

UNUSUAL AND INTERESTING EXPERIENCES

DURING MY WORKING LIFE

Written by Shirley, August 2006

Over fifty years ago, when I was Manageress of a ladies and children's wear department in a general store with drapery, grocery and hardware sections, a lady bought a green dress and had it altered. A few days later she brought the dress back and wanted to return it because it clashed with the green of her car. I said "No" because it had been altered. She went to the Manager of the store and asked him, and he said "Yes". So the dress was returned. That was in the good old days, when the customer was always right!

One of the staff was a staunch Orange Lodge member when a new person, who was a staunch Roman Catholic, was employed in his Department. There was fireworks! I didn't know anything about either, but I learnt quickly. After a while, things mellowed and not so long ago, I visited the younger member. She said the other person had passed away but, by exchanging Christmas letters, they had become good friends.

The Manager of the drapery department once heard a staff member say "We haven't had any for a long time" and he interrupted and said "We can get it in for you by Tuesday" - that was the day he went to Melbourne buying. When the customers had all left, he asked the staff member what the lady wanted. The staff member replied "She didn't want anything she said "We haven't had any rain lately"!

Two very expensive English coats were purchased just to see if there was any interest from customers. Thursday was Market Day and extra staff was put on because we were so busy. Late in the day we realised the coats were missing. Nobody had shown them to anyone and, if they had been sold, there would have been an entry docket, a cash docket or a lay-by docket. The coats must just have been worn out of the shop by somebody.

When I was being trained as a Deaconess we were given a religious education on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings at 9 a.m. before we attended lectures at 10 a.m. Over the three years we were given experience in teaching at six different levels. One day I was teaching Grade 4 when one boy was not happy about what another boy was doing. He said, "There is a strap in the cupboard, Miss". I said, "I don't intend to use the strap" and he said, "No! God is watching isn't He"!

They must have had a good relationship with the teacher because on another day (I don't remember what the lesson was about) I thought I would make a scroll to make it interesting. I had a long sheet of paper and two sticks and, to add interest, I got the loan of a Greek New Testament, wrote a text in Greek on the scroll, and rolled it up. When I opened it in front of the children, one little girl's eyes nearly popped out of her head. She said, "Miss, that is Greek". She came out, and all the class called out "Read it"! I said, "I only know a couple of words". Someone said, "Sula can read it" — and she did, without a hitch! (She must have gone to a Greek school). The children then went quietly back and sat down. I explained that the stories of Jesus were written in Greek. I had no idea I was teaching migrant children as they all spoke good English and I didn't have a list of names.

it was usual for me to spend the whole morning at some schools, so I had morning tea with the staff. One day, the Grade One teacher said "We were talking about you, as we were

discussing "Trust" and I said, "It is a good thing that what Miss Renshaw tells about God is right". I taught that grade immediately after playtime and the lesson was about the Good Shepherd and the sheep. As I had lived on a farm with cattle and sheep, I told how we had sheep in a paddock where there was plenty of grass to eat and water in a trough to drink. The paddock was fenced so they were safe. I don't think I had time to tell them about a pet lamb that had to be fed a bottle several times a day. The lamb stayed with the sheep and when we called "Baa" the lamb came racing down a long distance, had its bottle, then went back to the sheep. I told them it was quite different at the time of Jesus. The sheep spent the night in a sheep-fold, like a pen, and they were taken out each day by a man called a shepherd. They all had names and he called each name and they followed him because they knew he would lead them to where there was green grass to eat and water in a stream to drink, so they could trust him.

The teacher interrupted and said, "Excuse me, Miss Renshaw, we were just talking about "trust" before class".

When I was the only one teaching, there was a text book for each grade with different stories in each. I was there for four years. After several years, one girl said to me "You must have an awful lot of Bibles to know all those stories"! One lesson was for young children in a special school. One little girl was very vocal and each week she said "I hate Jesus. I hate Jesus". It went on for several weeks. As I wasn't a trained teacher, I felt I should ask someone with experience to talk to the little girl. Before anything was done about this, the lesson was on the healing of Jarius' daughter. I told the children that the little girl was very sick. She was hot and didn't want her meal - only a drink of water. Her father and mother were worried. Jesus came and made her better. The response was "What a kind man"! She never said she hated Jesus again for the rest of the year. My guess was she had only heard of Jesus as a swear word.

One day I went into a class and they were sitting three to a desk (There must have been another grade brought in). We had a song and a story as there was no hope of doing an activity as I only had the usual number of papers. I had a book of action/songs and then the lessons of the Good Samaritan and the Baby Moses. The class played out the parts. Half an hour later when the teacher returned, she must have been pleased as the class were all seated and quiet. She said. "We will give you a job"!