go in. But one day she was greeted with smiles, and asked to come in. "I heard, miss, as you'd come from Thorpe," said her hostess eagerly. "Yes; do you know it?" "Well, I do, and I don't," she answered. "My first-cousin cleans the church there. I can't mind her name now, but I'd like to see that place! There were an old lady murdered there—something awful!—years ago. I can mind hearing all about it, and I've had ever such a want to go there since then and see it all!" After this introduction she welcomed my friend regularly.

I have found many flower-lovers among these town-folk. One poor woman, scarred painfully with eczema, is "totally

fond of a fuchsia"; and in one house I was always welcomed if I wore a "real nice pansy." They love little plants. Another difficulty is that grievous one of having to act as relieving officer in the name of Religion. It tends to harden your heart, and make you believe that "all men are liars," when you find that the person on whom most care and money has been spent has either a private banking account or a regular pension, but has never seen fit to mention it to you.

In time, too, you learn to dread Saturday night, when curiously written notes arrive conferring the rank and title of "lady" upon you in the desperate desire for boots, "as my pore children is going bearfoot," or for "an old tail what you've a done with—my tail is in pawn"; a "tail" signifying a skirt that has seen better days.

It is a mistake to live too near your district. Usually those who need help most are by far the most backward in asking for it, and giving money, though the easiest, seems to me the most disastrous way. I wonder if any of my readers remember a picture that came out in an illustrated paper some years ago. An old woman, dirty, ragged, and untidy, is seen sitting by a fireless, unswept grate. A child, also ragged, is sweeping the floor vigorously with the enthusiasm of youth—and such a floor! The expression on the face of the old woman is unforgettable. Underneath are these words: "If you don't give over that sweepin', Sarah Ann, I'll give you such a 'idin'; the district lady 'avent been round yet!"

But there are many and great privileges in this work. First, and most obviously, because the work of a district visitor corresponds with the work of Christ as shown in the Gospel. Even in the petty details of organization it is well to remember that He made the men sit down by companies in order, before any scheme of help in food was carried out. There are still the little ones to seek out and bring to Him that He shall touch them in Holy Baptism. And who amongst us has not felt something of that sense of personal exhaustion after district

work, implied in the mysterious words, He perceived "that virtue had gone out of Him"?

Besides, there are few things that take you out of yourself as a district does. Many years ago we had a lovely Persian kitten; in spite of all our care he seemed to pine, and his blue eyes grew languid. Then we showed him to someone who "understood" cats. He looked carefully at the kitten; then he said: "There is nothing wrong with him really; catch a mouse for him, that will take him out of himself best." I think a district would prove "a mouse" to most of us.

There is so much variety when you once know your people. It is like a magazine of serial tales. I know a dreary court with ten houses on each side, once whitewashed, now green and grey with age and dirt. It is decorated on washing-days with strings of flapping clothes, about fifteen feet across, and there is a perpetual smell of hot soapsuds and steam rising from the washhouses attached. On a November day it is almost impossible to imagine anything more dreary; but the dreariness is outside.

An old man lives in one house (I am afraid he never has a washing-day), and he is always glad of what he calls "godly conversation." He is most hospitable, offering an old hollow deal box for a seat, in the courtliest manner. Being very deaf, the conversation is one-sided, but very learned. He talks of "the Hebrew ego" and "the human entity." I am left far behind, and I listen in respectful silence as he quotes pages of Milton, his favourite poet. Next door is Mrs. Jones, a widow; she is out, but her next-door neighbour calls me seriously in, and says (in what she fondly believes to be an aside) that she has had to speak straight to Mrs. Jones. "She's always talking about the men-folk, and she be up eighty, miss, and wore out both her last husbands by what I can hear. So I says to her plain: 'Mrs. Jones,' I says, 'at your age you'd a deal better be thinkin' about the next world, not about the next man!'" Farther on is an old soldier; he has been in India and abroad

more than twenty years, and he loves to talk of "them furrin' parts, and the 'boa constructors' you meets out there!"

A keen sense of humour is like the much-advertised rubber heels—"it prevents jar." I do not know if humour can be cultivated. I have my doubts; but to those who possess it, it is an inestimable boon, saving them sometimes from making mountains out of molehills, and themselves ridiculous. I heard of a clergyman the other day who was preaching to a village morning congregation of four grown-up people and about twenty school-children. After giving out his text, he began: "This historical situation was not an absolutely unknown phenomenon." So it is not only district visitors who are deficient in this gift.

Browning says the object of our lives is "just our chance o' the prize of learning love." I have been young, and now am old, and yet only once amongst the poor have I heard "giving" justified by the remark, "Never mind, miss; of course, we can't afford to lose it" (with an eye on my bag); "but it wasn't a large sum, only a trumpery shilling, and there—the Lord will provide, we know"—the suggestion being quite clear that "the trumpery shilling" would be easy to restore, but a larger sum would take some raising.

There are two suggestions I would like to make. First, that those we visit really look upon it as a politeness and compliment to them if we take pains to dress nicely. I know the criticism this remark will receive, but I maintain it is so. Some people think "any old clothes do for a district." "Oh, miss," said an old man wistfully to a friend of mine, "I wish I'd seen you last time you come to our place; 'twas in the evenin', and mother said, 'Miss looked beautiful; she be goin' courtin' for sure.'" Then my friend remembered she had put on her best hat to go out to tea, and called in on the way. The second suggestion may seem even more unnecessary; it is a plea for courtesy. One lady I know visits her district at 12 noon on Monday, and walks in without knocking, bidding her unhappy companion follow her. Another used to go and look at the beds to see if they were properly made! Another—a man this time

—walked into a house at 10 a.m. without knocking, to find a poor old woman rocking her wailing grandchild, and trying to tidy up at the same time. The breakfast cups were still on the table, and he was much incensed. “I’d got a shilling for you,” he announced, “but I shan’t leave it with you until you’ve got a tidy place to put it down in!”

There is a beautiful old collect for the Transfiguration, which parish workers would do well to ponder. “O God, who on the Mount didst reveal to chosen witnesses Thine only-begotten Son wonderfully transfigured in raiment white and glistening, mercifully grant that we, being delivered from the disquietude of this world, may be permitted to behold the King in His beauty.” And the Hill Difficulty lies on the road to the Celestial City.



The Missionary World.

BY THE REV. A. J. SANTER,

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IT is not often that missionary work obtains such a public recognition as was given to it on May 31 by Mr. Roosevelt in the course of his famous speech at the Guildhall. It is worth while to quote what the speaker said about Uganda, which place he visited in the course of his travels: “Uganda has been the scene of an extraordinary development of Christianity; nowhere else of recent times has missionary effort met with such success; the inhabitants stand far above most of the races of the Dark Continent in their capacity for progress towards civilization. They have made great strides, and the English officials have shown equal judgment and disinterestedness in the work they have done; and they have been specially wise in trying to develop the natives along their own lines instead of seeking to turn them into imitation Englishmen. In Uganda all that is necessary is to go forward on the paths you have already marked out.”

Many who read these words will also think of much that was not said on that occasion. Many will remember how that great kingdom was first *evangelized* by heroes of the mission-field long before the State took hold of things there; and that the blood of martyrs, European and native, has again proved to be the seed of both Church and Empire. Moreover, “the paths already marked out” point not only to the civilizing course of a settled government, but also to the building up of the great and growing Church in the ways of righteousness. Worldliness has perils quite as deadly as heathenism.