

## A LINK WITH THE SETTLEMENT HOME.

### TWO WORTHIES OF BYGONE DAYS.

There passed away within the past few weeks a lady, very dainty and small and vivacious, well known as Sister Kinsey to many members who, in years gone by, took an interest in our Settlement Home and visited the nurses there. She was actually the first member to have a room in the Home and, even in those early days, when she had but reached the age of forty-five, she looked as frail as a flower. Yet she survived all the others who were in the Home at that time and, indeed, most of those who helped to establish it. She went out rarely, but found interest enough in her little room that looked across the gardens to the Church of St. John and the churchyard, ablaze in the summertime with scarlet geraniums. In winter the empty square, the desolate gardens and grey skies served somehow as a fine foil, or so she said, for the brightness of her room with the firelight playing among the china that stood on every shelf. The owls in the churchyard "made music" for her at night and, oh, the blackbirds and the thrushes in the springtime!

"The drawing-room lady" was the name, given by her neighbours in the Home, to Sister Kinsey; it does not sound particularly distinctive, but it suited her old-fashioned, Victorian gentility well. It was always her "privilege," as the first comer to the Home, to act as hostess and to give tea to the Secretary and any other visitors who might go to see the Settlement. This prerogative was jealously guarded and no one in the Home would have dreamed of superseding her. To avoid any chance of visitors going astray there was on her door what was surely the smallest brass knocker ever seen and over it a tiny brass plate with the name "Sister Kinsey" upon it; there could be no mistaking her residence and, when we knocked the door was opened instantly in a way that made us realise that Sister had seen us come up the steps and immediately thereon placed her hand on the door handle. Arrayed in black silk and lace she made a pretty, old-world picture surrounded by her china and with an inviting teatable standing ready with its delicate old china and pretty cloth. What a treasure house that little room was in those days. The glass cupboard was filled with old china. After tea Sister would take her treasures down from the shelf one by one and explain their beauty. Many had been brought from China long ago by some captain of a sailing ship who was related to her grandmother. It was a fine array indeed and visitors always went away from that little room delighted with their entertainment. But, alas, tragedy overtook the china. Sister had for long suffered from a great longing for a piano. We were never quite sure whether this arose from any particular love for music or whether, like the door-knocker, she felt that it would add to the position she held as the acknowledged aristocrat of the Settlement. (Incidentally, she rather insinuated that she was of Huguenot blood and we could well believe it.) But to continue our story—we visited the Home one day and there was Sister Kinsey insistently showing to us the fine points about a piano which she was purchasing "on the hire system." She chattered on busily keeping our attention fixed upon that guilty piano until she was caught up by the abrupt question "Where's your china?" The explanation followed. A man came to see her about the purchase of a piano. Another man followed and the china went off to meet the hire purchase of the piano for a month or two. Vanished was the china and the piano vanished too before very long. Perhaps just as well, for Sister Kinsey became unaccountably (to her) less popular after its advent; indeed, at last she had to agree to have fixed hours for using it and this kind of thing did not prove acceptable to her artistic temperament, nor did it increase her respect for her

fellow members in the Home. "No minds at all," said she. She had found out that they did not appreciate music which "pertained to the beautiful" and Sister was in the habit of pronouncing judgment on the mentality of those whom she met by whether or not they showed appreciation of the beautiful; this was always the measure of their intelligence for her. Curiously enough a nurse, who used to visit the Home, still possesses two tea cups (not particularly old but so delicate that you can almost see through them) which once belonged to Sister Kinsey. We hope that she will bequeath them to the Settlement as a memory of "the drawing-room lady" who was the first occupant of the Home.

After being at the Settlement for many years, Sister decided to go to live in the country, a step for which, during later years, she professed great regret and at times letters came earnestly asking that a room be allocated to her again. But she had become altogether too frail for that. Her letters were always full of gratitude for the happy days she had spent in the Home. Then came a notice that she had been taken into hospital and we felt that we must visit "the drawing-room lady" once again after many years. We found her delightfully comfortable and rejoicing in a dainty pink bed jacket with which the Sister had adorned her. We both lost ourselves in admiration of it many times while we talked; it was all just after the manner in which she used to display the beauty of her china long ago. But we might have spared ourselves the journey so far as Sister Kinsey was concerned, for not for two minutes could we keep her convinced of our identity. Her whole talk was of the Settlement and the years she spent there. There were descriptions, all *couleur de rose*, of the people she knew in the old Settlement days. It is good and pleasant to think how those memories accompanied her up to the Gates of Death; they were all she wanted and full of comfort and joy to her. She never appeared to have any relations, perhaps she knew of none, but she knew no loneliness either.

Very different in type was her great friend Mrs. Carr, who had a room on the same floor at the Home; the two presented the greatest contrast. Mrs. Carr was a matter-of-fact little Scotswoman but one with spirit and imagination too. She had been Lord Lister's night nurse in the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and was never tired of talking of her experiences then. Either in the Infirmary or in some subsequent appointment she, along with the other nurses, had an allowance for beer. The long nights in the wards at the Royal Infirmary brought to her a very great gift—the gift of wonder which remained with her throughout her life. During those nights, in intervals between her duties, she would sit and watch the star-filled heavens. Often she has told with enthusiasm of the joy this was to her and she formed the resolve that some day she would possess a telescope. Inspiration came to her—she would save her beer money and buy one!

At the Settlement Home Mrs. Carr's walls were not covered with china as were those of her friend. A "tall-boy" and a few necessary pieces of furniture were squeezed into the space left vacant by a telescope that seemed to occupy the whole room. Fortunately, the windows at the Home are large and Mrs. Carr never ceased to thank Providence for that. If she opened a drawer or her cupboard there were seen publications and maps of all sorts on astronomy. On each visit we listened to a kind of lecture on the wonders of the stars and their movements at that particular date. In those days Professor Ball was still alive and she possessed his great book. Often in the night her telescope would be moved to the landing where a window looked out in the direction opposite to her own one. She would spend hours there, and, unlike the piano, her telescope appeared not to be in the least disconcerting to her neighbours. If a sound was heard in the passage at

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