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Friends of an Hour

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FRIENDS
OF AN
HOUR

BY WILLIAM SCRIVEN.

ILLUSTRATED BY

LANCELOT SPEED AND GODFREY HALL.

LONDON . 1900 .

GH.

RHN/FU/213/11



MISS E. R.

Friends of an Hour

BY WILLIAM SCRIVEN

"AH, HAPPY HILLS! AH, PLEASING SHADE!
AH, FIELDS BELOVED IN VAIN!
WHERE ONCE MY CARELESS CHILDHOOD STRAY'D,
A STRANGER YET TO PAIN!
I FEEL THE GALES THAT FROM YE BLOW,
A MOMENTARY BLISS BESTOW,
AS WAVING FRESH THEIR GLADSOME WING
MY WEARY SOUL THEY SEEM TO SOOTHE;
AND REDOLENT OF JOY AND YOUTH,
TO BREATHE A SECOND SPRING."

GRAY.

ILLUSTRATED BY
LANCELOT SPEED
AND
GODFREY HALL



LONDON, 1900

DEAR MR. SCRIVEN,

I congratulate you on undertaking another expedition to pensioners of an Institution affectionately and familiarly known as "*The Incurables.*" In your sketches you invested these unnoted wrecks of human life with an interest peculiar to people living in the past, secluded, by stress of pain and honourable poverty, from a world in which they once bore a worthy part.

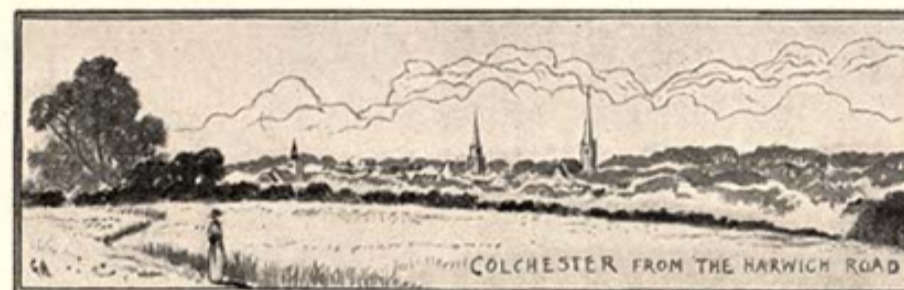
You have sympathy; you know something of the microcosm at Putney, peopled by two hundred brethren and sisters, united in suffering, reading a lesson of invincible patience, yet wearing always an aspect of gratitude and serenity. But it has been a joy to you to penetrate the modest abodes of such as, lightened by a small annual bounty, are enabled to preserve the reality of home and the fellowship of kindred.

Let me wish you God-speed in your work, and abundant success in its outcome. I am free to do so, as one who, for many years, has had converse with persons similar to the subjects of your present quest, and who has occasionally employed an idle pen in their behalf. I shall follow your wanderings with pleasure as they trace the hills and streams of East Anglia, the scene of my earlier days.

I am, yours very truly,

F. A.

PUTNEY, 29th May, 1899.



I.

It was on the morning of last Oak-apple Day, May 29th, that we set out to visit in their own homes a few more of the 650 pensioners of the Royal Hospital for Incurables, and particularly those who reside in East Anglia. The morning was gloriously bright and fine, with scarcely a suspicion of the cruel east wind of 'lingering winter,' which had so far 'chilled the lap of May.' Smoky, noisy London was quickly left behind and we were very soon in the heart of Essex, enjoying the beauty of the rich undulating country and the freshness of the renewed face of the earth. How many persons there are who imagine this charming county to be flat and uninviting! Surely it is because their travels in this direction have not extended beyond Wanstead Flats or Tilbury Marshes, and, judging *ex pede Herculem*, because these parts are dreary and uninteresting, the remainder must be so too.

Nothing could be more misleading, for the whole county is very diversified, with hills quite steep enough for some people to walk up, and sufficiently dangerous for the most adventurous cyclists to ride down. Though there are few great rivers, there are many small streams, fringed with tall poplars and drooping willows, and flanked by woodland scenes of surpassing loveliness. Of that peaceful rural beauty Constable and Gainsborough delighted to paint there is still enough left to refresh and gladden the senses jaded by the ceaseless round of toil, or the roar of the traffic of the endless brick-built streets.

Our first stopping-place, Colchester, is so well known, and, as in the far-away times of Briton and Roman, Saxon, Dane, and Norman, is again becoming a place of such great importance, that it is not easy for one to say anything concerning it, or to invest its story with fresh interest after so brief a visit as ours.

We were fortunate in having our quarters at the *Red Lion*, which is

variously stated to have been built in 1400, 1410, and 1484—possibly some part of this ancient hostelry belongs to each date. The earthquake which wrought much damage here fifteen years ago severely tried the old house, and necessitated considerable repairs and strengthening of the framework. But enough of the old work remains, in the heavily-timbered walls and ceilings of good sound oak, to show how well and solidly it was built, and that, barring fire, it may stand some centuries yet. Colchester is a garrison town of the first importance, and report says it is shortly to have large additions made to its military accommodation as the head-quarters of the Eastern Division. The town is situated on a natural stronghold, from which the ground slopes downward on every side. There is little record left of the hill fort and town of pre-Roman times, but sufficient to show that it was the chief hill fort of the powerful tribe then inhabiting this part of the country. The local museum is very rich in Roman and Saxon antiquities, found for the most part in recent years; while the remains of the old town walls, the castle, several churches and other buildings of Norman and Early English work, very largely consist of bricks and tiles of Roman workmanship, the spoils of the ruined structures they superseded a thousand years later.

To the leisured antiquary no town offers a richer quarry, while to such birds of passage as ourselves a passing glance and mental note was all our time allowed.

Colchester has the credit of having played a prominent part in all great popular movements in our national life. The freeing of the serfs in England

began here. More than one hard blow was struck by Essex men for liberty of thought. They furnished a large portion of the victims who suffered under the Marian persecution. Later, they resisted the unconstitutional methods of all the Stuarts, and they formed a large majority of those who, for conscience' sake, sought an asylum over seas, first in Holland, and subsequently laid the foundations of the North American States. To-day Colchester is a busy, prosperous town, where relics and witnesses of the hoary past and modern up-to-date buildings and methods are



H. A.

strangely blended. The people are proud of and cling to the memories of the fierce vicissitudes through which their old town has passed, and they march with the present in the van of liberty and progress.

To the east of the town, just beyond the railway crossing and to the left, stands a little cottage, wedged in between its larger and loftier neighbours. In the room with the flat dormer window set in the low-pitched roof, where one can stand upright in the middle of the floor and nowhere else, lies our friend H. A., an old railway signalman, within sight of his "box" by the side of the line, where he handled the levers for twenty-six years, controlling and directing the traffic, "and never had an accident." He feels, and rightly so, that this is a record he may be proud of, and if he is now but a poor human derelict, of no use to anyone, he has been of use in his time. For the last five or six years he has not left this tiny room, and for a like period previously he was unable to work. His feet and legs are drawn up, distorted and rigid from rheumatic gout, and he has not sufficient strength left to change his

posture. As his wife "fixes" him, so he has to remain until her kind hands re-adjust his pillows and cushions.

How few of us give even a passing thought of human kindness to the many humble toilers "on the line" to whose high sense of duty, and patient attention to the details of their calling, we owe the safety and ease with which we travel! We were pleased to hear that, of late years, the signalman's position has been made much better than it used to be. In the old days, when our friend was at work, the "boxes" were poor places for a man to spend the greater part of his life in. They were like ovens in summer, and ice-safes in winter. The hours averaged fifteen a day. He had no "relief," for "a signalman was always on duty." His meals were taken to him, and he ate them in his box. The only difference between Sunday and weekday was that on the former the trains were fewer, and occasionally he had half a day off. There was no Sunday pay then, and the wage for those long hours of responsible service was only about seventeen shillings a week. Surely, life under such conditions was hard enough, but when one adds the fact that his health was being steadily undermined by them, so that by the time he was little more than middle-aged he was crippled for life, with long years of suffering and dependent helplessness before him, life could be scarcely worth living. But a more enlightened policy is followed to-day. The men are better paid, the boxes are more comfortable, the hours are fewer, the workers are recognised to be men, and they have many privileges unknown under the old régime. The poor fellow bears his heavy affliction with wonderful patience. His wife watches over and cares for him with untiring devotion, her only hope being, as she expressed herself, that she "might be spared to wait on him as long as he needs me." Fortunately, he is

able to read a good deal, and many kind friends supply him with newspapers and magazines. A little grand-daughter of three or four years had been to see him, he told us, who could not understand why he should always lie in bed. From her point he was like Mrs. Dombey, who needed to "make an effort," so she challenged him with, "Get up,



A COOL CORNER ON THE COLNE

grandfer, do, and then I'll run yer." He laughed heartily at the child's fun, as well as at the puzzled expression on her little face as she gave it up as of no use. Probably many of those who read these pages have been well served by this poor man in the past. They may have fumed and complained of delay, when they seemed to stop at nothing and nowhere in particular. But he knew of the danger ahead, if they did not, and never allowed them to pass on until he could signal "the way is clear." Would that we on our line of life could keep watch over one another thus, then perhaps this would soon be a better and happier world.

As H. A. had only his club pay of 4s. 6d. per week to depend upon, the pension granted by the Royal Hospital six or seven years ago has been a great comfort to him and his wife. It has preserved their little home to them. They can be together, so that his burden of pain and helplessness is lightened by the tender care and solicitude of his wife. It was with heartfelt gratitude for all the Pension secures to them that they desired us to convey their thanks to those who helped to obtain it and to the Council by whom it is paid.



NEWBRIDGE
WEST BERGHOLT

II.

"BENT, not broken," might very appropriately be the motto of Mrs. A. B., who resides in the pleasantest suburb of this historic town, and quite on the opposite side from our friend the signalman. We found her in a very poorly furnished little back room, lying upon the bed. She had been up and dressed, but found that her strength would not last out the day. The story of her life is one long tragedy, terrible in its intensity and insistence.

Weakly from her infancy, and a martyr to dyspepsia, when little more than a child herself, she had to leave home to begin earning her own living as a teacher. However, as she grew stronger, and her capabilities increased, life opened brightly for her; for she found pleasure in her work, and there was much that was pleasant and encouraging in her prospects. When about twenty-



three, and just as she was looking forward with joyous anticipation to her approaching marriage, she sustained a serious injury to her spine from falling on the ice. This was not thought much of at the time, but very shortly after she had to resign her appointment, and become an in-patient of Guy's Hospital. Altogether she was under treatment for nine months. After a further period of rest, and being apparently cured, her marriage, which had been long postponed, at length took place. Within the next four years she became a confirmed invalid. The old spinal trouble returned, and before she was relieved of that, a serious internal malady necessitated another visit to London and admission to the Women's Hospital. About a month afterwards, when it was apparent that her case was beyond surgical remedy, and incurable, she was summoned home to her sick husband, whom she had left strong and well. The next day he died. Was it any wonder that she prayed and hoped that she might die too? She was ill, with no prospect of recovery, without means, and had three young fatherless children to care for. Her husband had been for many years confidential clerk to solicitors in the town, and they lived on the premises of the firm, so that, when he died, she lost her home also. Her position was so desperate that to-day she wonders how she lived through that awful time. She rallied at length, and for some years taught her children as she lay on her couch until they were old enough to begin to work for themselves. During this period her late husband's firm made her an allowance, which was supplemented by help from others, and regularly paid.



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Again misfortune overtook her, for a bank in which most of her friends were interested failed and her income ceased. But God, who had given her help in the past, gave her other friends, and her children also were now able to do something for her. If she had but little, she never was left alone and uncared for; even in her darkest days some gleams of light were given, some tokens of the Father's watchful love sustained her.

Repeated attacks of influenza have aggravated her complaint and made her, if possible, still more dependent upon others. Four years ago she was in the greatest straits, and it was then that she was nominated for the Pension, and through the warm support of many

good friends in the town and country, it was granted the following year, and she was then, once for all, relieved of the haunting fear of want. It will be seen that her life, from early womanhood, has been one long battle against ill-health and misfortune; and amid it all she has borne herself bravely, upheld and sustained by her faith in the unfailing goodness of God to the widow and the fatherless.

Of late, many of her friends have been removed by death, and others have left the town, so that in her case, as in the case of so many others, the help of the Pension came in the time of extremity, and just when it was of the

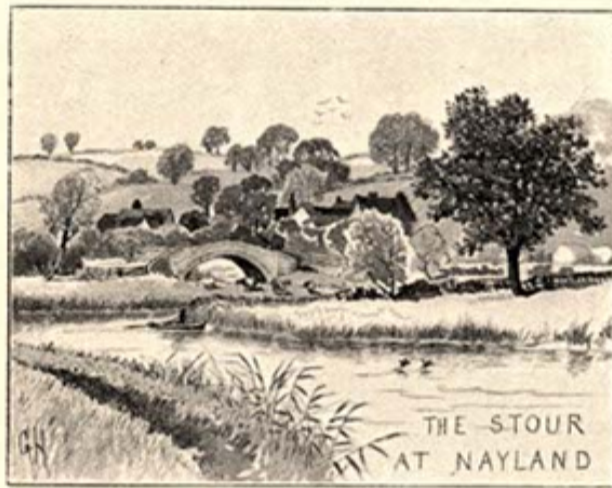


MRS. A. B.

greatest possible service. In conclusion, to quote her own words, "I cannot expect to live long, but while life lasts I shall never cease to be grateful for the Pension, which ensures me a home amongst dear and attached friends who still remain, and renders it unnecessary for me to make my appeal to become an inmate of the Hospital."

III.

A SLIGHT détour was made by us next day, over the river Stour into Suffolk, to Stoke by Nayland, which might almost be better called Stoke upon Nayland, so completely does it dominate the latter place from its splendid position upon the hill-top. We drove the six or seven miles from Colchester along the old



Roman road, locally called the Causeway, through Nayland and Great Horkesley, and a fertile, well-cultivated country, blessed with every token of prosperity and content. The appearance of the cottages and gardens by the way-side always affords a sure indication of the condition of those to whom they belong. When misery and discontent prevail, men lose heart, and have not energy to make the most and best of such things as they have. Here we saw

well stocked gardens carefully cultivated, and the timber-framed or boarded cottages as bright and clean as colour-wash and paint could make them. The masses of apple blossom in the orchards, for all the late May frosts, promised well for the golden autumn. We met children trooping home from school well fed and clad, while groups of smaller fry sprawled on sunny banks, playing at work, as with their little brown hands they fashioned daisy chains for personal adornment, or told each other the time of day with what's o'clocks. Everywhere one saw signs of rural comfort among the workers, while almost without exception every field promised an abundant crop.

On the highest crest of the hill, and close to the entrance to a large estate, Miss C. C. lives with her aged father, in the cottage where her grandfather lived and died. It is seven years since she was seized with partial paralysis

while engaged in her duties as a nurse, and was obliged to give up a good situation she had filled for nine years, and return to her home. From that time, notwithstanding that kind friends secured for her the advice of specialists and treatment in London Hospitals, she has never recovered the use of her limbs, but has grown more and more infirm. The malady has now so completely prostrated her that there is no likelihood of any improvement in her condition. While able to work, she had been very careful and saved a nice little sum, and upon this, with the assistance of her friends, she lived for a considerable time. When her money had been nearly all spent she was nominated



MISS C. C.

for a Pension; that was just two years ago, and to her great surprise and joy she was elected to the benefit of the fund last year. At the time when the good news came, her aged mother was lying seriously ill and unconscious from apoplexy. A few days before the end she revived somewhat, and it was a great comfort to the dying woman to know that her poor afflicted daughter was provided for. In order to nurse the invalid and to look after her father, her sister left a situation where she had been employed for eighteen



years, and in addition to her other duties she endeavours to add to the family income by needlework. The father was employed as gardener on the estate close by his home for more than thirty years, and though close upon eighty, he still does a little at his old calling in the village, as far as his strength will permit. The old man was away, weeding a neighbour's garden at the time of our visit, so we saw nothing of him, but his children spoke with pride and affection as they told us of his determination to do whatever he could while he had any strength left. We were sorry to miss the sight of this brave old man, for the sake of his own sterling worth, as well as to lose a talk with him about old times.

The two sisters—one helpless and dependent, the other resourceful and active—are devoted to each other. Their home is a pattern of neatness, in which the best has been made of everything to secure the invalid's comfort, and they have a well-kept little garden at the back, abutting upon the park, where she can enjoy the fresh air with privacy. To us it was very delightful. The fragrance of the flowers and the songs of the birds enhanced our enjoyment of the beauty of the scene. The trees were in all the glory of their early summer foliage, and the flicker of light and shade upon the ground beneath, and on the grey and gold of the lichen-covered fences, and the warmer colours of the mellowed walls and roofs of the cottages, can only be hinted at here in black and white, but we saw them there.

Patient, trustworthy, honourable women like these two sisters, whose record of long and faithful service tells its own tale, surely deserve the help the Pension affords them. It is a great change after their busy, active lives, to come back to this quiet haven of rest and peace, and the financial difference to them must be a very serious matter indeed. We heard no word of complaint however, but many of gratitude to God who had mercifully provided for the poor sufferer. Though their position is a very humble one, they have many warm-hearted friends among the principal families in the neighbourhood, whose personal efforts on their behalf knew no rest until the Pension was granted, "and then," said one of the sisters, "they were just as pleased as we were."

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On leaving these "friends of an hour," we wandered round the village, visiting the fine old church, with its lofty massive tower, a landmark for many a mile around. On reaching Nayland on our return, we stopped for tea and a walk by the Stour. The lock-keeper here has so little to do now-a-days, that he seemed glad of listeners to his story of the present poor times on the river as compared with years ago, when there were eight, aye, you might say ten, boats went through the lock to one now. The old pessimist waxed eloquent as he told us, "Why things are as they be, is it's all along of so much foreign corn coming into the country, and that comes by ship, you know, to the big towns like London and the rest; and then there's the railways, they get all the carrying now." Evidently he felt very strongly on the matter, for the irony of the situation appeared to be altogether too much for his composure, as he told us, "It was no use to expect folks to use the river who had no interest in it, when some of them that has, with lots of boats of their own, let them lie up and rot, and send their stuff by train. That seems unreasonable, but it's true, and you can't do nothing with 'em when things are like that." We consoled with him on the waste of so much carrying power, and as time pressed, we left him to his reflections on the perversity of things in general and lock-keeping in particular; and then, in the level light of a golden sunset, betook ourselves by the Causeway to Colchester again, and so to our lodging at the



Red Lion.

IV.

OUR next excursion was to Thorpe-le-Soken, a thriving village, which lies about fifteen miles to the east of Colchester. The journey calls for no special remark; our route lay through a pleasant garden-like country, with a plentiful sprinkling of hamlets, farms, and cottages on either side the line, and here and there a mill set high, that the sails might catch the favouring wind. Everything we saw seemed to denote a fair measure of prosperity, and the crops in the fields, as well as the fine timber by the road-side, proclaimed the good qualities of the soil. It is nearly thirty years since the writer was in this part of the country, and in that time the standard of comfort has been raised, and those who work on the land appear to be much better off than they were then. One could scarcely say so much for their employers, perhaps; but even

they seemed to find life worth living, although more intelligence and enterprise were required to make a living off their farms to-day than sufficed a generation ago.

The road from the station led up a long and easy ascent, shaded by wych-elm and oak, beneath which we were glad to escape from the noon-day sun. There was no missing our way, for the old red-brick tower of the church on the brow of the hill was straight before us. Thanks to the Wild Birds Preservation Act, we had music all the way and delightful company.



We had no difficulty in finding the Pensioner we were in quest of. She lives in a comfortable cottage next door to her sister, the wife of the village harness-maker. The house is small, but as her weakness confines her to one sitting-room down-stairs, it is large enough for her. Formerly the front door opened directly into the room from the road; but the harness-maker has had

a little porch built with outer door, which secures greater privacy, and is a protection from the cold in winter.

The two sisters spend most of their time together, as the invalid can do very little for herself, and frequently is entirely dependent upon the other. The record of many painful years is written in her face, and of apprehension and fearfulness too lest her means should be exhausted, and she should be left without any provision in her helplessness and old age. It is not a cheerful prospect for any one to have before them in every waking hour, and sleeping, to be haunted by the question in one's dreams, "What will become of me when my bit of money is all gone?" But that is the kind of experience this poor woman has known, *plus* all the pain of chronic rheumatism; and the story of it all needed no telling; it was in her face.

At first our arrival seemed to distress the poor invalid by making her painfully nervous, but when, on looking round the room we recognised the portrait of one of her best friends, we were soon more at home with each other. And still more so a little later, when she told us of her early years in Ireland.

A cousin of the patient's was in the employment of a Nottingham firm, and when, nearly fifty years ago, fashion decreed a demand for hand-made Irish lace, he was sent to Limerick to look after the business. In a short time he had 400 women and girls engaged in this beautiful industry, and M. S. left her home in Essex when about fifteen, to work for her cousin. This was a happy, prosperous time for her. The nice employment, the beautiful country, and the companionship of the kind and merry-hearted Irish girls made life

very pleasant for her. This continued for twelve years, when fashion changed, the proprietor died, and the business came to an end. She then returned to her home in Essex, but unfortunately brought with her the rheumatism she had contracted in Ireland and from which she was never wholly free.

For the next twenty-five years, as her strength permitted, she was employed in different families, at first as lady's maid, and later as housekeeper. Her last situation was with a clergyman, whom she left upon his marriage, and came home to her friends for a short rest. It was soon apparent that her work was done. Thirty-six years of almost incessant toil, together with much suffering from [rheumatism, had so enfeebled her health that there was no rallying power left.

It was quite impossible for her to take another situation, as her walking power failed her more and more. Change of air and treatment were tried, but with no lasting improvement.

She was all this time living upon her savings, and her little capital was fast coming to an end. As she had the use of her hands she bought a sewing machine, and took in work for a time, but had not strength to continue. Hitherto she had maintained herself, but the time was come when she must have help. Several friends came to her aid, and succeeded in obtaining a Pension for her from this Charity.



MISS M. S.

Her story was simply told, with no attempt at effect, and showed her to be a woman of great force of character and worth, not sparing herself, but persevering in her duty under conditions which were often exceedingly hard. It is an unfortunate fact that many of those in whose service she has been, or whose lives have been linked to hers by kindness and sympathy, have themselves suffered great reverses of fortune. Hence those persons upon whom her fidelity or sufferings might have given her some claim are unable to render her assistance. In this poor woman's case it will be seen that the Pension is a boon indeed! It was very pleasant to hear her speak of the many friends she has known and of the kindness they have shown her. The present Vicar of the Parish is a frequent visitor, and she highly values his ministrations.

It may be of interest to the reader to know that it was in this pleasant village the late Sir William Gull, the famous physician, passed his boyhood, and when fame and wealth had come to him he showed how dear the old place was to him by wise and generous benefactions for the friends of his early life. His last earthly resting-place in the churchyard, surrounded by his kindred, is marked by a plain stone with a simple inscription, with not so much as a hint of how great and good a man lies buried there.

In closing the account of this visit, let me add a word as to the past of



this ancient village. It was once of much greater importance than now. There were three places, which together formed the liberty of the Sokens, and this was the chief. The lords of the manor were said to have "the powers of *sac* and *soe* within the liberty." These dreadful powers—we do not know at all what they were—are said to have been used by them long before the Norman Conquest. We have been told the "powers" are nearly all gone now, but the Soken Court is still held at Thorpe under the jurisdiction of the lord of the manor, who proves wills and backs warrants for debt. The Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's, London, were Lords of the Sokens until Henry VIII. relieved them of their property here, and its doubtful privileges of making themselves disagreeable. In the church is a "good effigy," but no one we saw knew when he lived or who he was, for certain, "but he used to be called 'the King of Landmer Hall.'" But that is part of another story we hope to unravel at some future time.

V.

EVERYBODY—that is to say every Londoner—knows Clacton-on-Sea, beloved of the cheap tripper by boat and rail. Are we not, through all the summer season, besought by every allurements of mural and newspaper advertisement to take our holiday at Clacton-on-Sea? If we are so poor we can afford but one day in the year, is there anywhere so accessible, where the air and sea are so bracing or we can get such a lot of good things for our money? Our Clacton to-day, however, is not the popular watering place, but a pleasant old-world village of the same name, a few miles inland. With the advent of June the wintry winds of May took their departure, and like a pent-up stream the summer just burst upon us. One old gentleman gravely informed us that "the Zodiac, like the Strand, had been taken up for repairs, and the seasons, like the 'buses, had been going round some other way; but it's all right again now!"

The day was simply perfect—superb. Every living thing rejoiced that summer was indeed come at last. As for ourselves, with the



white dusty road beneath our feet, and a long walk from the station, we were glad to reach our journey's end, where rest and shade could be had. This is a village that has not been improved out of all recognition. The old cottages, thatched, patched, tarred or painted to make them weatherproof, still remain apparently just as they were a century ago. The tiny church, with its old

wooden turret all askew, worn and scarred by many a winter's storm and mellowed by many a summer's sun, is quite in keeping with everything else in the place.

Miss E. E. and her mother live in what is probably the smallest cottage in the parish, just filling the gap between the village grocery and the inn. The mother is eighty-two, and but for chronic rheumatism, a hale and good-looking old lady with plenty of mental vigour left to enable her to take the keenest interest in her widely scattered children, and in all the people about

her besides. She told us how her first husband died from cancer after two years' illness, leaving her "a widow at twenty-eight, with five little children to bring up, and not only impoverished by his long sickness, but burdened with debt." She resolved upon carrying on her husband's business, but found it a terrible struggle to get and keep her head above water; she persevered, however, and



MISS E. E.

succeeded in doing both. A few years later she married again and had a second family. Some of her children are in the Colonies; two sons live near by, one of whom owns "the village smithy," not standing "under a spreading chestnut tree," but shaded by *three* (in full bloom when we were there), and lying beneath them or leaning against each other, all the picturesque odds and ends of agricultural implements out of gear which have a way of gathering themselves together in and around a blacksmith's shop.

Both mother and daughter are very feeble, neither of them being able to assist the other. Miss E. E. has the whole of one side of her body affected by paralysis. Sometimes she is able to move her arm a little, and to use her fingers, but this, at most, is but a temporary relief from the almost continuous inability to which she had been accustomed for over twenty years. At the head of her couch she has a small case of books, her friends, who help to beguile the slowly passing hours of pain and weariness. As a child she suffered from St. Vitus's dance, but recovered and grew quite strong.



When about nineteen, she was appointed mistress of the village school, a position she held for several years. But the work proved to be too hard for her, and a severe illness followed. She had not long resumed her duties when she was suddenly seized with paralysis. She lost her speech and the use of one side. After a time the power of speech returned, and a little strength. At that time she was living with her brother, the blacksmith, and mainly dependent upon him. After keeping her room for two years, her friends thought it would make a nice change for her if she could be got down-stairs. But how was she to be got down? She could not walk, and was frightened at the bare thought of being carried down. "But one of my young brothers, who was tall and strong, said he could do it, and he did, lifting me so carefully that I went down after that whenever I was able." Since her stepfather died she and her mother have lived together. Many kind friends interested themselves in her behalf, and eight years ago succeeded in obtaining the Pension for her, concerning which she said, "It has been a blessing to me, as otherwise I should have been quite



dependent on my brothers and sisters. As they have the care of our mother, and have families of their own, I should have felt myself a burden to them, although I am sure they would have done everything they could for me." It was a pleasure to spend an hour with this interesting family, and to note the strong bond of affection between them. We would have stayed longer, but we had far to go. As we left them, mother and daughter and the two sons all wished that their grateful thanks might be given to their kind benefactors. "It is, of course," one brother said, "a great mercy to poor Ellen, but we are all deeply grateful."

VI.

"It is just seven years since he was able to do a stroke of work," Mrs. R. replied, in answer to our question as to her husband's illness. Those few words tell a sad tale of suffering of body and mind, which he who knows anything of the struggling life of a working tradesman in a small country town will best understand. The little master, dependent upon a jobbing trade for a livelihood, cannot afford to confine his efforts to the few hours which pass for a day with the trade-unionist journeyman. He must miss no chance of work, let no opportunity slip of securing another customer, and however it may interfere with his comfort to be so, he must "be obliging." But how much harder is the life of the small tradesman if he has feeble health, and especially so if, like the man before us, he is a martyr to rheumatic gout, whom poverty compels to work if he can stand and has any use left in his hands. As his powers decline he sees his work being taken by others, and the one time sufficient, if small, income dwindles week by week until it comes to an end. Then the poor fellow has to collect the small accounts owing to him here and there; some after long delay, are questioned, paid in part, or even repudiated. Then, when that source of income is exhausted, he has to part with his tools and trade effects, because there is no likelihood he will ever want them again. He has been hoping, and hoping, to get better, until his business is gone and there is none to sell, for it is already in the hands of other men. All household furniture and garnishing that can possibly be spared goes next, until no more can be parted with, and health, the great pre-requisite to all successful toil, has gone for ever.

I know this is all very commonplace, it is going on almost everywhere and always, but nevertheless it is very dreadful. The actual physical pain and misery endured while the months grow into years, and the depletion of one's means keeps pace with increasing bodily weakness, can only be thought of with a shudder. But add to all this the mental suffering and anxiety, not for one's self so much as for others, for wife and children involved in the same misfortune, then such a life in death becomes a burden, so great that God alone can enable a man to bear it and preserve his sanity. All this, and even more than this, G. R. and his patient, heroic wife have known and borne. There were not wanting those upon whom they had moral, if not legal, claims, who raised their hopes by repeated promises of assistance they never took any trouble to provide, leaving them heart-sick, despairing and destitute. Nothing but faith in God enabled them to bear up, and in mercy He gave them friends upon whom they had no claim but that of common humanity, who have been friends indeed, and chief among them "the Doctor" and his kind-hearted wife. They took his case in hand and spared no efforts to enlist the sympathy of the subscribers to the Hospital in his behalf, and at length secured him the Pension.

That was the red-letter day in the lives of these poor people, when the good news came that henceforth they had something to depend upon. I would that all who worked for them and those who gave them their votes could have some conception of the blessing they had conferred on this worthy pair.

While we sat by the patient's couch and saw his shrunk form, with his joints swathed in cotton wool and his look of patient resignation, what a contrast he presented to the fair scene outside his home! There everything was beautiful and full of gladness. The sunshine, the abundant foliage, the gardens with their wealth of flowers and trees in bloom. The air was heavy with the perfume they exhaled and filled with the songs of the happy birds. The laughter of little children came up to us from the street beneath, so fresh and clear that one might well wonder how pain could have the heart to mar so fair a world.

Bocking, where our friend lives, is a part of Braintree, or, to be more correct, the two places form one considerable country town. It is really a very pretty



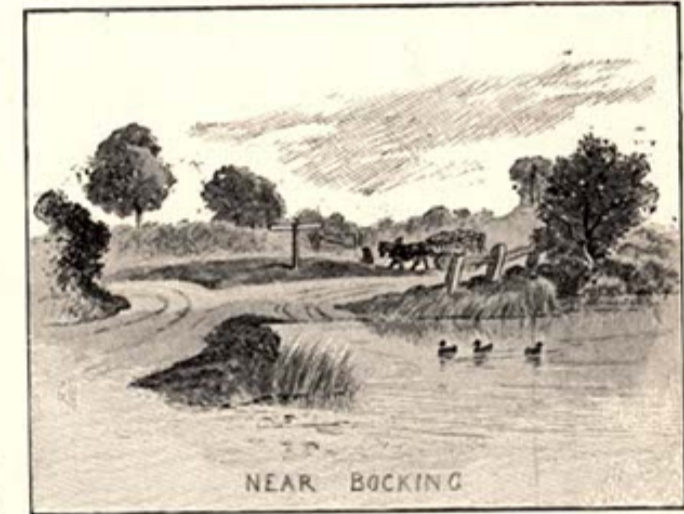
place, and a thriving one too, where those who enjoy quiet and restfulness may find both.

Some years ago a visit to Bath, and later to Buxton, were of great benefit to G. R., but at that time the rheumatic gout had not obtained so complete a mastery. The disease was developed in part by accidents he met with when working at his trade as a plumber—in one of them he fell from a roof and incurred serious injury. On returning home from Buxton, much improved in health by the baths and treatments there, a vehicle collided with the station 'bus in which he was riding, and the shock destroyed all the benefit he had gained by setting up another acute attack of gout. We have seldom heard a sadder tale than was told us here; but sad as it was, like all the discipline of God's children, their long affliction has borne blessed fruit. It has knit the hearts of husband and wife as prosperity could never have done, and drawn them both nearer to God. Before parting we knelt together before the mercy-seat where one day, when life's hard schooling is over, we hope to meet again.



G. R.

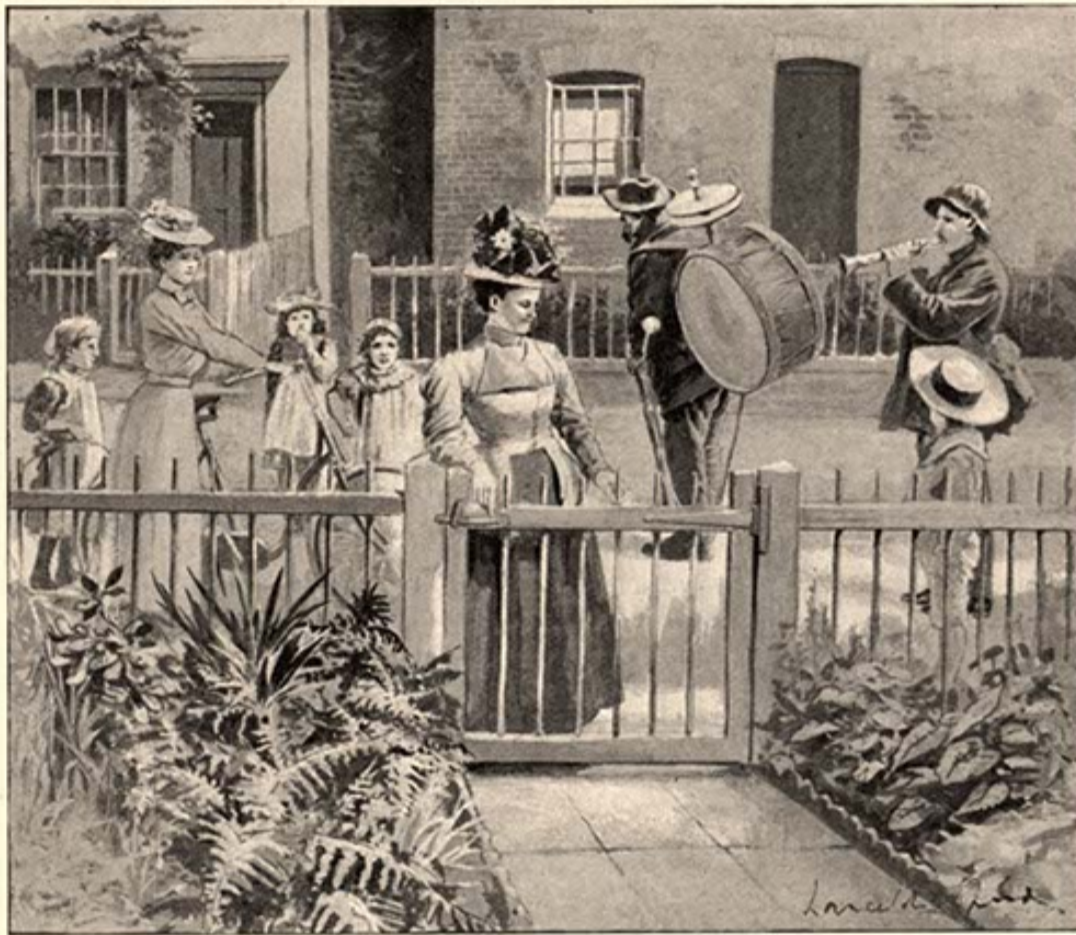
After bidding the patient "good-bye" we had a few last words with his wife downstairs. At the time when the Pension was granted it would appear that everything was at its very worst with them. Mrs. R. herself was very ill for want of nourishment, and it was then that the neighbours vied with each other in caring for her and her husband. They never knew until then how many kind friends were near them and ready to take part of their burdens upon themselves. They would have done so before had they known, but they didn't know, and we had here just one more instance of how much some people will bear rather than proclaim their poverty to the world. This proud reticence, however, may be carried too far. In this case, the husband did not know the worst; she took care of him and denied herself. Yes; and at the same time defrauded good neighbours of the joy of helping them in their affliction. Of course, this was all very wrong, but she has our forgiveness; for this kind of wrong is a good deal nearer being right than drawing dividends from trouble by mendacious publicity with as much assurance as a holder of Consols.



VII.

In the afternoon, after our visit to Bocking, we called on Miss G., who lives just off the road to Coggeshall, to the east of Braintree, and found her awaiting our promised visit. It evidently gave her much pleasure to receive us, as she had wished a long time to see some one who would convey her personal thanks to the Council for the great comfort and help the Pension is to her. Unlike the other sufferers we have visited on this excursion, she has sufficient use of her limbs to move about and to wait upon herself, when the internal malady with which she is afflicted permits her to do so. The disease is intermittent in its action, as there are times when for weeks together it is torture to her to move even from one chair to another, so that, as she told us, she will let the fire go out and sit in the cold rather than risk the pain of replenishing it. When the pain is acute it will sometimes almost deprive her

of the little sight she possesses. At the best she has but "one good eye," and that needs the aid of two pairs of glasses before she can get any work out of it, so it will be readily understood how helpless she is at such times. Just now she has someone sharing her cottage with her for a time, but usually she lives alone. Many of her neighbours are very thoughtful and kind, and she is especially favoured in having a warm friend and supporter of the Hospital



MISS E. G.

living quite near her. This lady takes great interest in her, and often personally ministers to her comfort when she is prostrated by one of her bad attacks. We were very fortunate in the time of our interview, as she said she was "so well it was a treat to have somebody to talk to." We did think of writing *with* in the last sentence, but "to" is the right word, and we wish to be truthful, sometimes. She was very merry and cheerful, and had "lots" to tell us, although the village itself had little to dispel melancholy more stirring than

the occasional advent of an itinerant band. Indeed, she is always bright and lively when pain lets her have a little breathing time and freedom from its clutches, and tries to make the most and best of these brief interludes. We learnt from her account of herself, that previous to her affliction she had been engaged in several houses of business. Perhaps if our legislators had heard her story, the "Shop Assistants' Seats Bill" would have had an earlier chance of becoming law.

Though never very strong, she struggled on for eighteen years, during which her sufferings were often very great. Towards the end of this period she was treated by four different doctors, and as her health did not improve, she was admitted to the Hospital in Soho. Instead of getting relief, as she had been led to hope, she was told her disease was a "cross she would have to carry as long as she lived." This was a heavy blow, as it destroyed all her hope of being able to resume her employment. What made it all the worse to bear, her father and mother, and two other members of her family, died about the same time. She had hitherto had the choice of three homes when her holidays came, now they were all gone. She had invested over sixty pounds of her savings in a land and house company. This was wound-up and she lost it all. Many friends were very good to her under these repeated trials, and she stayed with them sometimes for months together. But as they could not be expected to continue this, and some of them were advanced in years, she was nominated for a Pension in 1889, and it was granted in 1891. This provides her with necessaries, and her friends remember her occasionally in many kindly ways, so that, as she says, not wanting very much of anything, she is really comfortably provided for, and let it be added, she is very grateful for it all. How many times we were enjoined to let it be known what a blessing the Pension is to her, we really cannot say. We know that it is nearly all her living, and that she is quite incapable of adding to her income by any efforts of her own. The prospect before her is by no means a bright one, being, as



she says, quite alone in the world, but for all that she believes God will continue to care for her as long as she is here, and bye-and-bye take her to Himself for ever. So, like the true optimist she is, she makes the best of things, and tries to keep one side of her life bright enough to relieve the dark shadows which have fallen upon her path.

The generous little soul persisted in preparing some tea for us, for which we were grateful, as the day was very oppressive, just to let us see how much she could do when the pain was "off." Of course she had her way, and was all the happier for it. And so were we.

VIII.

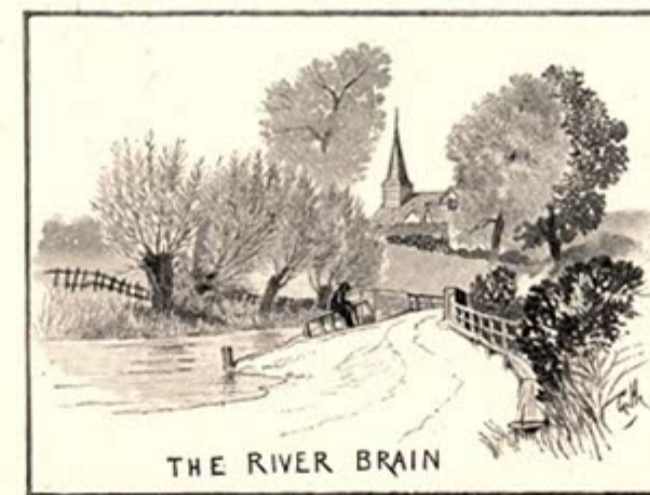
WHAT a place Braintree is for flowers! They are everywhere, and everywhere they appear to thrive. We saw them in old-world gardens in most delightful confusion and in modern examples of order and precision alike. In either case they grew with such luxuriance and *abandon* that one might think they resented control; they had nothing to do but to be beautiful and to exhale their fragrance, and they did both with all their might. In the grounds around some of the larger houses there were masses of colour grouped with most pleasing effect. Hawthorn and lilac, chestnut and laburnum, thrown into strong relief by the dark spring-tipped spines and red boles of Scotch fir, and the slender trunks of beech and plane-tree with their tender greenery, together with lower banks of laurel and ilex. From the withered branch of a tall acacia the mavis trilled his love-song to his mate below, while over all was God's fair heaven flecked with slowly-drifting cloudlets of fleecy gold. On every side of the town, but especially to the north and west, the country is very beautiful, undulating, and well-wooded. Just now the meadows are ripening for the haysel and the cornlands promise an abundant harvest. This is an ideal place for an inland holiday. It is easy of access, and yet fresh and unspoiled; with good roads, beloved by cyclists, and pleasant field



paths to outlying hamlets. In the town itself, there is a public park in which one may follow the active sports of youth, with a good bowling green for the more sedate and leisurely, and for all, the charm of an old garden full of quiet resting-places in shady, sheltered nooks. To those who can enjoy a holiday without the crowd and noise of the shore we would say let them come hither.



But we are on the way to see yet another of our friends again, an E. G., before turning our faces homeward. The contrast between this one and the last we visited is very great. She is *petite*, full of vivacity and restless activity of mind and body, as soon as the pain is away. This poor sufferer is a comely, middle-aged woman, of large build, who impressed us as one borne down by the weight of an intolerable burden, helpless and quiet. She can do nothing but wait, and be still; and this she has now been doing for five years. She is affected with an incurable internal malady, which shows no mercy, and allows of no respite from its cruel demands upon her patience and fortitude. She had very little to say of herself, but much of the devoted love and service of the good soul with whom she lives; and, like the others we have seen here, she is warm in her grateful acknowledgment of the doctor's unselfish attention, for he is a Good Samaritan to them all. She made her first start in life as a mother's help, but for the last eighteen years she has lived with her friend and companion, who is a shirt-maker, while she herself followed the dress-making. Eight years ago a very severe attack of influenza revived an old spinal weakness from which she had suffered as a child, the result of a fall



downstairs. Then she met with an accident, which caused serious internal injuries, followed by two years of intense suffering. Subsequently she underwent an operation, which, proving unsuccessful, left her quite helpless. For the last five years she has been confined to her bed or couch. Just now she has a little use in her arms, so as to be able to write, and, with her sticks, can manage sometimes to get across her room unaided. To quote her own words: "I can never feel grateful enough to those dear friends who helped me to



MISS E. G.

obtain, or to those who accepted my application and granted me the Pension a year ago. I am glad for myself of all the help it is to me, but still more for the sake of my friend here. By her own efforts, she earned a living for us both, kept on our little home, and nursed me like a mother. All this has told on her health, for she is no longer young, so that she cannot follow her business; but by letting a couple of rooms to lodgers, and with the Pension, we manage to live."

Her simple unaffected gratitude was very touching. She wanted to say so

much more, but words failed her; and they were not needed, we understood. Of one thing we felt sure, as we took our departure—every supporter of the Pension Fund will be glad to know that this afflicted woman and her devoted friend enjoy its benefit.

IX.

It was a delightful afternoon in June when seven of us were taking tea together under the pendulous boughs of a group of walnut-trees, in an old-fashioned garden in Maldon. The soft, springy turf was our carpet, we had foliage for walls and roof in every gradation of tint, from olive-green in the shade to golden amber toward the west, where it tempered the sun's fierce glare and heat. Like Wordsworth's little friend, we were seven, by a reckoning of our own.

There was the pensioner we had specially come to see, and also her sister. Next, a good friend of the Hospital, who was taking a short holiday in the neighbourhood and whom we were pleased to have join our party. Then there was an artist friend, who had "biked" over from Burnham-on-Crouch, and another brother of the brush from town; the scribe who records the event; and "Don," an old brown dog, the invalid's inseparable friend and guard. Our acquaintance, though brief, was long enough for esteem and good-fellowship. We had met that we might know one another personally as well as from correspondence. The chief interest of the gathering centred in the invalid in the wheel chair in which she had travelled from the house at the other end of the garden. It is seventeen years since she was able to walk, and now she cannot even stand. Her hands, once shapely and deft, are now so twisted and swollen as to be of little use. By employing one of the plunger or atmospheric teapots, such a boon to weak wrists and crippled fingers, she was able to preside at table. We could see it was a real pleasure to her to entertain her guests, and we were equally well pleased to be there. Before us was a path edged with flints and bordered with flowers, and beyond the flowers, on either hand,



a well-kept kitchen garden. This path leads up to the porch, which is almost hidden below by its living drapery of honeysuckle, climbing roses, and large purple clematis. The upper part of the porch forms a balcony which commands a fine view of the Blackwater with its winding estuary, the pleasure boats, sailing barges, and wide-spreading saltings or sea marshes, the winter resort of thousands of wildfowl. This house, old, square-built, and compact, is where the invalid was born, and has been occupied by her family for nearly fifty years. Her father, who was a master mariner, bought the owner's life-



interest in the property, and as the vendor is now over eighty years of age and very feeble, the sisters, whose home it has been so long, may have to remove at any time, as their tenancy will cease when he dies. This is a source of great anxiety to them for various reasons. Naturally, they are strongly attached to the old place,

the only home they have known. Then it is large and comfortable; and the elder sister, by letting rooms to artists in summer and wildfowl sportsmen in winter, has been able to earn her own livelihood, as well as to look after the invalid. To take another house, large enough for them to let any part of it, would involve them in responsibilities they fear to incur.

To those who have health and means, what is a trouble to these poor women would be a trifle causing scarcely any anxiety, but in their case it is a very serious matter. When their father was alive they were in very comfortable circumstances. He died when the pensioner was only a few months old, leaving a widow and seven children with but slender provision for their maintenance. In course of time her surviving brother became the hope of the family. Like his father he followed the sea, and became a master mariner, but to their great grief and loss he was cut off in his prime.

When quite a girl, E. R. took a situation as nurse to an invalid boy, and had good health until she was about twenty-two. Then rheumatism and gout slowly yet surely took away the use of her limbs, and notwithstanding hydropathic treatment and every known remedy, she derived no permanent benefit. By the time she was twenty-five it was apparent that she would never again be able to do anything to earn her own living. Her brother undertook to provide for her, and did his part generously and well until his untimely

death. Her mother was already advanced in years and in failing health. The bereavement was more than she could bear, for he was the last of her sons, the comfort and stay of her old age—and he was gone. Her two daughters were still left, but one of them was hopelessly afflicted, quite unable to help herself, and needing every care and attention. The elder daughter now became the bread-winner, and succeeded in keeping their home together, as well as providing for and nursing the two invalids. Only a very clever, capable woman, blest with good health, could have done all this. It was a long and fearfully hard struggle for the next five years, and then the mother died, and they were left alone.

When the application for the Pension was made, soon after the mother's death, they were in very straitened circumstances, partly owing to her long affliction. Every day was full of anxiety for them, from which there seemed no escape. It was then they discovered how many friends they had—and that even total strangers who heard of their troubles could feel for them and interest themselves in their behalf. "To all those who helped me then—I might say helped us," said Miss R., "I wish you would kindly convey our warmest thanks, so that they, and all who were instrumental in obtaining this great comfort for us, may really know how grateful we are to every one of them."

It was very distressing to see this bright intelligent woman, so keenly



observant, and full of real interest in all about her, condemned to a life of suffering inactivity and dependence on others. We were glad to hear that the artists and others who come and go, are good friends to her in many ways, thus helping to brighten what would otherwise be a very monotonous existence.

The invalid has our warmest sympathy in all the long years of suffering and weakness which have fallen to her lot, but we have at least equal admiration for her devoted and heroic sister. What but the divine impulse of unselfish love could have sustained her under such long and heavy trials; and she is always the same, just as patient and tender to-day as at the beginning. The granting of the Pension two years ago, by providing for the sufferer, has lightened this brave woman's burden; and who will say the money was not well-bestowed? In prospect of the necessity of seeking another home it (the Pension) is the one bright spot in their future, or, as the invalid poetically put it, "The silver lining in the darkest cloud." We sincerely hope and pray that God will mercifully disperse their fears, and that they may prove in their experience (what so many of us have proved in ours) that God has always some good in store for His children, unthought of by them, which he never fails to give when the time comes.

As we could not leave Maldon that night, we took the opportunity of seeing all we could of this quaint and unspoiled old town. We do not wonder that so many painters come here! Whether seen from the Blackwater or the saltings as "set on a hill" and straggling down to the shore, or reversing the point of view and looking over the town from above to the haven below, or whether studied in detail, bit by bit, there are sketches and pictures everywhere, and an abundance of colour. Then there is the riverside, best seen at low water, strewn with the decaying craft of a more prosperous past, where the ancient mariners who sailed them potter about and smoke, fancying they are at work. Further out are the wide saltings and the islands, with far-off fringes of tall poplars dimly seen through the haze, out of which the white masts and brown sails of the coasters come slowly creeping up with the tide.

Among the many charming inland walks we chose that through the fields on the hillside to the ruins of Beeleigh Abbey and Mill, where there are locks and weirs, bridges and old pile-work, with gnarled hawthorns and pollards galore. Thence to the town again by the river-side and the golf links, as the white mist rose from the watermeadows when the sun sank behind the tall elms and poplars in our rear, throwing them into strong relief against a pale saffron sky. How lovely everything was that night! and in its calm repose, its perfect content, what a rebuke to the world's feverish seeking and unrest.

Somehow it seemed to help one to a better understanding of our Lord's words, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."

X.

SIBLE HEDINGHAM is not more than twenty miles from Maldon by a bee line, but by the Great Eastern Railway, *plus* the long waits at the Junctions, it is almost a day's journey. By driving across from one branch line to another, we shortened our route and retained the natural sweetness of our tempers. For that drive of eight or nine miles was through a delightful stretch of country, under over-arching wych-elms, by farms and villages, and pretty roadside cottages with gardens, which made us long for a continuance of the calm delights of a peaceful rural life. We had a little mine of local lore in our driver, which we worked with a will. Like our old friend "Becky Sharp," we "asked for information." He was not much to look at, 'tis true, and, like Uncle Remus' "little brown jug," the outside of him "was that *desatful* nobody could tell from looking at him what he had or hadn't inside him." A little mummified old man, yellow-skinned as a last-year's apple, with nut-cracker profile and tiny bead-like eyes, erect and dignified, his appearance promised nothing; but for all that he was brimful of information.

Sible Hedingham is a large village of one long street, with several outlying hamlets. Many of the houses are very ancient, worth more to the man who could put them on canvas than to the owner, and, from a sanitary point of view, much pleasanter to look at in a picture than to live in. We saw them at their best, when the magic wand of summer had clothed them with roses and woodbine, wisteria, and many another



SIBLE HEDINGHAM



HOME OF E.P.



MISS E. P.

climbing plant, which, not content with glorifying the mud and wattle walls of poor men's homes, climbed on to the roofs and did their best to beautify the rather broken thatch.

The pensioner, E. P., whom we came to see, lives in a cottage close on the village street. We stepped up from the roadway into the living room, and thence, *via* the scullery and a boxed-in staircase of marvellous design and workmanship, to her bedroom. How that staircase has held together all these years is a marvel. It did not creak, it fairly groaned all the while we were on it. That was bad enough, but the ceiling was worse. It was the White Sea, with a swell on it, only upside down, and threatening to overwhelm the patient and everything in the room. The landlord is willing to put up a new one, but what is to be done with the poor woman while the work is in progress? She is such a wreck from nervous exhaustion that at the time of our visit it was doubtful if she could bear removal to another room, or the noise while the work is in progress. Her case is a very sad one, though the story of it is soon told. She is now just forty years old, and she was delicate from her childhood.

She managed to learn dressmaking, and worked at it until she was twenty-two, when she had to abandon her work through spinal weakness, which confined her to her bed. After ten years of extreme debility she became speechless, and lost all power in her limbs, and so remained for two years. She was living at home with her parents, who were very poor and aged. Her elder sister had to leave her situation and come home to wait upon them and the invalid. Soon afterwards both parents were called to their rest, and the two sisters were left destitute of any means of support. For some time they were provided for by the kindness of several ladies and gentlemen in the neighbourhood, who also interested themselves in obtaining the Pension for her, which was granted about two years ago. Both sisters are deeply grateful for the help thus afforded them. It is all they have to depend upon. Our visit was necessarily a short one, as it was doubtful if the sufferer would be able to see us at all. Her weakness is of such a kind that her sister cannot leave her. If she knew that she was alone in the house there is no telling how it might affect her, and so for six years the other one has "never left home even so much as to post a letter."

Their house is a very poor one, but loving hands have made the best of it; nothing is left undone which neatness and taste could suggest and their means supply to make it a home. No one can tell how long the need for the Pension may continue, for they are both scarcely middle-aged women as yet. The end may come at any time, or this poor helpless woman may live for many years. But, whatever may be the issue, it is a great mercy she has something to depend upon and such a devoted sister to nurse and care for her.

As we hastened to the station, that we might find quarters for the night, we had right before us on the hill the Castle of Headingham, lifting its head high above the trees, a witness in its ruins to the wealth and splendour of a feudal lord.



XI.

THE next pensioner visited by us lives at Clare, in Suffolk, just on the outskirts of the town. In many things her case resembles the one last described. She is now forty-three, and has suffered from spinal disease since she was eighteen. For twenty-five years she has been quite incapable of doing any work, and for many years past has been confined to her bed, unable to take any solid food, or to assist herself in the slightest degree. She is wasted almost to a skeleton, the bones of her hands and wrists showing with painful distinctness. In addition to her spinal affliction she is troubled with irregular action of the heart, which causes her very great distress.

She was able to converse with us a little, but her voice was so weak and low that we missed a good deal of what she tried to tell us. Her home is a modern cottage pleasantly situated, with a pretty flower garden in front, and



MISS E. A. H.



as she lies in bed she can look across the meadows to the railway and the open country beyond. Her room is bright and sunny, and everything in it nicely arranged and homelike.

The story of her life has nothing striking or eventful in it. Her father was station-master at a little place on one of the branch lines of the Great Eastern Railway, and while he lived she was comfortably provided for. Both he and his wife came of a weak and consumptive stock, and their children were like them, of whom the pensioner and her sister are the sole survivors. Here, too, as in the last case, we have one sister, herself very weakly, giving up everything to nurse the other. On the father's death they and their invalid mother were left without any means of support. By doing needlework, as well as waiting on both invalids, Miss H. did what she could to provide for their little home. Her strength gave way under the double strain, and when she also was laid aside, the mother died. A lady who knew of the terrible plight they were in, kindly provided them with a nurse until Miss H. recovered. They also received much kindness from other ladies, and steps were taken by them to bring the case of the younger sister before the supporters of the Royal Hospital for Incurables. Her election was secured in the following year—November, 1890—and from that time they have not known

anything of the terrible privation they had previously endured. But for the Pension one of them, if not both, must have sought admission to the poor-house. The Grant relieved them of all fear of that humiliation, for which they did not know how to be sufficiently thankful. It is gratifying to find that those who came to their help when things were at their worst with them, are still their good friends and assist them in many kindly ways. Apparently, this poor woman finds the greatest comfort in believing that no one could have better and kinder friends than those whom God had given her, and for whom she said, "I praise and bless Him every day."

There are many mementoes of happier times in their little home; trifles perhaps, but indicative of taste and refinement, and much prized by them. One we were told "was dear mother's," and another "belonged to father; he set great store by that." It was plain to us that they lived very much in the past; it was pleasanter to them than to-day, though the Pension has made life

so much easier for them. How true it is that our happiness and enjoyment here depend much more upon loving and being loved by our own, than upon any material advantages we may possess.

We spent the time we had to spare that evening, as well as the early hours of the following morning, in seeing as much as possible of this ancient Suffolk town.



CLARE CASTLE

There are many very old houses here, some of them dating from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and they are good examples of the domestic architecture of those times. There was much to interest us in their construction and ornamentation, and though no County Council surveyor would "pass" such buildings to-day, they are far and away better buildings even now, and from every point of view, than those of recent erection for people in the same rank of life. These old homes are beautiful—they were intended to be homes which those who lived in them could love and feel proud of, and not mere boxes with slate lids which would pay so much per cent. on the outlay.

Our chief interest, however, was in the mounds and ruins of the famous

castle of the De Clares and the adjacent Priory. From the mound upon which the keep or inner bailey stood we could trace the general plan of this great fortress, which was not only the home of one of the most powerful earls of his time, but also one of the chiefest of the strongholds in East Anglia.

Time has wrought some wonderful changes here. The railway runs through the middle of the ancient enclosure, and the station, with its outbuildings and sidings, now occupies what was the tilt-yard, when mailed knights on their war-horses were heralded as they entered the lists to contend in the tourney for the prize of my lady's favour. But now,

"Their bones are dust,
Their swords are rust,
Their souls are with the saints, we trust."

One of the daughters of Edward I., the one born at Acre, the fair Joanna, came here as the bride of Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester and premier noble of England. Doubtless there was high revelry here when the chivalry and beauty of the land escorted her hither and were entertained within the castle walls. In after years, she built a beautiful chapel to the Priory outside the castle grounds, in which at length she was buried. Her brother, Edward II., and most of the nobility of England, were here at her funeral. Here, too, the record says, "were afterwards interred many Royal and noble persons."

The Priory Chapel is now a barn, and affords shelter to a farmer's implements of husbandry.

A narrow path between cottagers' gardens, skirting a hedge of hawthorn and roses, leads to a bank across the castle moat, and thence to the postern door, to pass which we paid a penny for the use of the key, and for one brief hour had the whole keep to ourselves, and so while one sketched the other dreamed dreams and saw visions.

"*Sic transit gloria mundi.*"



THE STOUR AT CLARE

XII.

LEAVING Clare by the morning train, a ride of a few miles down the valley of the Stour, with pleasant glimpses of this beautiful river, brought us to Sudbury, an ancient Suffolk town. An old resident told us that they were pretty well off for most things, but they were sadly in need of an earthquake as a public benefactor. On the way there the line passes two famous villages: Cavendish with its many-gabled and quaint "Old Vicarage," whence the learned Dr. Syntax, mounted on his sorrel mare and with well-filled saddlebags, set out on his "tour in search of the picturesque," in which he met with much unforeseen adventure; and Long Melford, immortalised by Borrow

in his account of Lavengro's fearful contest with "the flaming tinman."

We left Sudbury on foot for the village of Bulmer, on the Essex side of the Stour, and lying on the further slope of a wood-crowned hill.

The summit reached, a short walk across a meadow and through the beautiful churchyard brought us to a large thatched cottage standing with its front to its garden and its back to the village street, in a very minding-my-own-business sort of way. This is where M. A. P.

lives, the object of our quest. She was standing in the doorway, and after greeting us most cordially bade us follow her within. We noticed that she walked with great difficulty leaning heavily on any piece of furniture within her reach.

"How did I come to be so lame, did you ask? I was but six years old, sir, when it happened. There was a stool in the way, and I ran against it and hurt my knee. Nobody thought much of it at the time, but it set up a white swelling, *that it did*. It is above sixty years ago, but I remember it all as though it was only last week. A few months afterwards they took me to Colchester Hospital, and the doctors cut my leg off. There was no chloroform in those days, and the doctors told me I bore the pain well and was a good child, and I had seven shillings and a sixpence given me by different doctors before I left. Losing my leg made me a very delicate child and I was not strong enough to go to school half my time. When I got old enough I



M.A.P.'S COTTAGE

tried to do dress-making, and worked at it on and off a good many years until my mother had the rheumatic fever. Then I had to nurse her and to look after my father. It was hard work me being so lame, but I did it, and got about and up and down the best I could. Mother was never able to get up again, for she was set fast in her joints and couldn't help herself; I even had



MISS M. A. P.

to feed her, poor dear, she was that afflicted; but for all that she lasted ten years and laid abed all the time. After she died, I waited on dear father until his death, which was fourteen years ago, last March. He was ninety-one when he died, and if he'd lived till now, he would have been a hundred and six years old. Father fought at Waterloo; he was what they call a Waterloo veteran, and might have had a pension years and years before he did, but he wouldn't apply for it, for he used to say "nobody ought to take a pension as long as he can work." He was a very strong man, and could do

without it better than some men. You see that big field over there? Well, he was mowing wheat in that field when he was turned eighty; and you know mowing wheat is reckoned hard work for young men, and he, though so old, did his part like the rest."

Here the old lady paused for breath and gave us an opportunity of asking a few questions about her father and herself. "It was the Colonel who got him the Pension; he lives over there in the big house the other side the Hill. He



said to him, 'You ought to have a pension and take things a bit easier; you have worked long enough.' So he and one or two more took the matter up and it was soon done, and he had ten-and-sixpence a-week for the rest of his life. He was a good man, and brought us all up in the fear of God. I said to him once, 'What shall I do when it pleases God to take you?' and he told me to put my trust in God and I should always have a friend, and so I have proved."

"Did he ever tell you any tales of Waterloo?" "Yes, *that* he did. As long back as I can recollect he used to talk to us about that dreadful day. There was father's comrade who was on the horse in front of him. When they had got the guns in position on the top of the hill he turned round and said, 'The French will have a job to get through us now,' and a bullet struck him in the mouth that moment. Father, he got hit too, but his was in the shoulder; the surgeon bound it up for him, and he went into the fight again till it was all over. When night came he thought he would have died of hunger and thirst, for he had lost all his rations early in the day. When he was searching some of the soldiers' bags for food, one man begged him to get him some water or he would die. Father couldn't get any water, but he found a little wine in one flask and some brandy in another man's, and a dead Frenchman had some biscuits in his bag, which father shared with the man, and he recovered of his wounds and knew him again afterwards. Father might have stayed behind with the other wounded, but he went on with the army, and never got his own wound properly dressed until they entered Paris."

We were told, too, how the local gentry always remembered the old man on Waterloo Day, and sent him what they called his "Waterloo dinner" and presents of money besides. "And now," the old lady added, "they send me

my 'Waterloo dinner,' for having had it with father so long they say I 'might miss it if they didn't remember me.'"

"You may indeed say so, sir! I have lots of friends, and they are all very kind to me. God is good; and though I'm only a poor, ignorant woman, they never seem to think of that, but talk to me just as freely as if I belonged to them. One told me the other day I ought not to be here alone, but have somebody with me. But I am never alone. I sit here and think about God and the way He has provided for me, until sometimes it seems as if God were really in the room with me. I cannot do much besides sit and think, and I cannot think of any one better than God: After mother died, I couldn't bear to think my dear old father should work for me, so I took up the dress-making again; but I soon got erysipelas in my eyes, and then rheumatism settled in my wrists, and since then



I've had to give it all up, for I can't see and I can't sew. Some of my kind friends set to work and got me the Pension. While they worked for it there was them who said to me, 'You'll never get it.' But I prayed for it, and when the election was on, I prayed all day long. About 6 o'clock the coachman up at the Hall came in and asked if I had heard anything. 'No,' I replied. 'Then you won't,' he said.

"I suppose I must have looked pretty bad, for he at once said, 'Look at that,' as he put a telegram into my hand; but I could not see to read it, so he read it for me. It had been sent to his master to say I *was* elected. Oh, what good news that was! I felt so sure I should be, because I had prayed for it so long; and then for him to tell me I shouldn't hear any more about it. Of course, he only did it to tease me; but he was sorry after, and I forgave him."

What a contrast this one-legged old lady was to the two previous pensioners visited by us. Though more than twenty years older than either of them, excepting her weak sight and wrists, she is hale and strong and full of good spirits. When we arrived she met us at the door with such a hearty greeting, and almost before we were over the threshold expressed her delight at being able to speak to somebody from London, to thank them herself for the Pension

she enjoyed. It was very delightful to enter her large comfortable sitting-room and escape from the heat and fierce light of the sun. We had walked over from Sudbury, two miles, but the heat must have lengthened them as well as expanding other things, for they were very long miles indeed. It was a real treat to sit in the shade and listen to her tales of the past, especially to those which concerned her father. She showed us a carefully treasured copy of a local newspaper, giving an account of her father's funeral, and bearing tribute to the old soldier's modest worth and to the respect and esteem in which he was held.

We would fain have stayed longer, but those long miles had to be walked again, and there was the train to be taken for Ely, *en route* to Boston, so we took our leave, followed by this good old soul's heartiest benediction.

XIII.

FREISTON shore is on the western side of the Wash, in Holland, otherwise the south-eastern part of Lincolnshire. This county is like Gaul, "it is divided into three parts," but of these three parts one is called "Holland." Like the other Holland farther off, from whence are brought Dutch cheeses and many other good things, it is a low-lying land, where the rivers are banked up in order to keep them to their proper channels, and the sea is kept out by dykes, extending some fifty miles along the coast. Freiston shore lies just inside the largest of these dykes, known locally as "The Roman Bank," as it is reputed to have been originally constructed by those great conquerors and colonisers, who were much in evidence here. This dyke is a splendid monument to their engineering skill and enterprise, for it shows accurate knowledge of tidal action, and made possible the reclamation of thousands of acres of the most productive land in England, which formerly was overflowed by the tide twice in every twenty-four hours.

There was a great inundation here in the thirteenth century, when it is said large numbers of Frieslanders were brought over to repair the breaches caused by the sea. They were settled here while the work was in progress, and their memory is perpetuated in the name of the place.

A few weeks before the date of our visit, one of the pensioners, W. G. A., removed hither from the opposite side of the Wash. We spent a pleasant hour with him and his devoted sister, in their little cottage, which they hope will be

a home to them as long as they need one. Unlike many of the friends we have visited, he has had an eventful and chequered career. His father was a surgeon, and died comparatively young, leaving a widow and six children very slenderly provided for. His mother, the daughter of an organist of repute, taught music to support herself and her fatherless little ones, all of whom were weakly from their birth. Three of them died when quite children, one has lately passed away in America, the mother has been dead some years; the pensioner and his sister alone remain.

In course of time, by the help of friends W. G. A. was articled to a solicitor, but his health failing he was advised to take a spring voyage. He set sail for Quebec in a vessel which proved to be a veritable coffin-ship, one of those wretched craft the crew could only keep afloat by incessant work at the pumps. The passage was therefore a long one, and when they had been six weeks at sea, and were nearing the Gulf of St. Lawrence, they were surrounded by floe ice, the bows of the ship were stove in, and ten minutes after the collision, she went to the bottom, taking six out of the twenty souls on board with her.

It was a case of *saute qui peut!* The Captain and eleven men escaped in the only serviceable boat; W. G. A. and another man leaped overboard and clambered on to the ice. They succeeded in attracting the attention of those in the boat, who returned and rescued them from their perilous position. They were picked up by a passing vessel after being twenty hours in an open boat without food or shelter, and some days after were put on shore. They were no sooner landed than our friend fell down insensible, and for some days afterwards was unable to walk, but he soon recovered and apparently was little the worse for his hardships. He took the first employment he could get, and after many vicissitudes went as far west as St. Louis, where he obtained employment in a lawyer's office, resumed his studies and in two years was admitted to practise as a solicitor. He



afterwards settled in Chicago, where he soon attained a good position and became the chief support of his mother and sister at home in England. Then came the great fire in Chicago, in 1871, by which he was a heavy loser, but he soon made good his losses and was more prosperous than before. He next became legal adviser to the mortgage department of three associated banks, a position which brought him an income of at least a thousand pounds a year. Everything seemed to promise fair for the future. He married and had a few prosperous and happy years. But this good fortune was not to last. One of those disastrous financial panics, formerly so frequent in America, swept over the country; and again our friend was stripped of all he possessed, and within a few weeks his wife and two children died. He was not strong enough to bear up against such a succession of calamities and a long illness followed, which deprived him of the use of his legs. As children he and the other members of his family had suffered from creeping paralysis, which now returned, and it slowly dawned upon him that his case was without remedy; he was incurably afflicted. He managed to return to England, and for a time he was entirely dependent upon those he had formerly supported. As he still had the use of his hands he learnt to work a stocking-knitting machine, and for some few years was able to contribute to the maintenance of the home. Then he lost the use of his hands, but his sister kept a home over his head by the machine, and not only supported him, but became his devoted nurse, giving up her whole life to him. Up to this time he had never heard of the Royal Hospital for Incurables at Putney. Then a clergyman, a friend of his family, brought it to his notice and offered to take up his case. The offer was joyfully accepted, and, with the assistance of many other kind friends, the Pension was secured for him and he has had the comfort of it for the last five years. At one time his mind

was seriously affected; but surely this was no wonder, considering the vicissitudes through which he had passed. But that dark cloud has disappeared, and though he is gradually becoming physically more helpless and dependent upon his sister, both his mind and general health are better than they have been for some years past.



W. C. A.'s Cottage

Of course the Pension is the main support of their home. To this Miss A. is able to add a little by the knitting-machine, but as her brother needs a great deal of help and attention at her hands, this does not amount to much. They just manage to live, but they are thankful and even cheerful, because they have learnt to bow their heads to the storm in humble submission to Him without whom "not a sparrow falls to the ground."



W. G. A.

The condition of this poor man is very sad, but it would be much more so but for the Pension. Without it he would be compelled to spend the rest of his days in a workhouse infirmary, while now he has privacy, and his comfort is cared for by his sister, who cheerfully does all that can be done to alleviate his terrible affliction. No one could see how happy they are together in their little home without rejoicing with them that they need not be separated; for which mercy it were indeed hard to tell which of them is the more grateful.

Before setting out on our return to Boston we walked on the dyke and attempted to get down to the shore, but this proved to be more difficult than we anticipated. The tide was out, and between us and the water lay nearly half a mile of flat hard mud. This was almost entirely covered with a thick growth of samphire of a tender greyish green. The sea water, in draining away after every tide, has worn little channels for itself of a foot or so in width and depth; these run into larger ones, and these again into little creeks of unknown depth. This vast expanse, everywhere veined and ribbed like a leaf, extends north and south as far as the eye can see. The great beds of samphire are outlined with a deposit of glistening salt, with the brown mud below, and the effect is desolate and weird in the extreme. These Lincolnshire saltings, like those further south, are the winter resort of aquatic wild fowl of every description. We returned to Boston by another route and had further evidence of the fertility of the reclaimed land in the splendid crops ripening for the harvest.

And now, in conclusion, to revert to our friends of an hour whom we have endeavoured to describe just as they are, and amid the surroundings of their daily lives. Of the thirteen pensioners whom we visited two only can by any chance get out of doors without assistance, and these only with difficulty and at the certain cost of much subsequent suffering. Then there are those who have to lie just where they are placed, and who are dependent upon others for everything; while a few are able to get from their bed to a couch, and no more. The brighter side to these sad pictures of human suffering and infirmity is seen in the unstinted loving care and devoted service which is at the call of nearly every one of these poor pensioners.



Over and above the many mercies enjoyed in addition to health, it is permitted to those to whom these words come to have a part in providing for the 680 afflicted ones assisted by the Royal Hospital Pension Fund. Who would not avail himself of the privilege of doing something for those who cannot help themselves? Will it not be a sufficient reward for any sacrifice that may be made if we may but hear Him say, Who gave us all, yea, even Himself, "Ye did it unto Me"?

" We that pass down life's hours so carelessly,
Might make the dusty way a path of flowers
If we would try.
Then every gentle deed we've done or kind word given,
Wrought into gold, would make us wond'rous rich in Heaven."

FINIS.

THE ROYAL
HOSPITAL FOR INCURABLES,
WEST HILL, PUTNEY HEATH.

SEA-SIDE HOUSE, 55, MARINA, ST. LEONARDS-ON-SEA.

Instituted 31st July, 1854.

Patron: HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCE OF WALES, K.G.
President: THE MOST HONOURABLE THE MARQUESS OF NORTHAMPTON.
Treasurer: HERBERT JOHN ALLCROFT, ESQ., F.R.G.S.

This Charity was established to relieve and to cherish, *during the remainder of life*, persons, above the pauper class, suffering from incurable maladies, and thereby disqualified for the duties of life.

For persons *needing a home* an asylum is provided: medical attendance, nursing and domestic comforts are supplied, and the endeavour is made to alleviate suffering, and to cheer the life from which health has departed.

To persons *having a home*, but without the means of support, a pension of £20 a year is given; thus the family circle is unbroken, and the invalid is relieved from the pain of dependence.

There are at present 213 Inmates, and 682 Pensioners. Total, 895.

The Institution is open every week-day for the inspection of Subscribers and Friends, between the hours of Twelve and Six.

Inmates' Visiting Days—Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, from Two to Five, and on Sundays from Two to half-past Three.

TERMS OF SUBSCRIPTION.

An Annual Subscriber has One Vote for Half-a-Guinea, and an additional vote for every additional Half-a-Guinea. A Life Subscriber has One Vote for Life for Five Guineas, and an additional Vote for Life for every additional Five Guineas.

Subscriptions received at the Office, 106, Queen Victoria Street, by the Secretary, Mr. FREDERIC ANDREW, to whom all Orders should be made payable; by the Treasurer; by Messrs. GLYN, MILLS & Co., 67, Lombard Street; and Messrs. COUTTS & Co., 59, Strand.

OFFICES :— 106, QUEEN VICTORIA STREET, LONDON, E.C.

January, 1900.

