

THE QUEENS' COLLEGE MISSION (ROTHERHITHE).

QUEENS' College commenced work in South London in October, 1901, by taking over a small and struggling club for boys in the parish of St. Chrysostom, Peckham. The Rev. J. W. Maunders, who became first Missioner, had already been at work there for over two years; and by 1907, when he left, had accomplished great things amongst the coster lads of the neighbourhood. His work was always, as indeed it still continues to be, primarily religious and secondarily social. It grew steadily and surely till the Club numbered over 300 members, and the Bible Class, which was quite voluntary, had an average attendance of over 80. This Class was the great feature of Mr. Maunders' work, and through the teaching given many boys were led on to Confirmation and became regular communicants. In 1907 the Rev. R. L. Gardner became Missioner, and he continued the work on similar lines for nearly three years.

Owing to very unfortunate circumstances it was quite impossible for Queens' to remain and carry on the Club in Peckham after 1910. Consequently a new sphere of work had to be sought if the College was still to have some share in what Cambridge had undertaken to do for South London. This was a matter of some difficulty and caused considerable waste of time. Early in 1911, however, three possible places were suggested by Bishop Talbot, and the Committee decided to plant the Mission in the parish of Christ Church,

Rotherhithe. The Vicar thoroughly approved of the scheme and it was found possible to commence work without delay.

A commodious house on the bank of the Thames, rather more than a mile East of Tower Bridge, was taken over. Formerly Jesus College had worked there, and at their departure a generous lady made it her home and provided various forms of recreation for the boys of the district. It was when she could stay no longer that Queens' were able to adopt the house as their own Mission centre.

The house contains three good club rooms, a canteen, prayer-room, quarters for two residents and housekeeper, and accommodation for three guests, as well as a spacious balcony overlooking the river.

The first Missioner here was Mr. H. M. Grace; but he only remained a year, when the present Missioner succeeded him. The work of the Mission consists in running a Boys' Club, not merely for the sake of providing healthy recreation and amusement, but for furthering their education and developing their religious life. The aim, therefore, is threefold; social, educational, and religious.

The need of the social side is obvious to everyone who knows anything about life in an overcrowded city, and there is no need to enlarge upon it here. To keep boys away from the street-corners is a splendid thing, but it does not equip them for the battle of life. Games are useful for recreation, but they do not help a boy to get a better job. Therefore education must have a prominent place.

Hitherto very little has been accomplished in this direction. A few boys have been persuaded to attend Evening Classes at a neighbouring Technical Institute, but it is hoped that as time goes on it will be possible to hold regular classes in the Mission House. Sometimes boys who have done well at school can be encouraged and helped to continue their education, and anything that will help them to find good jobs with hopeful prospects is part of the business of the Mission.

Yet the whole man must be developed, and while the social and educational sides are necessary, religion cannot be left out. The teaching given is definitely "church," though decidedly non-party. Where support is looked for from men of all schools of thought, it cannot be otherwise. The Bible Classes have one clear aim in view—to lead the boys on to Conversion and Confirmation. When a few boys have reached this stage, the religious side will have a solid foundation, and there will be much encouragement in furthering the spiritual work of the Mission.

The amount of accommodation renders the possibility of dealing with a large number of boys out of the question. At present the Club is divided into two sections; boys from 14 to 20 who are termed "Seniors," and boys from 10 upwards who have not left school are known as the "Juniors." There are now about 40 Seniors and 30 Juniors. Eventually the Club will include 100 boys, but this will necessarily be the limit. The boys are of the usual rough type found amongst the river-side population.

One great feature of the year's programme is the Annual Camp at the Sea. Much keenness is shewn over this, specially as the summer draws near. It is looked forward to with eagerness, and when the time comes the boys have a really good week's holiday. The officers are always Queens' men, and the personal contact gained and the many friendships formed are of immense value both to Queens' men and Rotherhithe boys.

Something must be said of the Mission in the College. The men take a real interest in it. Every term the Missioner visits Cambridge, getting to know men and telling them how things are going. Reference has been made already to arrangements for accommodation, and in the Vacations many undergraduates come and visit the Mission. The boys are always delighted to see them, especially if they have made their acquaintance before at Camp, or on Whitsun-Monday when a party usually goes up to Cambridge.

It is very noticeable how interested they are in Queens' men. The passport into their companionship is always the fact that a man comes from Queens'. Even now some of our old Peckham boys come over and are willing to help, simply because, as they say, Queens' has done so much for them.

As time goes on, more and more old Queens' men should be forthcoming as regular helpers. Without their assistance the Missioner's task is by no means easy. Moreover, the ideal state of things will not have been attained until the Mission is making itself felt amongst Queens' men, past and present, as much as amongst Rotherhithe boys.

The cost of maintenance is considerable, and involves untiring effort at the Cambridge end, for at present no funds are drawn from outside sources. The expenses are met almost entirely by contributions from within the College itself, supplemented by subscriptions from old members.

There can be no question that the work Queens' has undertaken is one which is well worth doing, and though now in its initial stages it is impossible to tabulate results, yet if it is pursued with patience, and adequately supported, in due time it will doubtless bear good fruit.