

**Woman's Friend Society**

**Salem, Mass.**



# SYNOPSIS OF THE WORK

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# WOMAN'S FRIEND SOCIETY

FROM THE TIME OF ITS  
ORGANIZATION IN 1876 TO 1889

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As the writer of this paper had no personal knowledge of the work, until the year 1878, she cannot assert that the story is absolutely correct in every detail. It is, however, in her estimation, sufficiently so for the purpose, which is to show what harvest has been reaped from the seed sown broadcast during the last thirteen years. She has made a careful study of the records, which begin with the report of a meeting held March 22nd, 1876. This, however, was not the real beginning of the work. The earliest records have not been preserved, but sometime during the year 1875, Mrs. Kate Tannatt Woods (a lady whose name is well known in Salem), addressed a meeting in the Town Hall, called by herself as a representative of the Moral Education Society of Boston. She then and there invited the attention of those present to the importance of some form of work for the moral elevation of women. Later, by her personal effort, money was raised and plans matured. The work was, therefore, really started in 1875, although the society was not permanently organized until 1876.

No person of thoughtful mind, having occasion to pass through Essex street on any pleasant evening, can fail to note the lawless character of the continuous stream of pedestrians promenading between North and Liberty streets. It tells a story of careless disregard for appearances: of vulgarity; of crime. It is a fair exponent of the license of the time in which we live; the recoil from the Puritan austerity of the last century.

Thirteen years ago, the state of affairs was pretty much as we find it today, and was clearly recognized by Mr. William M. Hill, at that time City Marshal. He felt very strongly that something might be done to purify the moral atmosphere, if an earnest counter influence for good could be exerted over that class of girls who, through mere thoughtlessness and wilfulness, were allowing themselves to be contaminated by others, whose ways of life were unmistakably evil. To bring this matter to the notice of the public, he called a meeting at the Town Hall.

The results that followed this philanthropic movement were most satisfactory. A little band of earnest women was immediately organized, who took up the work with a strong hope that they could make it successful. The task seemed a very difficult one; but the hearts of those noble women were filled with the courage and enthusiasm engendered by a holy purpose, and they felt, if in their work each year, they could save one soul alive, they would not have labored in vain.

That matters might be done wisely and in order, a form of Constitution was adopted, defining the methods of work. The society received the name of Moral Education Association, to which was added, a few months later, that of "Woman's Friend Society." A little later, it was known under the name of the "Woman's Friend Association." (When the society was incorporated in 1884, it was incorporated under the name of the "Woman's Friend Society.")

It was of course necessary to have a place which should be the head-quarters for the work, and accordingly the ladies took a room in Maynes' Block, giving it the name of the "Girls' Reading Room," and making it as attractive as possible, with the material at hand. Everything now being in readiness, they began to consider ways and means by which the girls could be reached. To this end, circulars were placed where they could meet the eye of those whom they were ready to help. It was a foregone conclusion that many cases would be brought to them by Mr. Hill, and other police officers. However, they wished to be alert themselves, and to overcome every obstacle which stood before them and the end which they had in view. And how faithfully they worked, and how bravely they "held the fort," amid discouragements and crippling limitations, is shown by the fruit of their labors—the present condition of the society. All honor to them for their indomitable courage.

But their work was not one of prevention alone. In the very beginning they accepted the fact that they would gladly help another class, those who had been willing to purchase excitement, and so-called pleasure, at the high cost of loss of reputation and of virtue. If the girls would turn from their evil ways, those good women stood ready to give them the help they needed; to strengthen them to resist the manifold temptations of a vicious life, and to become pure and useful members of the community.

To do this, it was necessary to procure a house in which to establish a "Home" for the "Homeless." Through the influence of Mrs. William H. Jelly, one of the earliest and most faithful workers in the society, Mrs. Joseph Hodges offered the use (rent free), for three months, of a tenement in the house corner of Essex and Daniels streets. The offer being gratefully accepted, the ladies immediately began to make the "Home" as complete as limited resources would permit.

A placard in the window told the passer-by that within might be found a "Girl's Reading Room." This reading room had been part

of the original plan, and was regarded as a very important feature of the work. As a stimulus to many of the girls, it had its manifest advantages, but there was a class who might be induced to come to the "Home," who had never been trained to read books other than trashy novels, or perhaps had never been taught to read at all. What web could be spun, to catch these thoughtless, wandering flies? A web of simple little entertainments, which these uncultured minds could understand and enjoy. The ladies set their wits to work, and the thing was done. The girls came, and came again, and brought their friends. Link after link was forged in the bright chain that bound these girls to their benefactors. But what a weary time these same benefactors had. There were plenty of ready wits, but little ready money, and anybody who has ever had the like to do, will understand the task these ladies had to perform. The makeshifts must often have been very amusing; the spectator whose quick eye detected the artifice, must have been moved to laughter, albeit her heart was filled with admiration for the ingenuity which could devise so good a semblance of the reality.

So the summer of 1876 found the ladies hard at work. It would not be agreeable to their feelings to see their names recorded, but under existing circumstances, it should not be considered a breach of good taste to note that, in the records of that time, the name of Mrs. George D. Putnam may constantly be read. Although for three years she persistently refused to become their leader, by accepting the office of President, her indomitable courage, her unflagging enthusiasm, her unselfish devotion to the cause, must have been a power deeply felt by those who worked with her, shoulder to shoulder.

It must now be understood that the society stood pledged to a two-fold work, that of prevention and of cure. To do this under one roof presented difficulties at the very outset. At a meeting held June 24th, 1876, it was voted: "Girls of good moral character shall not (with our consent) be associated, in this 'Home,' with those of vicious or questionable character." It was the work of an hour for certain members to pass this vote; it was—it may almost be said that it still is—the work of years, to convince other members that this mingling of the two classes, the good, and the bad and doubtful, can bring only weakness to a society organized to elevate women and girls. August 2nd of this same year, it was voted: that a Bureau of Employment be connected with the "Home." This is the germ of the present Intelligence Office.

## 1877

At the beginning of this year, the plans had been matured, and the routine work was in train. The continued kindness of Mrs. Hodges enabled the society to occupy the tenement on Daniels street, and it began to be more widely known, and was called the "Daniels Street Home."

So this tiny stream of charity—for it was virtually a charity in those days—trickled through the heart of the community, and probably not one twentieth of the people were aware of its existence. Like the rare flower hiding where the eye of the true lover of nature alone can discover it, this pure, life-giving stream was visible to those only, whose ready sympathy gave them the clear vision to see it.

## 1878

At the close of this year, the ladies felt the work had attained the utmost growth possible, under existing limitations. The resources at their command were wretchedly inadequate; their quarters were too small; their treasury too scantily provided, to enable them longer to stand alone. Unless they should receive the generous help of the whole community, it was a foregone conclusion that the work must be given up. As matters became so desperate, and they saw defeat staring them in the face, they resolved to adopt the bold policy of procuring a house more suited to their needs, hoping, by showing themselves ready to do more important work they could interest the community, and earn their cordial support. Finding, after diligent search, that such a house was obtainable only at a rent which they dared not pledge themselves to pay, they decided to put an appeal into the newspapers, boldly stating in absolute figures what they wanted, and what they were prepared to do, should they obtain it. This appeal met the eye of Captain John Bertram, who although confined to his chamber by illness, was ever devising plans to help those less fortunately placed than himself. He immediately conceived the idea of giving the society the house for which they had asked. In the manner of this gift, he showed the clear judgment which was ever a strong element of his character.

## 1879

At a meeting held March 12th of this year, the hearts of all present were made glad by the announcement that the use of the house numbered 12 Elm Street would be given to the society, by Captain Bertram, for a term of five years, with the understanding that during that time the society should pay the taxes and keep the building in repair. At the end of the five years, should the society have perfected their plans, and find themselves in a condition to make a wise use of the property, the house would be presented to them as a free gift.

In the beginning of this year, Mrs. George D. Putnam was elected President and accepted the office, the duties of which she faithfully, earnestly and most wisely performed until December 19th, 1888, when her Lord and Master called, and she passed away out of our sight, into the great unknown, whither yearning hearts alone can follow.

This year was one of great activity. The city was thoroughly canvassed, with most favorable results. A large sum of money was

obtained, also articles to be used in furnishing the house. The society was strengthened by a largely increased membership. The new headquarters received the name of the "Working Women's Bureau," and were first occupied May 9th. The Constitution was amended, the old form being preserved wherever it was possible. At the close of the year, the Intelligence Office had grown so much, a Committee on Registry was formed to oversee the work.

## 1880

The records of the first half of this year do not show the taking up of any new branch of work. To preserve harmony where so many interests were involved; to keep the expense of the table at the lowest possible figure; to make the "Home" attractive despite the simplicity of its arrangements; all these matters fully occupied the time and thought of all who were engaged in the work.

In the autumn of this year the Committee on Needle-Work was formed. It fills the place of the "Employment Society," an organization well known in Salem many years ago. Its purpose is to give out plain sewing to those to whom this somewhat unsatisfactory method of earning a living is an absolute necessity. The completed garments are sold at cost of material and making. The tendency must ever be towards undesired accumulation of finished work. To meet this condition of things many methods are employed, and the fact that the committee have wisely solved this problem is shown in their financial reports, which are the admiration of all who are familiar with them. This branch of the work is thoroughly established and has a good share of patronage.

## 1881

In the beginning of this year another branch was started, the Mission to the Sick. Its method of work is the weekly distribution of delicacies to invalids whose needs are manifest. These distributions are made by young ladies, whose bright faces and words of cheer are of incalculable value to those to whom they minister. It is an absolute charity, the only one connected with the "Home;" however, by a careful selection of beneficiaries; the development of pauperism, the lurking evil of all charity, has been avoided. The Mission continues its work through the year; is firmly established, and enjoys the cordial support of the community.

Just after this was fairly started, the society was asked to take up a work which it was alleged might prove a valuable annex. The plan was to provide nurses at wages suited to the purse of people of very limited means. Nurses willing to engage in this philanthropic project were to pledge themselves to be ready for duty when wanted. A careful view of the subject showed the undertaking to be a very expensive one. Therefore, although a small sum of money was raised and a little work done, it was never established.

Early in the year it became advisable to put a part of the routine work into the entire charge of an especial committee. It was found that cases classed reformatory could not be successfully managed by the Board of Government, as were the cases of those admitted as inmates of the "Working Women's Bureau." To do this work carefully it was necessary to establish closer personal relations between these girls and those who were to help them. This committee (called Reformatory) has had, and still has, a hard task to perform. They have, more than once, found it best to modify their methods of work, and that they do not feel they have mastered the subject is evident from the fact that they continually express themselves in need of more light.

In the winter and spring cooking classes were in successful operation. The ladies' classes were full, but those for servants were not so well attended. They were self-supporting. However, the facilities for the work being inadequate, these classes were not continued a second year.

A Woman's Exchange was started this same year, but it was not well supported and after a two years' trial was discontinued.

## 1882

At the annual meeting a committee was formed whose duty it should be to find suitable places for very young girls whose home surroundings and influences were not what they should be. This work has not advanced in the proportion of the other branches, but there is a future before it in which more important results may be achieved.

In May the society most gratefully accepted the gratuitous services of Dr. Frank S. Atwood, as physician for the house.

This same year a committee was chosen to look after the interests of working women by protecting them, in cases of need, against employers who are unjust in their dealings. This committee called "Protective," has the valuable assistance of a lawyer who generously offered his gratuitous services. The mere existence of such a committee is a moral power in the community.

## 1883

In the early summer, laundry classes were in successful operation, but were discontinued at the end of July and have never been resumed.

## 1884

The beginning of this year found the society nearing the end of their time of probation. Captain Bertram had passed away two years before, but his daughter who was trustee for the estate, was empowered to carry out his wishes in regard to the gift of the house. She

considered that the society had perfected their plans and should receive this gift. To enable themselves to hold the property the society was incorporated, and became the owners of the estate. The same year the constitution was revised to suit the enlarged work.

## 1885-1886

No new branch was established in either of these years, although the year 1885 is one to be remembered from the fact that the society received its first legacy in money. Mr. Enoch Lord bequeathed to them the sum of \$200.

## 1887

At the annual meeting held January 26, a paper was read calling attention to the subject of sheltering homeless infants. The establishment of such a work demanded the annual expenditure of a considerable sum of money, and in the hope of obtaining it, an appeal was published in the papers. The response not being sufficient to insure the success of the plan, it was abandoned. However, with the co-operation of the Children's Friend Society some useful work in this line has been accomplished.

At a meeting in April a paper was read by the President (Mrs. Geo. D. Putnam) asking the ladies of the society to consider the advisability of establishing industrial classes. This work was hampered by many difficulties, but that some of them were happily overcome is demonstrated by the fact that in May a normal class of young ladies, under the tuition of Mrs. Kelt of Boston, were learning the methods to enable them to teach classes in Kitchen Kindergarten. In June these classes were in successful operation, the young ladies giving their services with untiring zeal. The free use of the Fraternity Rooms enabled the society to carry on the work with less expense than would otherwise have been the case. The classes were for poor children and were free, but the generous gifts of friends and the receipts from public exhibitions, enabled the society to meet the larger part of the expenses.

## 1888

These industrial classes were not resumed, although the interest in them had by no means declined, and it was regarded to be of the utmost importance to enlarge the borders, with the view to the permanent establishment of this work. In point of fact all the branches were a little cramped through lack of room, and it seemed as if the society were fast outgrowing its quarters, as had been the case before the removal from Daniels street.

Following the plan of 1879 a direct appeal was made to the generosity of the public. The response was most liberal, and before the lapse of many months a goodly sum was collected. That the close of the year found this money still unused for the purpose of which it was raised was primarily due to two causes.

The original plan had been to buy the other half of the house, enlarging the borders as opportunity offered, by uniting the two parts; thus making a building suited to the purposes of more extended work. Negotiations for this purchase had failed as the owners held it at a fancy price.

Other plans could not be matured owing to the illness of the President (Mrs. George D. Putnam), which continued through the summer and autumn, culminating in death at the close of the year.

And here this chronicle will end. It is hoped its purpose has been understood. No words which might be written could pay a higher tribute to the memory of the beloved President of this society than the record of the grand work which she planned and helped others to execute. This work must now pass into the hands of those who should accept it as a sacred charge. Let them look to it that they continue faithful stewards, laboring with steadfast purpose and unselfish aim to the end that the society shall live and grow with ever-increasing vigor. So shall they best honor the memory of one who was herself so faithful a laborer in her Master's vineyard.

L. A. LANDER.



