



HOMELESS.

The Story of the Children's Home.

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WE have always attached great importance to industrial training in the Home. The primeval curse of the ground was intended as a blessing for man. And in modern society the seed of pauperism is that many *will* not work, and a large number *cannot* work profitably. Of these, some have not the habit of industry. Steady application is to them a trouble and a difficulty; nay, it has become almost an impossibility. They are essentially "loafers." In all classes of the community the Micawber element—which is waiting for something to turn up, but never makes an effort to turn up anything—has its numerous representatives. And in proportion as a child is born near to the pauper class, in the danger greater of his taking readily to criminal ways, for the pauper spirit is not distantly related to the thief spirit. The pride of independence, and the sense of being able to earn an independent living, are enormous safeguards against both pauperism and criminality. If, therefore, you want to arm a child against the world, you must not only inculcate the fear of God and instil the love of home, but you must put him in the way to earn a respectable and comfortable livelihood.

Now, it does not much matter by what work a lad is broken in to industrious habits, if it only be honest work. But when you have some hundreds of children to train, you will certainly have amongst them a great variety of capacity and taste; and it is most desirable that you should be

able to afford a considerable variety and choice of employment.

Further, it is desirable that they should become acquainted with steady and recognised industries. Shoeblicking, woodchopping, street-step cleaning, and a number of similar occupations, will not provide permanent and satisfactory employment for the boys when grown up. Such employments, though useful for first breaking in the lads to industry, are not far removed from casual labour. We have, therefore, endeavoured to provide industrial training, which will open to the children hereafter spheres of permanent employment. In our country Homes we carry on farming and market gardening. To these I will refer more later on. In

London, besides the necessary household work and that of the kitchens and laundry, we are able to employ our boys in printing, carpentry, shoemaking, painting and glazing, and engineer's work. Then, for the girls, there is the work of the sempstress and some of the simpler processes of bookbinding.

In the printing-office as in the shoemaking department, contracts are undertaken, and fulfilled in good, workmanlike manner. Whilst not pretending to the highest and most finished styles, good, sound, average work is done, of which no establishment need be ashamed. And after doing this, our lads will be able to hold their places amidst their fellow-workmen of similar age in the ordinary labour-market.

But, it may be said, why complicate the arrangements of the Homes by introducing industrial pursuits? Why not give the children a plain, ordinary education, and let them begin work when they leave the Home? A full answer to this would require a long discussion of educational questions. Some, who can speak with authority, maintain that "half-timers" make as rapid progress in their intellectual pursuits as those children who devote two sessions daily to school work. However this may be, it is certain that the children of the Home take a very fair place, scholastically, as compared with those of ordinary elementary schools; whilst it cannot be doubted that the formation of the habit of industry is valuable to those who must depend on the labour of their hands for their future sustenance. Beyond all this, many of our boys acquire an amount of technical skill in their several industries which enables them to command good wages from the moment of their leaving our care.

The girls are, with rare exceptions,

destined for domestic service. We teach our girls to look forward to "service," either at home or abroad, as to a sphere in life not to be avoided, or to be accepted because nothing else is attainable—but to be welcomed and prized.

An increasing number of our girls is available for situations; and though we can by no means guarantee to meet all applications, we shall be pleased to receive them, and to meet them when possible; and, in any case, to send a prompt reply to any communication.

Thus, by the combined influence of religion, the family, and the workshop, the children are systematically trained; and, thanks be to God, with a large measure of success.

The physical change that comes upon many of them is very marked. Some of them have come to us in rags which would scarcely hide their nakedness. Some of these have been covered with itch, vermin, and sores; and the countenance, that quick and sensitive index of the inward condition, has told too plainly—by its vacant, or hungry, or downcast look—of the previous history of want, neglect, ill-usage, or injudicious treatment. And even of those children— orphaned or otherwise thrown on charity—who have never known these deeps of sorrow and shame, many have been underfed and indifferently clothed, and far too hardly worked, so that they frequently bring with them a bloodless complexion and heavy eyes, and a feeble, purposeless gait and deportment, which contrast strongly with the buoyancy and vigorous health to which most of them subsequently attain. Some, indeed, never lose—and never can lose—the effects of the sad experiences of their youth. They will always be undersized; and, alas! some will be, to their death-day, more or less crippled, and these, in some instances, through the drunken carelessness of a mother or the drunken cruelty of a father. But of the bulk of the children, it may be said, that a few months in the Home makes a wonderful difference in their appearance, and even works in them a sort of physical regeneration. Of course cleanliness soon takes the place of the hitherto habitual dirt. Sometimes a sort of "crisis" comes on, and there is an outbreak of boils or other sores, which give trouble enough for a time; but presently good plain food, regular hours, and cleanly habits, together with the calming influence of a contented mind, begin to tell, and soon "their flesh is as the flesh of a little child." The countenance usually accords with their general physical improvement; and most visitors are

struck with the free, happy, at-home look of our lads and lasses.

It must be acknowledged that there are some exceptions to this statement, as, indeed, might be expected. Some of the children come to us only to be nursed for heaven. The utmost that our care can do for them is to ward off for a while the enemy's attack, and try, meantime, to prepare them for Christ when he calls them. Several of the children have come to us with subtle but obstinate brain disease. Others have brought to us a constitution hereditarily and hopelessly unsound. A yet larger number have working within their systems consumption—that fell plague of our English race. Almost all the deaths which have shadowed the Home have been from these causes. One dear little girl came to us, with two brothers, from the far north of England. They were all doomed by consumption, and one by one we had to give them up at the call of their Best Friend. Dear little Maggie was a sweet, fair little flower, whom we almost grudged even to our heavenly Father's home. But she was ready to go; and after her spirit had departed, we found under her pillow her own little hymn-book, open at the page whereon was the simple hymn so many have learned to love:

"Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on his gentle breast;
There by his love o'ershadowed,
Sweetly my soul shall rest."

When Dr. Guthrie was dying, he said, "Sing to me a bairn's hymn." If his great heart could find comfort, after the experience of his brilliant career, in the simple words of a "bairn's hymn," who can doubt that in such teaching little Maggie's soul found, for her faith, power to soar and to trust?

(To be continued.)



LITTLE MAGGIE.