

THE WOMEN'S INDUSTRIAL HOME

SOUTHWOOD, SYDENHAM HILL

This is another of the Salvation Army Homes for Women. When I visited Southwood, which is an extremely good house, having been a gentleman's residence, with a garden and commanding a beautiful view, there were about forty inmates, some of whom were persons of gentle birth. For such ladies single sleeping places are provided, with special dining and sitting-rooms. These are supposed to pay a guinea a week for their board and accommodation, though I gathered that this sum was not always forthcoming. The majority of the other inmates, most of whom have gone astray in one way or another, pay nothing.

A good many of the cases here are what are called preventive; that is to say, that their parents or guardians being able to do nothing with them, and fearing lest they should come to ruin, send them to this place as a last resource, hoping that they may be cured of their evil tendencies.

Thus one girl whom I think I saw, could not be prevented from gadding on the streets, and therefore had been placed here. Another young woman was a schoolmistress who would not get out of bed and refused to work. When she came to the Home she was very insolent and

bad-tempered, and would do nothing. Now, I was informed, she rises with the lark, at 6.30 indeed, and works like a Trojan. I could not help wondering whether these excellent habits would survive her departure from the Home. Another lady, who had been sentenced for thefts, was the daughter of a minister. She horrified the Officers by regretting that she had gone to jail for so little, when others who had taken and enjoyed large sums received practically the same sentence. She was reported to be doing well.

Another, also a lady, was the victim of an infatuation which caused her to possess herself of money to send to some man who had followed her about from the time she was in a boarding school. Another was a foreigner, who had been sent to an American doctor in the East to be trained as a nurse. This poor girl underwent an awful experience, and was in the care of the Salvation Army recovering from shock; but, of course, hers is a different class of case from those which I have mentioned above. Another was an English girl who had been turned out of Canada because of her bad behaviour with men. And so on.

It only remains to say that most of these people appeared to be doing well, while many of those in the humbler classes of life were being taught to earn their own living in the laundry that is attached to the Institution.