



THE HOME, BONNER ROAD.

The Story of the Children's Home.

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IV.

"SMALL as a mustard-seed." Such was to be the kingdom of heaven in its beginning amongst men. And such have been almost all things belonging to that kingdom which have ever been worth much to the world. For the seed can grow; it has life in it; there is something of God in it. Generally speaking, the things which begin with great flourish and noise, and are built upon a large and ambitious foundation, have not life in them, and, therefore, do not grow.

The Children's Home has grown. Here is the comfort; for this is one of the proofs that it is not our work, but God's. If it were a scheme of our own, we should be overwhelmed with its burdens and anxieties. But believing that he, who received and blessed the little children when he was on earth, is now the true Founder and Patron of our work, we can toil cheerfully in our subordinate task, since he, whose is the ultimate responsibility, has all riches, and might, and power,

and dominion—"yea, all things in heaven and earth." The beginning of our work was indeed very like the mustard-seed. For two years the Home was housed in a couple of inconvenient cottages. Then we removed to a range of workshops, having one house attached to them, situated near Victoria Park. At first we could only divide these workshops into suites of rooms by wooden partitions. But from the first we embodied in the arrangements all that has subsequently been provided in larger and more solid forms. We had the distinction of separate houses: we had workshops for several industries; and we had our little chapel for our daily united prayer. Soon sympathy and help were attracted to our work; and step by step, through the kindness of many friends, we have secured additions and improvements to our premises. At first leased for a short term, they have since been bought and enlarged by many accretions, until we have been able to secure the one house which was needed to make our property complete and self-contained.

Our chapel is now a very beautiful though simple building. The hard limit of space compelled us to build

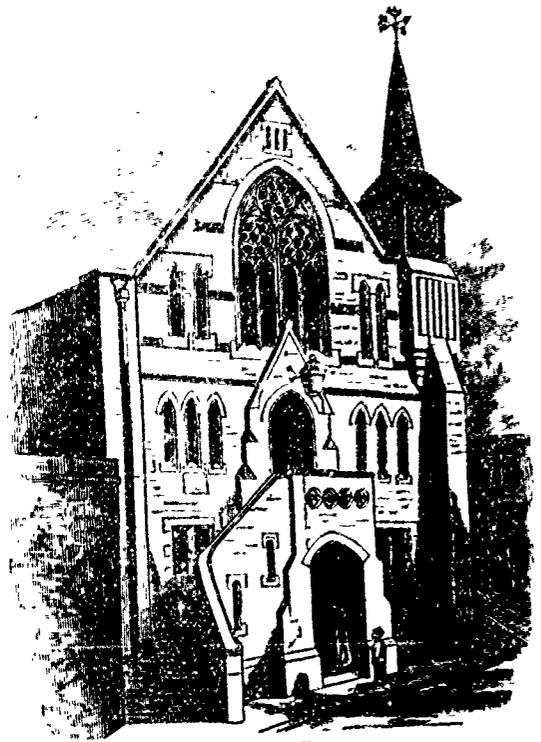
it over the schoolroom; but it has independent approaches; and once inside, the peculiarity of its position is forgotten. It has many points of special interest to such as know its history. The organ, a small but richly-toned instrument, was paid for by concerts, given for this purpose, by the choir of the Home. The Bible, from which daily lessons are read, is the gift of a true and now lamented friend of our work, the late William Whelpton; and that used on Sundays is the gift of old boys and girls, who have settled in Canada.

One of the pulpit

hymn-books is connected with a pathetic story: One of the boys of the Home was dying; he had a few shillings of his own; and when he knew that he was drawing near to his end, he asked that his money might be given to Dr. Stephenson, "to help him to keep other poor boys like me." When the dear lad had gone, the little legacy seemed too sacred to be put to any ordinary use, so a hymn-book for the chapel was bought with the money, and is inscribed, "George Pitman's legacy."

Two recent additions to the chapel have also some interest to a limited circle: A stained-glass window, given by the Principal's family as a thank-offering for preservation in their journey round the world; and a memorial-brass, bearing the name of "Sister Emily," the first child of the Home who became a helper in our work, and who now waits the resurrection-call in a South African grave.

The services of the Home Chapel are open to the public, though no effort is made to establish a regular congregation of "outsiders." We attach, however, great importance to the presence of visitors, which makes the worship "public worship," and something else than a mere part of institutional routine. Great pains are taken to make the service interesting and effective. The musical service is varied, and is led by the carefully-trained choir of the children. Some of the best church anthems are frequently sung. The chapel is used for no other purpose than worship; and all these circumstances combined, secure a solemnity and propriety of demeanour in the children which is remarked by all visitors, and might



THE HOME CHAPEL.

well be imitated by congregations of older persons. The chapel is something more than a convenience—something more than a necessary arrangement. It represents, and it continually fosters, the religious life of the Home, which is the mainspring of its activities, the true source of its power, and the only hope of its largest and highest success.

Another principle of our work is represented by the separate houses which constitute the Home. Four-

teen years ago "the family principle" was not embodied in any English institution. The Red Hill Reformatory had, indeed, discarded the system of massing together large numbers of children in one huge building. From the first, "The Children's Home" accepted and acted upon this idea: borrowing it, with adaptations and improvements, from Wichern's wonderfully successful experiment at Hamburg. One important, though indirect result of our work, has been that in several institutions, including some of the schools under the Poor Law administration, the "family principle" has been embodied, and is being wrought out with most happy results.

The principle is very simple. God "setteth the solitary in families." He is the "God of the families of the whole earth." We conclude, therefore, that the family is God's plan for the moral training of the human race. The sorrow and peril of the children is, that they are without a home. Now, when Christian love endeavours to supply what these children



WALTON MEMORIAL HOUSE.



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