

RELIEF WORK IN POLAND AFTER LAST WAR

IN 1920 I went out to Poland to do relief work under the Friends War Victims Relief Mission. This society had branches in Vienna, France and Poland, and it was an Anglo-American Mission, the Americans being sent from Philadelphia, and the English from London.

My work, at one centre, entailed looking after our store. This meant unpacking and sorting the bales of goods sent out to us from home, and taking stock of all I had. For a long time before the shop was due to open, there was a queue of people as long as any waiting outside a London Theatre, so when the shop was opened, we were certainly all kept busy. There were often very amusing incidents, owing to the difficulty of language, but we generally managed to please our customers, and they were all so pleased to get the things that we were glad we could supply them.

A Travelling Shop

We also had a travelling shop, which went into the surrounding districts to supply the people with soap, clothing and blankets at a purely nominal charge. The procedure was as follows:—

First of all the lorry went over with soap and cleaning materials which were distributed around, and the inmates of the houses were told that if they wanted to be able to get things from our travelling shop, they must see that the place was thoroughly clean and neat when we called again. In the meantime

I was advised of the amount and kind of clothing required, e.g.—so much for men, so many things suitable for boys or girls between certain ages, and so much for women, etc. So I got busy and sorted and packed these bales, so that when the driver of the lorry called at my store to get them, they were all ready. He then drove out into the same district; the bales were opened up in some suitable place, and the people came to get supplies. They brought us all kinds of things such as eggs, milk, and even a goat!

Not Good-bye, Sister!

The children, of course, were very interested, and one day, as I was very fond of children, I collected a lot of them in a wood nearby, and we played all kinds of games together. At that time, I could not speak any Polish at all, and of course they did not know any English, but it was quite surprising how quickly they responded, and understood just what I wanted them to do. In the end I tried to say "Do Vigenia" (which means good-bye), they cried "Nia Do Vigenia Sesta" (which means, not good-bye sister), and they all followed me down the road until I felt like the Pied Piper of Hamelin with children instead of rats! One little darling slipped home and came back bringing me a sweet little posy which she had picked especially for me. Poor little mites, it was indeed a joy to see their pleasure in the simple games which I showed them. There was so much room for a little brightness in their lives, that

it was good to see their smiling faces while they played, and to know that they were happy, at least for the time being, in spite of the war.



This Budget Business

(Inspired by an A.C.E. Talk)

I ONCE started keeping a budget. I bought a three-penny notebook and put down "Note-book 3d" as the first item. After that I went on from strength to strength, recording all the minutiae of my rather hand-to-mouth existence — pennies for phone calls, lunch time buns, tram-fares and threepenny Eskimo pies. It was an absorbing occupation. It absorbed all my spare time—not only the time spent in totalling up the shillings and pence columns on Saturday afternoons and anxiously comparing the balance shown in the note-book with the balance shown by my purse—but countless half hours stolen from business or social pursuits. I had the faculty of detaching myself completely from the life about me and letting my mind roam at will up the by-paths of consciousness in an attempt to discover just what had happened to that missing sixpence-half-penny. If I had been considering joining the Detective Branch of the Women's Police it would have been excellent training in deductive methods. I would endeavour as far as possible to reconstruct the crime. When had I last seen the missing sixpence? I would ask myself. Then I would recall every moment of my spending time since then. I would pounce upon the solution to the mystery with as much avidity as Hercule Poirot upon a corpse, or Madame Curie upon a spare ounce of radium.

After a month, however, I began to notice that my character was becoming

unpleasantly warped. I was beginning to realise the enormous importance of money. I would eat my lunch-time bun without butter to save an extra penny. I would avoid spending money on hitherto unconsidered trifles to save myself the effort of putting the item down in my note-book. When I took my friends out to lunch I myself would choose the cheapest item on the menu. I can pride myself on only one thing—I never sent my relatives unstamped letters. One by one my friends dropped away.

At the end of two months I had saved five pounds, and had come to the end of the notebook. I looked wistfully at the old one but even the backs of the pages were filled. So I bought another one. This time it cost me only a penny, because I decided to rule the cash columns myself.

Next morning found me at the Savings Bank filling in a deposit form and at the same time working out the interest on five pounds for one year at 2¾%. I signed my name with a flourish at the bottom of the form and looked in my purse. The money had gone.

Since then I have never kept a budget. I don't get the time because I'm always dashing from place to place with one or another of my many friends.

Discerning readers will find a moral in this cautionary tale. Maybe it should have been a National Savings Account.

—M.I.

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