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**HINTS**  
**FOR**  
**LADY WORKERS AT MISSION**  
**SERVICES.**

**BY A LADY.**

**EDITED BY THE**  
**REV. A. W. THOROLD.**

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## HINTS FOR LADY WORKERS AT MISSION SERVICES.

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THOUGH the "Mission-week" movement is rapidly spreading, it is still entirely new work to many. Lady workers are frequently asking, "How can we help in a Mission service? What is there for us to do?" May I offer a few very simple hints to such?

As to the spiritual part of our share in the work, I do not venture to offer any, feeling convinced that the only availing counsel will be given by the great Counsellor. No cut-and-dried plan or rules will do; but doubtless He who sends us, as He Himself was sent, "to heal the broken-hearted," and "to set at liberty them that are bruised," will show us the right way, and give us the right word, if we only keep looking to Him for it.

But a few words to those who ask, "How do you set about it?"

We take it for granted that we have been systematically at work beforehand, canvassing our districts, using every means of arousing interest and expectation in all within our reach, uniting in prayer with others, and wrestling continually for the shower of blessing, the real outpouring of the Spirit, which is our heart's desire.

Now for the evening's work. We agree beforehand as to the division of labour, so that no time may be lost in hesitation, and no power be wasted by having too many in one department and too few in another. Two or three of us linger outside the church or schoolroom, before, during, and after the service. Many passers-by, having nothing particular to do, will yield, on the spur of the moment, to a kindly and pleasant invitation to enter. The offer of a hymn-book goes a long way, and the promise of "a seat near the door" is always

an attraction. After service, we watch the countenances as they come out, and we are nearly sure to see some who evidently "rather wish they had ventured to stay" for the After-Meeting. Sometimes a word is enough to decide them to return at once, and still oftener to induce them to step aside, and listen, in the shadow of the porch, to words from which they would timidly shrink in the full glare of the gas-light. Many a young girl has thus been noted, gently drawn aside, pleaded with, brought back into the After Meeting, and blessed.

One or two more workers will sit just inside the door, ready to welcome timid strangers, or to receive those brought in by the workers outside. They will be on the watch, too, for children and others, who will often just peep inside the door if the building is lighted up at an unusual day or hour. A quick eye and bright smile are needed here. When a pew-opener is most wanted, he is sometimes at the other end of the church; so a kindly face

at the door, ready to put the stranger into a near and quiet seat, and supply a hymn-book, secures many a one doubtful about coming in at all, who would perhaps go out if not speedily attended to.

These little services are useful, moreover, as making a sort of introduction, and giving easy openings for speaking to the same persons after service. We have established a connecting link, and may often turn the scale by inviting them to remain for the After Meeting.

When the sermon or address has begun, let us for the time resolutely put away all thoughts of others, and only listen for ourselves, seeking to gain refreshment, courage, and personal blessing. It is time utterly wasted, if we sit listening for others, and thinking about the effect upon them; this can do no possible good to them, while it loses a precious opportunity for our own souls.

The mode of conducting After-Meetings varies much. Some Mission Preachers have

continuous prayer throughout; others have alternate prayer, hymns, and short addresses; others have intervals of perfect stillness, during which all unite in silent prayer; others have nothing but personal dealing, except a prayer at the opening and closing. Our share of work is, of course, moulded accordingly.

When it is likely that a larger number will remain than the Mission preacher and other clergy can speak with individually, it is well to plan definitely beforehand what each worker shall undertake: a transept, half an aisle, the back benches, etc. This saves waiting to see what others are going to do, and also saves unnecessary moving about; each one taking her appointed place before "the door is shut," that solemn and suggestive signal for the commencement of the After-Meeting.

The few minutes (generally filled up by a hymn) during which those who do not intend to remain are leaving the church or school-room, are most important, and call for quick



observation, tact, and promptness. It is the very turning-point with many a soul, and is often a moment of special temptation—a last effort of the enemy to retain his captive. We mark a hesitating hand on a pew-door, or an irresolute step in the aisle, or a troubled glance round, or even a nervous hurry to get away; and with any of these, even a simple but earnest whisper,—“Oh, *do* stay!” if we can think of nothing else to say,—is often enough to decide them to remain. But an instant’s delay on the part of the worker, and the opportunity is lost!

Will my friends forgive a suggestion here? Let all movement be as noiseless as possible, so that no one shall notice you except the person with whom you are actually dealing. A rustling dress, or creaking boots, may hinder one who is trying to pray, and be an actual distress to some who, nervous and trembling, will fancy that others will notice that the lady is speaking to them.

All needless noise is jarring, in the intense solemn stillness of an After-Meeting. Satan contrives to use such *very* little things as hindrances, that we may well be careful to deprive him of the opportunity when we can.

Unless under very exceptional circumstances, it will be better and wiser to let our personal work in an After-Meeting be only among our own sex, leaving the clergy and lay helpers to deal with the other.

When "the door is shut," we shall probably have noticed some one, perhaps a poor woman, evidently impressed. It is, perhaps, best to go very softly and kneel down with her. It is less conspicuous than standing, and she will feel more at her ease; and it is more suitable for the words of prayer, *for* her and *with* her, which we shall surely utter. We will not let her feel that our dealing with her is overheard. She is virtually alone with us and with the Saviour; and He is "passing by." And here we pause; the moment is too

solemn; we could not tell another what to say; we could not tell before-hand what we ourselves shall say, but the Master will tell us, and will put His message in our mouth, and He will guide home the arrow of His love, though our bow be only drawn at a venture.

We pass on to others, but we keep an eye upon her, and return to her, perhaps stooping to whisper a text in passing, before once again kneeling with her. If at the close of the meeting she is still "sore distressed," it may be advisable either to lead her to the vestry, that the Mission-preacher, who has been a messenger of conviction, may now, if God will, be made a messenger of peace to her; or to ask him to come out and speak to her where she kneels. But in some cases, especially with young persons, it is wiser only to invite them to come again, and to keep the case entirely in our own hands, lest nervous excitement at being brought forward, or, on the other hand,

a lurking liking to be made much of, should mar the work.

Sometimes, when great emotion is shown, and there is convenient opportunity for so doing, it is well to lead the distressed one quite apart from others, and leave her kneeling, quite "alone with Jesus," in some empty pew or unoccupied corner.

It is very desirable to ascertain the names of those with whom we speak, in order that we may follow them up, or report them to the clergyman, as the case may be; yet very undesirable to distract their minds, even for an instant, or alarm a very timid one, by the enquiry. Therefore, if we have any other means of ascertaining or identifying, we use that in preference to a point-blank question.

When there seems no special timidity, it may be as well to speak or pray (but always softly) with two or three together, if there are many to be reached. In any case, we should aim at letting none go away without a special

word, or an *opportunity* of personal help. Sometimes the very ones whom we most shrink from approaching, not only need but desire it most. This occurs most frequently with those in our own social station, especially if we have a slight personal acquaintance. We are so tempted to feel this a barrier, and an insurmountable difficulty! Yet if we overcome it, we shall have no reason for regret, but only for rejoicing. Why should we so hesitate to speak for Jesus to a *lady*? It is far more likely that no one ever yet spoke lovingly and personally to *her*, than to the poor woman to whom it seemed so easy to speak. Yet her need is as great, and her anxiety may be as deep, though more concealed. Would she resent it? would she dislike it? Try, dear sister-workers, only *try*, and you will find many a joyful surprise, and many a sweet reward in this direction. Never will you have better opportunities for breaking the ice

than during a Mission-week. Do not lose these opportunities.

Perhaps you say in your heart: "Oh, I could never go and speak to people!" Nevertheless, stay to the After-Meeting as a helper, for we need praying hearts as well as praying voices; and while others are working, give yourself unto prayer for the blessing. It may be that your Lord will send you a sudden impulse to look up, and you will see some sorrowing one kneeling near you, and then an impulse will come to wish to point her to the Saviour. If so, yield to the call; rise and go to her; and it may be that the Master will give you the honour of being His messenger, though you never intended to take it, and will give you the joy of harvest while you hardly dared to claim the privilege of sowing.

There is another pleasant work for those who are too young, either in years or in faith, to come forward as general workers. Let such remain, not only to pray, but to *sing*.

Often, the singing of such a hymn as "Just as I am," or "Jesus, I will trust Thee," during an After-Meeting, has been peculiarly blessed. Yet those who are speaking to others ought not to be burdened with the feeling that they must take up the singing, and thus interrupt their work; while even if the choir remain and lead, it is far better if other voices are ready to follow and join. In this way our *young* ladies may use for God the voices which He has bestowed on them, by taking whatever share they can in thus "singing for Jesus," and it will be more valuable help than they perhaps imagine.

At the close of the meeting there will be fragments to gather up, and we should watch for these. Some anxious one has been overlooked, or has purposely kept out of observation, and now lingers just inside, or perhaps just outside, the door, anywhere in the shadow, waiting for a ray of hope or comfort. And even if it is altogether too late for prayer

and conversation, a word, if it be indeed His word, may be enough to turn the darkness into light; or, at any rate, a clue may be gained, to be followed up next day. For, in every case, we shall try not to lose sight, during the Mission-week, of those with whom we have once spoken; we shall make them our special objects of prayerful effort, resting not till the Lord, at Whose feet we lay them in faith, has indeed put forth His power, and made them "perfectly whole."

F. R. H.



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