

Our Contributors.

A Visit to Bournville.

BY THE REV. CANON HICKS.

Like most of us, I had read and heard a great deal about Bournville, and had fashioned for myself a mental picture of its general features. I had also paid several visits to Port Sunlight, and had conversed at leisure with the best informed persons on the spot. I felt myself, therefore, the better prepared to take advantage of an opportunity which offered itself the other day of visiting the other "Garden City," which lies within five miles of Birmingham. What I saw, however, so much surprised and pleased me, and so far corrected and enlarged my previous impressions, that it may interest your readers to jot down a few particulars which especially struck me.

To begin with, everything in Bournville testifies to the personal qualities of its founder. The character of Mr. George Cadbury, his Quaker love of religion and of liberty, breathes through the whole settlement. I arrived at Bournville at 8.50 on a Wednesday morning in the summer. Many hundreds—I had nearly said thousands—of workmen in white blouses and caps were streaming forth from the factory towards their assembly hall, and I went in with them. In a few moments the hall was packed with an immense gathering of workmen. Mr. George Cadbury stood on a low platform, facing them. He gave out a hymn, "O for a heart to praise my God" (tune, "Belmont"), and the very volume of all those male voices impressed one. Then he read a verse of a psalm, and commented upon it in a few words full of piety and of practical religion. Then followed a few words of simple prayer, and all went off to work. Mr. Cadbury told me that at first he conducted such a service every morning himself. He had, however, found it better to reserve it for certain mornings. The girls have service on Tuesday and Thursday, the men on Wednesday. It lasts some eight minutes. He usually conducts it himself, but occasionally others take his place. Attendance at the service is voluntary, but they all like to come and it is taken out of the time of the employers. "Cadbury's girls" are said to make good wives, and they are known all about by the way they sing their favorite hymns amidst their household work. As there are some 4,000 work-people in the factories, the religious influence exercised by the head of the firm in this quiet way must have far-reaching effects. But this effect within the works is unquestionable. Religion is understood to be part and parcel of the daily life, and to mean not rapture but the fear of God and duty between man and man. One important consequence is the invisible bond of moral confidence which exists between employer and employed. "I want my people to think," says Mr. Cadbury. To this end he places Suggestion-boxes all over the works, and even in the cricket pavilion. He invites suggestions and criticisms with a view to improving methods and arrangements. Prizes are publicly given every year for the best suggestions. "How many suggestions did you receive last year?" I asked him. "Over 1,600," was the reply, "and more than half of these were worth adopting." Suggestion-boxes have been tried in other works before now, but they

have failed for lack of confidence between master and man. There is no such danger at Bournville.

I was less interested in the process of manufacture than in the social aspects of the place; so I wandered all over the Garden City with an expert guide, asking all sorts of questions. Let me note the points which chiefly interested me. Some thousands of girls are employed at the works, but no married women. "When a girl marries, her proper place is at home." The greatest care is taken of the physical health of the girls. While the men start work at 6 a.m., the girls do not begin work until nine as a rule and they leave off at 5.30; if overtime is required of them they make it before nine, and leave off, as usual at 5.30. Their day on Tuesday and Thursday begin with the short service at 8.50. All girls in the works under 14 and all boys under 16 are required to spend two hours per week in physical exercise under trained instructors. I came upon a squad of lasses, clad in gymnastic costume, merrily going through all sorts of drill and exercise in a spacious room half open to the air, with a skilled teacher. This is in the employer's time. Young women from a distance can find cheap accommodation at the hostel, under the care of a matron. A sense of dainty comfort prevails there. The hostel was once the mansion of the estate, and its architecture and grounds still retain their former grace and beauty. The grounds are set apart for the workwomen's recreation. Great care is manifestly taken of all the workers, a doctor and several trained nurses being always engaged rather in preventing than curing illness, every case of absence through illness being at once taken in hand.

The same principle of prevention has guided the founder in making the settlement a prohibitory area. No licence to sell intoxicants within the estate can ever be granted or even applied for until all the trustees have expressed their unanimous approval in writing. The pretty village inn, with its swinging sign-board and inviting garden settle, welcomes the traveller, but provides no intoxicating drink. The Garden City is being built upon the strictest principles of prohibition.

The common impression about Bournville is that it was founded to house the Cadbury workpeople. This is a complete mistake. It is open to anybody who likes to live there. The present population is about two thousand; it is intended gradually to grow to five or more times that number, but always on the principle of having only six houses (or about twenty five persons) to the acre. In addition to the gardens which adjoin every house, there are frequent open spaces and it is strictly laid down in the trust deeds that these are to be open spaces for ever, and are on no account to be built upon. Another very beautiful provision I noticed, namely, that frequent play grounds are arranged for children, the object being that every child under twelve years should be well within five minutes' walk of a safe place to play in. And such playgrounds—with swings and grass plots and flowers, and everything to make a children's paradise. I know nothing in Manchester to match this feature unless it be the children's portion of Whitworth Park, which is due to the thought-

ful sympathy of Mr. R. D. Darbishire. Let me repeat that the houses at Bournville are for anybody who cares to live there. Houses of all sorts and rentals are provided. Only about half of the present house holders are engaged at the chocolate works, but of course a large proportion of their young people are working there, as they like to be near their homes. It is the desire of the founders to mix the population and to secure for the city as natural a growth as possible. Its existence and prosperity are not necessarily bound up with the success of the works. An air of freedom and independence breathes throughout all the life of the settlement.

There is much variety in the size and plan of the houses. The architect has endeavored, as far as might be, to avoid the monotony and dullness of a "model village." Great care has been expended on making the cheapest houses comfortable and convenient. The system of "two down and two up" is steadily avoided. There are always three decent bedrooms, and the ground floor one good parlor, kitchen and a small scullery behind it. In front of the scullery fire is an ingenious feature which, if not original, is rare, and worth the attention of our municipal authorities. A bath is let into the floor, the wooden lid being covered by the hearth-rug. The water is poured in, but drained out. "This is a capital place for bathing the children," I said to the housewife who showed me the contrivance. "Yes, and for grown-ups too," was her ready reply. In front of every cottage is a little bit of garden-plot adjoining the street. This each tenant can do what he likes with, so long as it is kept tidy. The town-gardener is the judge of this. But, subject to this proper limitation, there is freedom. This contrasts somewhat with Port Sunlight, where the little plots in front of the houses must be left in turf, which is kept in order by the company.

A tender feature of the city is the block of almshouses, built in a quadrangle enclosing a broad garden, which at once calls to mind Fred Walker's beautiful "Haven of Rest." These dwellings are intended for the ultimate benefit of the workpeople, but at present they have no end of them. Any fit and proper persons from the district are admitted provided they have already five shillings per week and are over sixty years of age. It was a touching sight to watch these pensioners gathering from all parts of the quadrangle to ten o'clock morning service, some leaning on stick or crutch and others stooping with age. The rents of a row of villa residences are set apart for the endowment of the almshouses. This was the gift of Mr. Cadbury's brother.

The founder has a great belief in the moral value of the cultivation of the soil. Every lad in the place is encouraged to rent a piece of garden-plot at a small rate and cultivate it for himself. Tools, seeds, and instructions are all provided for him. Such inducements are wise, for it is a mistake to suppose that the town lad suddenly transported to the country will at once take kindly to the slow and patient though fruitful labor of the spade. Recreation proper is by no means forgotten. I visited the magnificent cricket ground, which was being mown by a motor machine. Two cricket professionals are always there. Any workman for five shillings a year is made free of the ground and its splendid pavilion and clubrooms. The river runs by it. A little further up-stream is the men's bathing place, and further up some capital fishing is to be had. "And where is the women's bathing-place," said I. And presently I was shown by the roadside and not far from the works, an immense covered