

Visits to English Schools. IV.

By G. U. HAY.

Reference has been made in these notes to the good manners everywhere observable in the English schools. Courtesy in dealing with others seems to come natural to the boys and girls, whether belonging to the richer or poorer classes, and with it there is obedience and respect for authority. This in some degree may be due to the fine system of physical and military drill which is everywhere practised in the schools. In a school that I visited in West Kent, the first ten minutes of the outdoor recess were devoted to drill, the girls taking part in it as well as the boys, and going through the movements with equal ease and readiness. With the drill were combined exercises to secure freedom of arms and body with habits of proper breathing. The boys were practised in their drill and in target shooting at stated intervals after school hours during the week. The principal of the school, Mr. Baker, is the leader in all the sports and exercises of the scholars, and seems to enjoy them as much as his pupils. "Mr. Biker, you're ite," shouted a boy gleefully as the master laid down his bat in a game of cricket. "What does the boy say," I asked. "Oh," said the master, smiling, "we can't rid them of the dialect here. He tells me that I have made eight—Mr. Baker, you're eight."

An incident occurred in the schoolroom a few minutes after which was characteristic of the teacher and the school. A boy was reading a story where a western cowboy shot his foe before the latter could "get in on him." "That shows the advantage," the master explained, "of learning how to shoot and of being always ready to act on the instant." Few teachers would care to make use of such an illustration as this. The results of military training, however, and the ability to use a rifle need not imply that boys are taught to shoot indiscriminately at every living thing in sight. Accidents from the use of firearms or from careless shooting are far more common in this country than in England. The killing of song birds or other harmless animals in the woods would not be tolerated in that country. There is no doubt that teaching a boy how to shoot, as was done in this school, with incidentally the use and abuse of firearms, is an accomplishment which is of service to him. And teaching him military drill does not imply that he is being trained for a soldier, but rather for an athletic upright citizen who has

learned valuable lessons of obedience and self-restraint from the exercise.

The pupils sang two songs while I was in the room—Spring has Come and The Lark (in parts)—the teacher playing the accompaniment on a small cabinet organ. The voices were well tuned, without those harsh discordant notes so frequently heard in schools. The teacher was rather proud of his skill in music, and had some reputation as a song writer. He showed me a piece of music for which he had written the words, entitled, "The Men of Kent." The design on the title page represented some of the famous names in English history—Sir Philip Sidney (the ancient castle of the Sidneys was scarcely more than a stone's throw from the school-house), General Wolfe, whose father was a clergyman in one of the parishes of this county, the younger Pitt, Sir Francis Walsingham, one of the secretaries of Queen Elizabeth, Wat Tyler, leader of the peasants' revolt in the reign of Richard II, and other names scarcely less illustrious. The words of the song were spirited as became a theme dealing with such patriots. I thought how happy should be the children whose lot was cast in this pretty village of Penshurst, where that gallant soldier, Sir Philip Sidney, played as a child, and perhaps drew poetic inspiration from the noble and beautiful scenery around him. And the children were happy, singing with innocent enthusiasm of the great deeds of the "men of Kent," even though childish fancy could not comprehend their far-off greatness. They were being trained by one who entered into their sports and exercises, sympathized with them in their longings and taught them to love their country and home.

One evening in my rambles along the road in this part of Kent I fell in with a middle-aged farmer who was interested in what I had to tell him of Canada. As I turned to bid him good evening, he said: "Well, I doan't think there be such a place in the wide woarld as Kent; I've lived 'ere vorty year, and I'm well pleased, God willin', to live 'ere all my days."

The school at Penshurst was a clerical, not a board school, so the headmaster told me. Religious instruction was given during the first hour of the morning, as in other country or village schools I had visited. About fifty or sixty scholars were in the room, with a monitress to assist in overlooking the work. The pupils were engaged in arithmetic when I entered, shortly after ten o'clock. The