

THE CHURCH EXTENSION ASSOCIATION.

THE ORPHANAGE OF MERCY. OUR GIRLS AND BOYS.

THE GIRLS' HOME comes first in point of time and in superiority of numbers. It can reckon ten years and 300 inmates, while our Boys' Home was opened last summer and only contains thirty-five boys; so the girls take the precedence. We have a few new arrivals, and they shall tell their own histories, for we know our readers like to hear them.

The first is a solitary only child. Grace B., a little maid of twelve, seems to have had a lifetime of sorrows and cares already. This is her account of herself:—

'We had a nice home, we had. Mother was a dressmaker, and she could make dresses beautiful with only one hand.

'Oh, she was clever, mother was! Her work looked every bit as nice and nicer, than other folks' with two hands. She had a thumb on her right hand, and that was all. Father worked in a mill and got a good wage, and we all had nice clothes, and I went to school and passed second standard, and to church every Sunday with father and mother.

'Then mother began to get poorly, but she wasn't very bad till my birthday. We had some company to tea on my birthday—two or three little girls; and we had muffins, and I think a bit of mullin stuck in mother's chest, for she got a bad pain and grew worse and worse, and died in two or three days. I was bad off without her.

'And the next thing, father was carrying a heavy sack of corn up some steps, and his foot slipped and he knocked his leg and bruised himself all over, and then he got erysipelas. He was ill for three years, and I minded him, and cooked his meals, and did for us both. His masters sent some money every week all the time, and he never wanted.

'Then he got dropsy, but one day after the doctor had been he felt a deal better. Next day was a Saturday, and he says, "Gracey, I feel that better as if I could go to work to-morrow"; but to-morrow he was bad again, and Tuesday he died. And after the funeral I had to go to the workhouse.

'I was glad when they took me out and brought me here.'

N.B. We do not as a rule receive girls of twelve, but we could not leave this nicely brought-up child to workhouse training.

One day during this last summer there was great excitement in the Home. Five 'new little orphans,' as our children call the latest arrivals; all of one family.

The eldest, a girl of about eleven, acted as mother to the little group. This again is over the age at which we generally take children, but having vacancies how could we separate the desolate little family?

Hetty's two years of trouble have aged and sobered her. This is her account of it all:—

'Father was a butcher, you know, ma'am, and we were well off. We kept a horse, and had plenty of everything. We all went to school but baby and little Harry, till father got ill.

'It was one night he was coming along the street and there was a horse in a cart running away, and father was afeared it would do some mischief, so he stood ready to meet it, and caught at it and held it fast for a bit; but it was that mad, it broke away and threw father down. He picked himself up after a bit and got home; but when he got into the stable to "sapper up" our horse he felt bad, and he brought up some blood, and then he knew something was broke.

'He daren't come in and tell mother for fear of frightening her, so he went to a neighbour's and they took him to Dr. Jones; but he never got better.

'Oh, he had bad pains—we could hear him groaning—and then he died, and mother had to work for us. But she fretted after father, and worried herself so about all of us, she dwindled away in a year. We had parish pay, and there was nowhere for us but the workhouse.'

When we heard of this case, how thankful we were that we had it in our power to take the whole family into our Homes. The two fine little boys are in our Boys' Orphanage at Brondesbury doing well, and the three little girls are brightening and looking more like our children every day.

Our number of girl orphans is now quite made up. The Boys' Orphanage is not full, but we dare not receive more than the two or three little lads for whom beds have been promised till we see our way to maintaining them. Only twenty of our little boys have been 'adopted,' that is to say, have found a kind heart willing to make itself responsible for the 12*l.* a year which we reckon that the maintenance of each child costs. How thankful we should be, were some lover of little boys to come forward and undertake to be responsible for the food and clothing of one or other little