

Thursday, - October 19, 1871.

## LIFE AT WASHINGTON.

ATTEMPT AT REFORM.

(From the Washington Chronicle.)

[CONTINUED.]  
Nina. Well, a great many are seduced when they are very young, and run away from home to get rid of their trouble. Of course there isn't any hope for them. Some young girls were brought here by Department clerks who promised to marry them. Of course they never do. If they want to marry, they can take their choice out of respectable families. Then, as I told you, there are a great many widows who were not brought up to work, and could not get it to do if they had been.

Mrs. Y. But we are told that many women and girls actually choose this mode of life of their own free will. You have a much better opportunity of judging this matter than we. Don't these women tell you sometimes that it is a physical necessity?

Nina. (with a bright spot on each cheek). Never, as I am a living woman. Who says so?

Mrs. Y. Men tell their wives so. Don't they tell you that you are as bad as they are?

Nina. They had better not! They know better. And yet, perhaps, they do think so. I don't know. I don't suppose they did. In fact, I know they don't. There are some of the best men in Washington who insist on having a new girl every time they come. It's a common question, "I don't know if you new face to show me?" And they want young girls, too—the younger the better. Of course they get tired of their wives, but I do get out of patience to see that they want a new one every time.

Mrs. X. Who are your most regular and liberal patrons—married men, or single?

Nina. Oh, married men, of course. I should starve if I depended upon young men.

Mrs. X. What reason do they give for coming?

Nina. O, they complain of their wives, and say they don't treat them well—but we know that they get tired of everybody. One man, who has a family in Washington, has visited this house for fifteen years, and he never is satisfied.

Mrs. X. Are there any laws in the District in relation to your business?

Nina. None that I know of—only when a man gets drunk, or jealous, or angry, he may go out and make a complaint, and the next thing is a raid on the house. Everything is sold out, and if we can't raise money to pay the fine, we are put in jail; and that isn't the worst of it. All the men connected with it are our regular customers, and insult us and abuse us all the more when we are in jail.

Mrs. X. What a demoralizing effect it would have to give you women a choice in your officers! Would your girls marry if they had an opportunity? If they could have each a little one of her own, who could bear the father's name, do you think they would be satisfied?

Nina. Well, of course, most of them expect to marry the men who bring them here; but after they have been in the business a long time, I have heard them say they wouldn't marry the best man living. You don't know men as we do. If they deceive their wives, as we know they do, and break their hearts with neglect and cruelty, how could we ever trust them? And yet our girls would be the most faithful wives in the country if they were married. It does happen sometimes that some man better than the rest falls in love with one of our girls, and marries her and takes her away. No danger of her ever wanting to come back to this life again.

Mrs. X. But you say this business ought to be protected for the sake of the wives and mothers. Have gentlemen consulted you about it?

Nina. O, yes, some of the best men in the city have talked with us about it, and have promised us it should be done—but I don't believe they have dared to propose it. They certainly could do it if they chose. It is done in Paris, and even in St. Louis.

Mrs. X. Well, take courage. They have the law-making power, and they haven't even consulted with the wives, whom they claim to represent. Hard as your case is, you stand a much better chance of being represented than we do. But see to it that in pretending to legislate for you and protect you they don't protect themselves at your expense. Insist that no man shall visit you who cannot show a certificate from an examining physician to prove that he is registered and licensed.

Nina. Dated within the week.

Mrs. X. Yes, dated within the week. Insist also upon having a lady physician for your household. There are women who are qualified, and who would rather do it without charge than to feel that all womanhood is subjected in you to that shame once every week. We have heard of abuses that never will appear in print.

And now, Nina, we have a clear, definite plan to propose, in which we desire your co-operation. (Here followed a description of the plan.) Will you help us? Whatever Christian people, or society, or the world at large may throw in our way, we are fully determined that you shall have a chance to stand on the same level with your "sisters" in this community. There is to be no "patronizing," no "charity" in the case—only simple justice. If you accept our proposition, it will be done. Do you accept it?

Nina. That I do, most gladly. And you—you'll help again?

Mrs. X. Yes, frequently; and there is a large number of the sisters, poor and most distressed, and who would rather be put in operation within a week. Good-bye.

The next visit was also on Thirteenth St. The lady of the house, poor and terrified at the sight of her visitors, and the ladies were obliged to assure her again and again of their friendly intentions.

Why do you fear us? said Mrs. X. We would not hurt a hair of your head. Men injure you enough, if the papers tell the truth.

To be continued.

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