

A LILLIPUTIAN COMMUNITY.



DHUT up those dreary books and reports, and come and see the human material they treat of. A pinch of practice, in my opinion, outweighs a ton of theory."

Not very reluctantly, I piled my heavy Blue-books and Poor Law Reports together, and sallied forth with my friend into the bright, crisp autumn air.

"I am going to take you to the Chase Farm Schools at Enfield. You will have a lovely drive through what in olden days was the Royal Chase, where the great Queen Bess had her hunting lodge."

"In our practical days famed for its Royal Small Arms Factory and its palatial pauper schools."

"Now, hold hard; withdraw your adjectives. Not 'palatial,' and certainly not 'pauper.' I won't hear my dear children called 'paupers'—that is a *sine quâ non*, if you wish to raise the disinherited classes to self-reliance. Are these poor little atoms of humanity responsible for their own helpless condition? Is it their fault that they have sprung up in a hot-bed of misery, cut off from intimate acquaintance with even fresh air and clean water? Why, in addition to all these drawbacks, should they be made into a race of pariahs, hall-marked 'paupers' from their cradles?"

"The world doesn't generally credit guardians with such tender feelings."

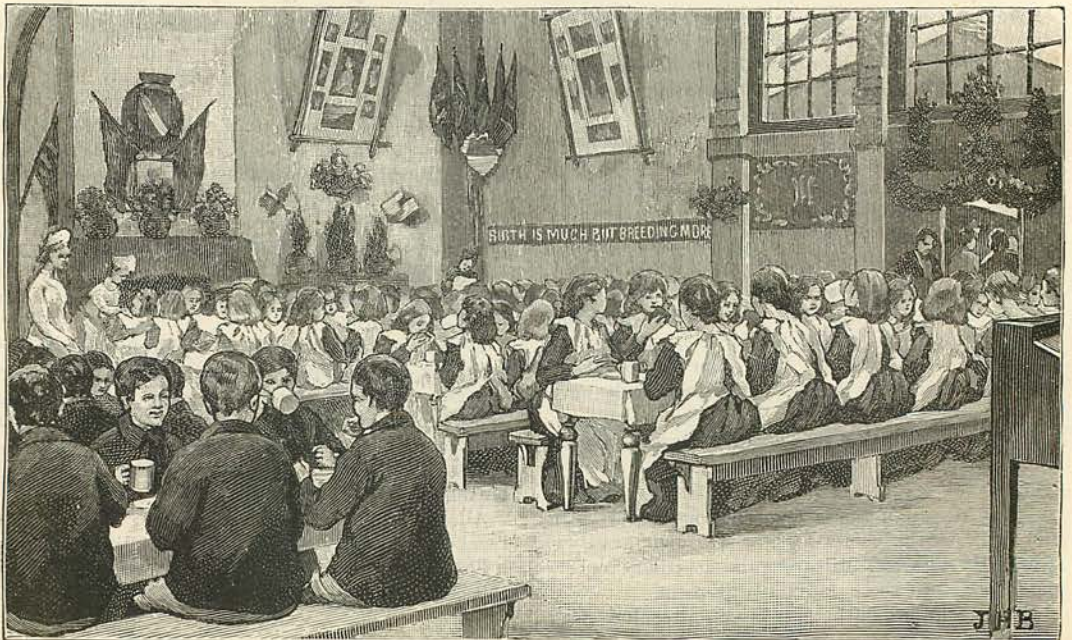
"It is not a question of anything but common-sense, and must be judged by results. We won't allow these children to be called 'paupers,' nor the school a workhouse school; and, I think, when you have seen all I have to show, you will agree that, as far as we are concerned, the 'Bumbles,' 'Tilly Slowboys,' and 'Oliver Twists' are creatures of the past."

It was not long before we reached the schools, pleasantly situated on the crest of a hill, with plenty of open air and space all round.

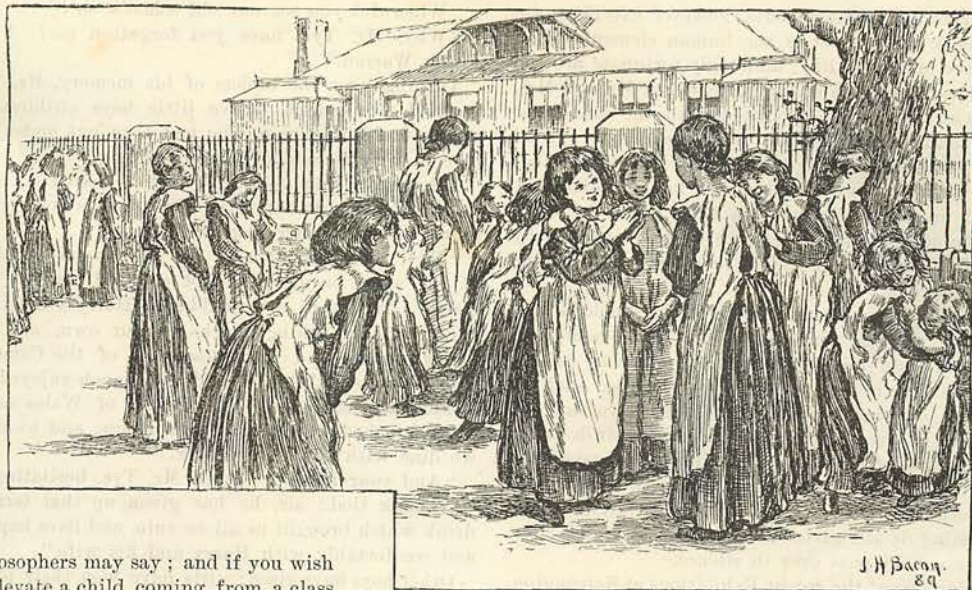
"Now, you can't call that 'palatial,'" said my friend, as we drove through a prettily laid-out shrubbery, up to the large new yellow-brick buildings, plain and substantial, built on what is called the pavilion system—a centre and three surrounding wings.

"I withdraw the word 'palatial.' The elevation does your architect credit; for, though quite unadorned, it is very attractive. It must have been pretty expensive."

"The total cost, inclusive of every item, was £60,750, which is entirely covered by a rate of 1½d. in the pound for thirty years. At present there are about five hundred children in training, but there is room for twice the number. When you have to meet the absolute requirements of many hundred children, you must have space and air. Cheap and nasty won't do when human lives are at stake; and more than human lives—souls and minds to be trained and elevated. Material surroundings influence everyone, whatever



IN THE HALL.



"GROUPS OF BRIGHT-LOOKING GIRLS."

philosophers may say; and if you wish to elevate a child coming from a class enfeebled for generations by bad air, bad food, and evil habits, contracted in crowded dens amid squalid surroundings, you must plunge that child at once into a life the very antipodes to that in which it has vegetated. It has been used to dirt and disorder of every kind. First, it must be made clean and tidy; then its mind must be developed to take an interest in work and a pride in doing well and excelling. Trained industry and a spirit of self-reliance are the only safeguards against the improvident habits which make our poorest class so dependent on the State."

The hall, which we just then entered, was airy and clean as hands could make it, tinted with a pleasant shade of French grey, which contrasted nicely with a deep chocolate-coloured dado, surmounted by a simple stencilled pattern. Wending our way down a spacious corridor, we passed the open door of the matron's store-room, which, fitted up with racks and shelves, seemed to contain more miscellaneous articles than any American store. At that moment the tables were laden with very tempting-looking cakes, which spruce, natty maidens were rapidly cutting up for the children's festivity, as this was the great occasion of the year—the annual prize-giving.

After crossing one or two open courts, we reached a spacious asphalted playground. Groups of bright-looking girls, in tasty brown cotton frocks and snowy pinafores, were gathered at one end, evidently in a high state of expectation as to the coming event; while a squad of boys were drawn up in admiration round the school band, whose energetic playing did much credit to their teacher.

"We spare no pains on our band," said my enthusiastic friend. "Hark what justice they are doing to the march which our Chairman, Mr. Latham, has composed specially for this occasion."

No one could doubt of the enjoyment and pride felt by the zealous little musicians, who looked alm st

military in their tasteful uniform of blue lined with red.

The company having by this time assembled, the drill-sergeant showed off the acquirements of his pupils, both boys and girls, who performed sundry evolutions, marching and deploying with an accuracy many Volunteer colonels might have envied. To this succeeded musical drill, in which both boys and girls displayed great agility and precision. Headed by the band playing merrily, all marched off to the fine lofty hall, over sixty feet in length, which was gay with banners, mottoes, and wreaths of flowers in honour of the day. A hecatomb of prizes having been awarded, to the evident delight of the recipients, the new swimming-bath became the next object of attention.

This bath, fifty feet by thirty, is filled with tepid water, and used on alternate days by boys and girls. More than anything, it seems to have given them a taste for an element of which the poor are generally rather shy.

Dressed in suitable blue serge swimming dresses, the girls swam bravely round and round the bath, and hotly contested the races, emerging dripping and radiant from the water. The boys in their turn exhibited their proficiency, disporting themselves like young Tritons, and eagerly diving after the small coin thrown into the tank by the amused visitors.

During this time the hall had been cleared and arranged for tea, and our last glimpse of the children was seeing them enjoying an extra-good supper of tea and cake in honour of the occasion.

A survey of the airy, clean dormitories, bath-rooms, lavatories, and cheerful class-rooms adorned with modern improved maps and coloured pictures, was enough to show how the welfare of the "children of the State" was considered.

Systems and arrangements, however excellent, are but the dry bones; it is the human element which gives the breath of life; and truly fortunate are the guardians in their chief superintendents, Mr. and Mrs. Tye, who have been associated with the school for more than twenty years. Both are equally proud of the successes of their large family, whose eventual career they follow with the most loving solicitude.

Such an establishment is a little world in itself, and the accumulated experience of years, as told by Mrs. Tye, is far more interesting than any volume of fiction.

The most encouraging feature of the whole is that not only are the children, as it were, re-created, fashioned into active, sensible, intelligent beings, but that they in many cases have exercised such an influence on their parents that they have dragged them out of the workhouse, aroused in their despondent minds a longing for independence, and raised the whole family from helpless pauperism into active and successful exertion. Time and space exclude the interesting details given of both boys and girls; but one we cannot pass over in silence.

During one of the recent Exhibitions at Kensington, a handsome, well-dressed man called on Mr. Tye, and asked to be allowed to see over the newly built schools.

"What an improvement on the old schools! Why, one could touch the ceilings there without much trouble. These are splendid!" said the visitor.

"When did you see our old schools, sir?"

"Why, Mr. Tye, have you forgotten me? I am Frank Warren."

Turning over the tablets of his memory, Mr. Tye recalled two bright, active little boys, children of a once flourishing man, who had been put under his care in very melancholy circumstances.

"Remember you?—certainly I do. Need I say how delighted I am to see that life prospers with you? How is your brother Harry?"

"Well and flourishing. We both work together at the same business. I got on, and married my master's daughter; so I could give Harry a hand up. Now we own fishing-smacks of our own, and are doing famously. I was chosen one of the Commissioners to the Exhibition, and have much enjoyed the kindness I have met. The Prince of Wales asked us to luncheon at Marlborough House, and to-night we dine with the Lord Mayor."

"And your father?" asked Mr. Tye, hesitatingly.

"Thank God! sir, he has given up that terrible drink which brought us all to ruin, and lives happily and comfortably with Harry and his wife."

Other boys have risen; girls have won their places in the world through their loving devotion to their employers. One has attained distinction by her great intellectual gifts, and not long since earned two hundred pounds a year as a lecturer in the United States.



WILD ROSES.

WILD roses, delicate and fair,
Born of the sunshine and sweet air,
On tangled hedgerows blossoming,

When happy birds are on the wing,
And skies are blue, and days are long,
Are they not worthy of a song?

Ah, yes! if perfect words could paint
Their colours, and recall the faint
Sweet fragrance of the summer noon,
And move in music to a tune
Filled with the joy of golden days,
And glow and stir of leafy ways!

A blissful morn comes back to me,
From that dear time when Marjory—
One year ago—was by my side!

And we had wandered far and wide,
And stripped, the lanes through which we passed
Till by a stile we paused at last.

"Here rest a moment! sister mine,
And round your brow my hands shall twine
A wreath of roses gleaming bright
With fairy petals, pink and white,
Warmed by the sun, and wet with dew—"
"But none," she said, "so sweet as you!"

Wild roses, gathered once by her,
Pure, fragrant, delicate, and fair,
Plucked in the morning, and at noon—
So brief is beauty—faded soon!
Yet in my heart, as bright and gay—
So long is love—they bloom to-day!

J. R. EASTWOOD.