

say whether such stains were caused by the blood of mammals, but by the accurate tests now possible this great advance, most important in relation to the detection of crime, has been made.

SOCIAL SERVICE.

NURSES NEEDED IN THE HOP FIELD.

Dreamland, is it? The rhythmic thud of the mill wheel, the dewy grass, those crimson dotted apple trees and the flowers in the garden beneath my window seem to belong to a dream-vision, and yet one cannot enjoy its beauty, for past the old mill house there straggles a shuffling, shambling procession of sorry-looking human beings, laden with pots and pans, kettles and bottles, babies and bundles, in fact everything requisite to a family picnic in the hop fields. Most of them have wraps of some kind, but here is one little girl shivering in an old cotton frock, all unfit for this rigorous kind of picnic life in late September. They have come from the neighbouring towns: the Potteries, Cardiff, Bristol, Bath, and even London, trailing their filthy rags and all the vileness of slum life across the loveliness of the sweet West Country. Yet we must not grudge them their holiday, poor things, for that is how they regard the hop-picking, though they have to work hard from sunrise to sunset. The green fields, blue skies, and pure air mean joy and health to very many of them in spite of all their grievances, discomforts and weariness. This is the bright light in a picture which is heavy with terrible shadows.

Generally the pickers are housed in big barns and cattle houses, divided up by partitions of sacking with beds on the floor, also of sacking stuffed with hay or straw. Dark blankets are provided, and in some cases the yards and quarters are well-lighted, which makes for decency and cleanliness. One settlement far out in the fields consisted of rows of bell tents and some sheds. Everywhere the people gather round great fires in the open air, cooking and eating their supper and enjoying the picnic as long as the weather keeps fine. It would be untrue to say that *no provision* is made for wet weather, but on some farms the shelter provided is most meagre, and the pickers coming in wet from the fields are in miserable case. However, conditions vary greatly, and the tone of the people varies according to the accommodation provided. One farmer had a very respectable lot of people lodged in the barns near his house, and there I actually saw a white pillow-case, but the same man had a lower class of people living in wooden shanties in a field under much rougher though quite decent conditions. Another farmer who is more grasping and less conscientious had hundreds of the very lowest class of people herded together with very little light and scarcely any provision for decent cleanliness. Can you wonder that these people lived down to their surroundings? I did see a

woman here washing her children, and I marvelled at what seemed under the circumstances little short of heroism. One could not marvel at the sticky griminess of the other little kiddies as they crowded round making the very air foul even under the open sky of a frosty autumn evening. One could not marvel either at the gathering storm of discontent which broke out at last into open rebellion and violence. The pickers here were a degraded lot, vicious, probably criminal, but still each with a man's right to fair play.

At first we tried to gather the people together at a convenient centre for meetings, but it proved utterly useless for the merely *shabby* people at one farm would not mix with the rabble at another, and both shook their heads over the disreputable crew at a third. So the only way was to visit each farm separately, and the memory of each little meeting stands out as a clear-cut picture with its own unique characteristics and its own picturesque setting. Dulness and monotony were entirely absent, and though many a mischance occurred to disconcert us, we never met with a repulse of any kind from either farmers or pickers. I could not help smiling one night as I climbed on to the top of a huge vat and sat down to talk to the motley crowd, but I soon forgot the humour of the situation in the desperate intentness with which those hungry eyes gazed into mine as I told them of the One who comforts even in bitterest trouble and despair, and one poor soul thanked me afterwards with the tears rolling down her face, and added "We feel as if God had forgotten us out here."

The Worcester branch of the Church of England Temperance Society organisers work in the district on sound practical lines, running tea-tents where most needed, and arranging lantern meetings which the people love. Two years ago two trained nurses did splendid work attending to minor ailments and injuries, but last year they were not able to come, and there was no one to take their place. Doubtless there are other districts, too, where a dispensary would be eagerly welcomed, and the hop fields give ample scope for any and every kind of unselfish ministry. It is said that before long machinery will be introduced and so hand picking will become a thing of the past. Should we not, therefore, rise up quickly and bear to these weary sin-stained crowds the Holy Presence of the Master,

"the shadow of Him love,
The speech of Him soft music, and His step
A benediction"?

EVELINE CROPPER.

The Directors of the Nurses' Hostel Company have received, with regret, the resignation of Miss Hayes, Superintendent of the Hostel, after six years' efficient service. Miss Hayes resigns with the good wishes of many friends for her happiness in her retirement.

Miss Cunningham has been appointed Secretary-Superintendent.

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