

of three-legged tools that served for both chairs and tables; an old servant went as maid; and the lady's mother gave the cottage. Thus she started, very humbly, very hopefully; and of the six little girls with whom she began her work of tenderness and mercy, their ages ranging from five to eleven, there was not one who was not qualified for a penitentiary or a reformatory, had she been old enough.

The question now was, how to employ and how to maintain this little family of castaways, so as to keep them from the greater evil which must come if they were turned adrift again into the streets. Some one suggested "taking in washing" as the thing which requires the least arduous apprenticeship; and the lady acted on the idea. A washing machine, a stove, and some irons, were given as the nucleus of the future laundry; and the six little creatures began with washing for two boys in the old stables adjoining the cottage. How well the work has prospered may be inferred from the fact that the Home now washes for thirteen families, besides a school which sends the linen of fifty persons. I can bear the testimony of an eye-witness to the first-rate quality of the work done. I have never seen better washing—seldom so good. Every one in the Home, from the eldest to the youngest, bears a hand; and a "Lady," as Miss Cotton is always called by the children, herself helps—much of the delicate gossamer being done by her.

It is pleasant to see this large family of children and grown-up girls all occupied, busy, capable, happy, in the various stages of the work. The little ones do the lighter parts, and machinery of all kinds helps the heavier. One of the elder girls, "E," whose history will be more specially particularised by-and-by, is a first-rate laundress; ever since she was fourteen distancing any woman who could be got for the amount and deftness of her work. She went to the Home in 1865, and was then a miserable starveling whom many a Christian mother would have shuddered to touch had she known her awful history and condition. She is now a useful and valuable worker. A pretty little girl of eight, mothering her two younger brothers with the thought and care of a woman, is an active elf of no small value as she flits about the washing room; and "Hector," a chubby, blue-eyed young Trojan of five, was occupied during my visit in pulling out the flannels, which a strong-looking girl sent crawling between the rollers, as she turned the handle of the machine. The steaming clothes were hot for his small, fat hands; but he managed bravely; took virtuous care not to tear the dragging tapes; and piled up the fleecy garments cleverly on the tin platter which kept them from the stain of the sloppy floor. Another little creature folded the wet clothes for "packing," previous to washing; and the younger ones generally paired the socks, and tied them and the pocket-handkerchiefs in bundles, cut the soap, cleaned the pegs, waited on the elders, and made themselves actively useful and happy in their zeal.

The stories of some of these unhappy children are fearfully sad; and some so terrible that I scarcely know how to tell them. Still, it is a simple matter of duty to tell out as plainly as the world will bear to hear what things exist in this Christian England of ours; and to put it to the consciences of faithful men and women, themselves parents, whether more ought not to be done, than is done in one obscure humble little Home, by the efforts of one lady and her immediate friends only, to check this awful "causer in the bud," which is surely worse than any amount of conscious adult sin. Men and women are free agents, but children—

The story of E., to which I alluded just now, reads like a sensation novel; but every word, as I shall tell it, is either truth or less than the truth. The end has not come yet; but we can only hope that the poor girl will be kept safe through the temptations which await her. At all events, these past years of peace and virtue have been so much to the good.

E. is the child of an Italian adventurer, who was some sixteen years or so ago employed about the Opera. Her mother was his French servant. Her earliest recollection is that of being in a garret in Soho, with her mother, who threatened to kill her. An old woman, who lived in a room near theirs, begged the child of the mother; and the woman, glad enough to get rid of her burden, left her on the dame's hands, and departed into the night whence she has never returned. The old woman had two daughters and a son, all of whom married; the son taking to wife another servant of this same Italian adventurer. When E. was seven years old, the dame died, being christened and baptized on her deathbed; a scene that made a strong impression on the child. She left E. to the care of her daughters, asking them to bring her up between them, and not to let her want. The daughters took the little girl, and she lived first with one and then with another; while both the husbands qualified themselves for the Old Bailey by their hideous treatment of her. Before E. was ten years of age, she was earning ten shillings a week for them, and was essentially what the world calls "bad." Her course of life landed her in the hospital; where she was heard of by Miss Cotton, and found, desperate, deserted, and grievously sick both in soul and body. The lady, nothing daunted, took her up and carried her to the Home. She scarcely realised the task she had given herself. E.'s nature was wild and fierce; her passions were strong; her love of liberty, and her need of excitement great; but she had the potentiality of a conscience, poor lost lamb!—and while one part of her character drew her powerfully towards lawless courses of all kinds, the other

male her desire to be saved, and led up into something nobler and purer. In this chaotic state of mind, the lady had both her difficulty and her hope. By gentle treatment, kind and yet firm; by never slurring over the degradation of her past, but never ceasing to hold out the bright possibility of a pure and wholesome future; by trying to bring back this premature woman to something of the sweetness and docility of childhood; by skilful management when her fits of savage rage, her fits of wild impatience at the comparative quiet of the Home, and her mad desire to break away and go back to the noisy riot and excitement of her old life came upon her like possession—true soul sickness—the lady succeeded in keeping her until the age of sixteen, and in gradually softening and reclaiming her. But there were hard days to be got over during that time—days when E., resolved to be wicked yet unable to be disloyal, would turn the little prints and pictures of Christ and the angels about her bed with their faces to the wall; tear off the cross she wore round her neck; swear; rave; demand to go back to her old haunts; till the fit gradually subsided—when she would fling herself at the lady's knees in a paroxysm of repentance and despair, sometimes refusing to go into the prayer-room, kneeling only at a distance as the publican of old, as one too vile to draw nearer. And then she would quiet down into the better condition of peace and calmness, which gradually grew to be her more usual state. But we cannot picture what times of trial these must have been for the lady and her coadjutors—the patience, the faith, the intensity of Christian love, the fervent wrestlings in prayer that accompanied and followed the poor child's soul through these crises!

When E. was sixteen there came down to the Home two flaunting, evil-visaged women. They brought her the photograph of a handsome man, who they said was her father; and it was afterwards discovered that he was really her father, and that their mission was so far true. He had commissioned them to demand her as his daughter, and to request that she should be sent out to him, living at ease in Cairo, "to be made a lady of." The women reminded E. that she was now of the legal age to choose her own guardian; and they urged her to come with them and leave the Home and "Lady," her godmother. Miss Cotton was absent, but her coadjutor resisted them, and pleaded with the girl on the other side. It was the old story over again, of the angel and the devil, vice and virtue battling for the human soul; and poor E.'s wild nature and truer conscience had to guide her through the difficulty as passion or grace might determine. She stood for some minutes flushed and irresolute. On one side was her father, comparative wealth, pleasure, luxury, and the reckless life of the world. On the other poverty, hard work, the Home, and God. Suddenly she turned, and clung to the lady's hand, "I will not go! I will stay!" she said.

After this she ran away to London for a few days. The women's visit had disturbed her and she could neither rest in peace nor give herself up to evil. The letters to her godmother, during the three days she was absent, are among the most touching and tragic I have ever read. So simple, too, in their relation of her self-made difficulties and temptations! Over and over again she stood by the gin-shop door longing to go in, but remembering her life and teaching at the Home, thinking of the prayer-room and all she had heard therein, and then running away at hot speed. And standing, listening, longing, fearing, as she did so often, yet never once did she cross the threshold of one of these dens. Finally, wandering about Soho, wanting to be seen yet ashamed to go to the clergyman's house, she was caught by an old porter who knew her; and rescued. The lady took her for a time of probation into her private house; and from thence, she passed back to the Home where she now is, and where may God grant her the grace to remain!

A second little creature is such another as E. was at her age; passionate and wilful, at times desperate and unmanageable, but coming right in the end by reason of her strong affections, and the divine germ of conscience which is growing slowly in her. This little creature, Bessie, was in a low lodging-house, where she was no one to care for her and keep her from evil; so the fate that is by no means uncommon among these deserted children befel her, as so many others. By the mercy of Providence she fell into the Lady's hands; and though she too has given them hard days and heavy nights by her lawless, undisciplined, violent nature, as yet the good has prevailed, and she has been kept safe among them.

One young child has been caught away from the infancy of her own home; another little creature, like an angel, has been taken from the infamy of a quiet, rural village, which looks all peace and virtue: one is utterly a walf and cast-away, without a friend in the world save the Lady and the Leytonstone Home; born no one knows where, bred no one knows how, and rescued from destruction by the Home. One was dedicated to crime by her own mother; another by her grandmother; and some are just gutter children, abandoned by society from the beginning. But no one is shut out. Those who are considered too bad for their Homes are taken into this, where they are sought to be cleansed and purified; and whence, when old enough, they are set forward in an honest way of life. It is not for the virtuous—they have aids—so much as for the lost children of the sinful poor that the Home has been founded. As Miss Cotton says in her report, "Many a poor child is sent

to me from some other Home because "she will steal, or pick, or lie, fight, or behave ill at night," and "we cannot keep her." I long to ask some of my sisters if they think the Good Shepherd only cares for the good and biddable lambs."

One great endeavor at the Home is to make it like a real home, where the children are treated as children—neither petted as repentant little sinners turned saints, nor preached at as irredeemable sinners who will never be cleared of their stains. They are children—naughty or good, obedient or disobedient, as it may chance; but always children, and at home. They are taught, and they are employed. The elder ones take charge of the younger; for there are fourteen very little ones, quite babies, chiefly from the Five Dials' district in Soho, most of whom are Miss Cotton's godchildren, and all of whom are of course too young for the special sorrow that has afflicted the elder. Miss Cotton's report speaks of these very little ones thus:—

"These little ones are only inadmissible to other orphanages because of their deep poverty. It may seem unwise to try to bring them up in a Home bound to receive very bad children, but five years' experience has made me trust that, with us, the little ones do good, and do not get harm. Was it from Dr. Arnold or from Tom Brown that I learnt how much may be done to help a difficult elder child by giving a younger one in charge? Still I do very much wish I could have a separate cottage for these tinies, and be able sometimes to keep them apart."

Sometimes there are outbreaks in the Home, which have to be put down with a firm hand. Once, one fiery little rebel was going to "kill" the Lady's coadjutor with a hot iron, but she took thought in time, and did not; and there are frequent outbursts of rebellion and violence, that try the patience and nerves of all concerned. In Miss Cotton's own house, brought up by her, as her own, is a lovely child now a year old. When only seven weeks old it was sent to chance, with £100 pinned to its frock, to guide the hand of fate to a kindly issue. Knocked about and half starved for more than a week, nobody's care, nobody's charge, it was almost dead when the lady took it; now it is a fine, blooming, beautiful little creature, full of as much promise as a baby of a year old can be. So far as is known, it is the child of a gentleman in the Midland Counties; but both father and mother have repudiated it. Another girl in the Home is also the daughter of a gentleman and a woman of low origin, and worse nature; and the lady says that she proves in a most extraordinary manner the theory of "inherited qualities," showing in all sorts of odd ways some of the most pronounced features of the upper and lower classes combined, bad and good together. She was sent out into service when old enough; but the temptations of the outside world proved too strong for her; and she fled back to the Home, to be admitted as a penitent—doing the hardest work, sharing in none of the privileges, beg only cry being, "Let me stay here, safe from temptation!" Miss Cotton has kept her on probation; hoping, yet fearing; but in any case willing to give her another chance. One child was an infant in an orphanage. She swore as soon as she began to talk (many of them do that), and when dismissed as too bad by those who are obliged, by the rules of their constitution, to feed only the wholesome of Christ's flock, was found by the lady who cares for and cleanses the foul, to be one of the worst of the bad. Dirty, naughty, thieving, pretending insanity to escape work or punishment, her language horrible, and worse things yet behind, she seemed simply hopeless. Now she is cleanly, industrious, and of fair average goodness.

In this extraordinary family of lost lambs found and folded, a stranger would see nothing odd or unlikely, if they have been long enough at Leytonstone to have become really homed and somewhat civilized. (But the Lady says, for her own part, that the strain of dealing with such abnormal characters and experiences as theirs is something at times almost beyond her strength to bear. Nothing but the deepest sense of the need of such a home, and the help in God's help, could carry her and her assistants through their terrible duties.) In the beginning the girls have a wild, starved, hunted look about them; they sink into corners, or stand defiantly at bay, like wild beasts. They are hard to conquer, and are true Ishmaelites in suspicion and hate; but the discipline, at once so free and yet so strict, so kindly, so full of occupation, so rich in religious hope and teachings, does its work; and the rounded forms and humanized faces tell that the starved wild beast has given place to the Christian child, with some idea of right and wrong, some germs of a true conscience.

The story of one poor little creature was very touching. She was the tiny folder of wet clothes for packing, previous to being washed. She is four years old, and one of seven. Her father and mother, who are not married, live at the top of a wretched house in Newport Market; he, a basket-maker and a drunkard; she, paralysed in one side. Of the children, one boy of nine is a cripple; another of eight is strong-bodied, but nearly a cripple. They go about together as one boy, under one coat, with bits of rags for shirts and trousers. Perhaps a pair of old boots or shoes is shared between them. The crippled boy does any washing of rags or floors in which the family indulges. The only girl, Alice—the "folder"—and her youngest two brothers were on the way to be christened, under the Lady's charge. She was caring most for the little boys, thinking the girl at her mature age, better able to fend for herself; when, on looking round,

she found her gone. After much search, she was discovered in the midst of a flock of sheep which were being driven to the slaughter-house. Some time after this the father ran away; and the mother went, with her young children, into the workhouse. A neighbor, a ticket-of-leave costermonger, saved the little girl, and sent her to her godmother, the Lady.

The Home is now altogether a household of fifty, including cripples, invalids, aged and infirm women, reprobate children whom no other Home will keep, very young orphans taken up starving out of the streets; and, among others, a woman and her two children, whose story is one of the old, sad and bad chronicles of deceit, vice, and self-indulgence. Their support comes from the laundry, from donations, and from the Lady's aged mother who allows her daughter to make up the deficiencies from her private purse. She, however, is very old and infirm; and when she goes, the prospect is a cheerless one enough. There are also all manner of stray and sick birds and animals, the care and love of which greatly help in the work of humanizing these poor little lost lambs. The Home has overflowed into three houses or cottages, where a wise division is as much as possible kept up; but, as we have seen, where it is not possible to keep up as much as would be quite wise. The children are from ten months to eighteen years old; and the adults number among them one old dame of sixty, and another of eighty. There is no room for them in the parish church, and their own little prayer-room is insufficient for their numbers. But they do the best they can, waiting for better days, and sure of the blessing of God.

The "out-girls" must not be forgotten. There are at least fourteen in service, doing well—some of them very well. Some of the letters which I have been allowed to read, sent by these out-girls to the old Home that sheltered, fed, and taught them to know good and to follow after righteousness, are wonderfully touching from their simple heartiness and earnest affection. Some, again, have gone wrong altogether; and some as we have seen, have flown back to the Home as their place of refuge from themselves. On this, Miss Cotton says in her report, or letter, "Here, again, I touch upon one of the pressing needs of such a work as this, a permanent Home for those quite unfitted to be out in the world."

There are many lovely charities in and about London, Charities in the support of which all may join, whatever the special dogma observed, because of the object which is beyond and above dogma. But there are none which appeal more directly to the heart, not only of Christians, but of citizens, of human beings, than the Children's Home at Leytonstone. To take out of the mire the wails and strays whom society has deserted and civilisation overlooked; to place them where they may be taught to get an honest living by their own industry, and to know good from evil; to humanize their wild hearts; to purify their soiled souls; to snatch from destruction so many immortal spirits; to bring the little ones to Christ, and to obey his behest, "Feed my lambs"—can there be a nobler object for any woman's work? for any man's sympathy? When we remember from what manner of life these children are rescued, what can we say but God bless the Home! God reward the tender soul that conceived such a work of mercy, and the brave heart that has battled for so many years with its difficulties!

## THE PICTURE OF HEALTH.

I am not less a devil-worshipper than the rest of my species; but I hate muscular depravity as I admire intellectual rascality. Dick Turpin I have always despised. A man who could only escape for a time, and at the cost of a noble "Black Bess," was not worthy the name of thief. Were I Lord Chamberlain, I should be very hard upon the Jack-Shppard drama. To exalt the brainless dare-devil villain above the calculating systematic scoundrel is an insult to our progress and enlightenment. A man who does all and more than a Dick Turpin could do, gets a flattering postscript put beneath his name on his tombstone, and leaves a good round sum to his rejoicing friends, is a rascal that obtains my profound respect. There is all the difference between the objects of my aversion and respect that exists between a great blundering donkey that breaks into my garden, tramples down my geraniums, and escapes by his heels or calmly takes a cudgelling for his misdemeanor, and a subtle fox, whose crime is only known by the scattered feathers of one other martyred goose.

The most admirable devil of my acquaintance is a Picture of Health. When I first knew him, he lived in an alley adjacent to our house, and within pea-shot of our upper window. This window was the coolest and airiest place one could find in the summer time, and the fact relative to distance was impressed upon me with wearying tautology. As soon as I had perched myself on the sill with a book, that interesting boy would appear at his window with a tin tube in his mouth, looking like a monumental cherub with a fractured trumpet. The Picture of Health was the son of a weazened care-worn little laundress—a restless, eager, anxious little woman, with a strenuous expression in every line and action of her body. He was as unlike her as a fine full-blown cabbage-rose is to the brier it grows upon. My mother was the first to call him "the Picture of Health," which she did in an envious tone, as she looked from his ruddy chubbiness to my sallow flabbiness. We were