

THE INDUSTRIAL HOME FOR BOYS.

BY A FRIEND OF THE WORK.

Among the many interesting sights in the city of Venice is that of the doves in St. Mark's Square ; and those who have the pleasure of seeing them must hear with interest also of the kind lady who provided for their feeding. But comparatively few know of the provision that has been made for those worthier than doves—the boys.

In Casa Scandiani, San Felice, resides Mrs. A. R. Hammond, the widow of that illustrious English captain who fell in the Crimean War. Eleven years ago she founded in Venice what is now known as "the Industrial Home for Boys," and it was started in a very peculiar manner.

She went to that beautiful island city with a friend in the fall of 1880, expecting to spend but a few weeks there. But in the providence of God her friend fell ill, and it was found necessary to pass the entire winter in Venice. With this long period stretching before her, Mrs. Hammond made it a subject of prayer that God would show her if He had any work for her to do in that city.

On the following Sunday she attended the service of the free Italian church ; but finding she had come too early, she took a back seat in the little Sunday-school, which was still in session. It was conducted by the pastor, Rev. S. Bernatto, and at the close of the lesson he made a prayer which he had never before offered in public.

"He prayed for the many poor, neglected boys who were growing up in ignorance, vice, and misery ; that God would open a way by which some of them might be reached, taught to gain an honest livelihood, and, above all, *be led into the fold of the Good Shepherd.*"

This petition seemed to Mrs. Hammond to be an answer to her own prayer, "a direct message from God" to her ; and, like Paul in his Macedonian mission, as soon as she had heard the call, "immediately" she "endeavored" to answer it.

This was in October of 1880 ; in March of the following spring the work was begun. It was started in a small dark room which Signor Bernatto had arranged that she might have, rent free, in the building where he held his services. Twelve poor boys, aged from eight to fourteen, were at that time gathered together. The colporteur of the free Italian church offered his services gratuitously for two hours every morning to teach reading and writing ; and a shoemaker was engaged to give instructions in that handicraft.

But after a little while it was found that it would not do to make all the boys shoemakers ; so a carpenter was hired, and some of the boys "took to the use of the saw and plane with much animation."

The work, however, was found to be without solid good unless a house could be obtained in which the boys might be lodged over night, and so kept from the influence of bad companions.