

Miscellaneous.

THE CHILDREN OF THE POOR IN ENGLAND.

We conclude our extracts from the article in the London Quarterly Review, upon the sufferings of the children employed in various trades in England. The first extracts related to the state of things in Birmingham.

"Many are put to work at six or seven years old, if they have a father in the shop. An incident in confirmation of this is related by one of the Assistant Commissioners. 'While,' he says, 'I was in a cottage, where I found a boy with a sore foot bandaged up, caused by a burn in a spade factory, a sound of many voices singing swelled gradually near, and the boy, limping on his stick to the door, cried, 'Oh, mother, there's the nailers coming, may a thousand of them!—and there passed by a crowd of several hundred men, women, and children, singing a hymn, of which two lines (constrasting strangely with their look and errand) were:—

And not a wave of trouble roll, Across my peaceful breast.'

They were coming from the villages near Dudley to hold a meeting in Hales Owen to see if they could 'get out' the nailers who were working against them there; their strike having already lasted eleven weeks. 'It's heart-breaking work,' said the woman. Amongst the many children in the crowd there were two little boys, apparently six years old, or not much more, dragged along by the hand of a woman, probably their mother, foot sore and lame from their march. To see such infants made to take part in a strike and march miles to swell a meeting to spread it, was a sight which gave but a poor idea of the consideration which they are likely to meet with at home.'

"The rapidity of the work in which hundreds of young women and children are employed is extraordinary. In one of the processes of steel-pen making, a quick worker can cut out in a day ten hours, 36,000 steel-pens, an operation which involves 72,000 distinct motions of the arm, or two motions in each second.

"The great demand for young workers in Birmingham has a tendency to invert the natural order of labor as between parents and children. The defective state of education is brought forward very prominently by the Commissioners, and the ignorance not only on religious subjects, but even of the commonest and simplest objects of nature that was exhibited was amazing. In religion, especially, the minds of hundreds were found in a state of absolute darkness. In a button manufactory, out of thirteen selected boys, nine had never heard of the Bible or knew anything that was in it, and some of the elder boys laughed at the idea of their being supposed to know anything. On an analysis of a hundred, from seven to ten years of age, 72.5 per cent. admitted that they could not read, 13.75 practically could not, 12.5 could read a little, and the remaining 12.5, i. e. one girl, could read well. In Birmingham thirty-two persons averaging more than twelve years of age, including a young man of twenty and two young women, could not tell the Queen's name. The commonest and simplest objects of nature, such as flowers, birds, fishes, rivers, mountains, and the sea, were unknown. Some thought London a county, one that it was in the Exhibition; a violet was said to be a pretty bird; a primrose a red rose; a lilac also a bird; but whether a robin redbreast or an eagle were birds none could say; some knew not what a river meant, or where fishes live; or where snow comes from; and a cow in a picture was pronounced to be a lion. Multitudes of these poor children can never have seen a primrose by a river's brim, or heard the song of a lark—

"Not for them The vernal cuckoo shouteth; not for them Mourns the laboring bee."

"It is estimated that there are 70,000 children, young persons and women employed in the metal manufactures alone of England and Wales, who might, with the greatest benefit to themselves and their employers, be brought under the operation of the Factory Act.

"The number of children and young persons employed in the glass manufacture in the United Kingdom is 3934; and of females, above the age of eighteen, there are employed in England and Wales about 1600. The age at which children enter the glass-works is commonly between nine and eleven. The heat to which they are exposed is necessarily great, and they are often literally standing for hours 'between two fires.' In some works, as in the crown and sheet-glass houses, the boys are 'almost permanently' in a very high temperature, the hottest employments being those of the little shovel-holders and pushers, boys who protect the men, by holding up shovels, from the heat of the furnaces when they are opened for the extraction of the metal, and who also open and shut the doors. The heat to which they are exposed is terrific, and the thermometer held close to a boy's head rose immediately to 190°. The Assistant Commissioner, standing near a boy whose position was permanent, afterward found the crown and brim of his hat completely melted out of shape. At the mouth of another kiln, where the boys were constantly putting in articles to anneal, the mercury of a thermometer rose rapidly to the top, viz., 150°.

"Exhausting as the labor exacted from boys is, six hours is the utmost period of unbroken rest they are allowed, and in this is included the time spent in going home and returning, and for meals; leaving a very short period indeed for sleep, and none for recreation unless at the expense of sleep. Overwork is frequent. A little boy, ten years of age, had worked without cessation from seven on Friday morning until seven on Saturday evening, 'only lying down a little now and then on anything he could find.' In one sheet-glass manufactory a boy has worked thirty-six hours without going to bed, and another had worked for sixty consecutive hours. Night work prevails more or less in all glass-houses. It is impossible to conceive any system more calculated to ruin the health of growing boys, and to destroy their constitutions; their appearance is described as unhealthy, their frames slight, and they all suffer more or less from languor, head-ache, and the effects of sudden chills after exposure to great heat; their feet are often sore and blistered, and they not unfrequently fall asleep over their work. 'When you come to work at nine at night,' said a little boy of thirteen to the Assistant Commissioner, 'you do feel very sleepy, and have to sing to keep awake.'

"It might have been supposed that the rural districts of England would at least be exempt from the evils upon which it has been our painful task to comment, but agricultural labor is occasionally imposed upon children, to the serious injury of their constitutions, and under conditions peculiarly demoralising. In the course of the Poor Law inquiries which, in 1862, were instituted into the employment of women and children in agriculture, it was found that an organised system of labor called the 'gang system' existed in certain districts of Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, and Lincolnshire. A farmer who wished to have a particular piece of work done, such as a clearing land of stones or pulling turnips, applied to a gang-master, who contracted to do the job, supplying the necessary labor. The system still prevails; the farmer agrees with the gang-master and the gang-master bargains with the laborers. If the work, as usually happens, is such as can be partly done by women and children, the gang is composed of persons of both sexes and of all ages. They work together superintended by an over-keeper. In parishes where there is an excess of population, and consequently much competition for employment, these gangs are easily collected, and the farmers get his work done quickly and cheaply, and the gang-master is generally able to make considerable profit. His object is, of course, to extract the greatest possible quantity of labor in a given time for the smallest possible amount of remuneration. A herd of human beings of both sexes and all ages, often including very young children, is speedily got together, thus constituting an agricultural gang. The distanced traveled before work is commenced, is often five, six and seven miles, and the night is often passed by the party at a distance from home, huddled together in barns and out-houses, and without distinction of age or sex. In the formation of a gang the worst characters; male and female, are often collected from the neighborhood, and the contaminating effect of a promiscuous assembly upon the young who form part of it may be readily conceived. Out of a hundred girls in a gang, seventy have been known to have been previously demoralized. This system, we regret to say, has increased rather than diminished since public attention was first called to it. It prevails extensively over portions of Suffolk, Lincoln, Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire."

"There really in Christian England no remedy for this worse than heathen abuse but the one of Parliamentary interference? Cannot the condition of these parents be elevated by more efficient methods of intellectual and religious instruction? Is this one of the inevitable and frightful results of an overworked population? Or has the original Celtic and Saxon stock, represented by the lower classes of the English population, never been really civilized and Christianized, and is such want of natural affection among parents but an evidence of their remaining heathenism? A gang's man it is said often makes as much as 15s. a day.

THE GREAT REVIVAL AND ITS LESSONS.

The present, says a Chicago paper, is a marked year in the reign of God's grace. At no period for hundreds of years probably, has so large a number been brought to the knowledge of the truth as in the last few months. This revival spirit has not been local, but general, pervading the whole country.

A correspondent of the Evening Journal of Chicago, writing from Springfield, Ill., under date of May 7th, thus describes the revival in that city:

"The religious interest recently awakened in this community seems rather on the increase than otherwise. The clergy seem to have consecrated themselves anew to their holy mission, and given themselves with redoubled zeal and energy to the work of reclaiming lost sinners. The union prayer meetings and open-air services continue as per last report, with, if possible, increasing numbers. So great is the fame of the movement, that hundreds of persons are drawn to the city for miles around, who come to see and hear the wonderful things that the Holy Spirit is doing through the instrumentality of a preached word. Churches that used to be but sparsely attended are now crowded to overflowing with new converts and others seeking the way to Zion, and ministers that were considered but common-place pastors and preachers seem to have had their lips touched afresh with the 'live coal' from off the altar of Jehovah, and now carry the message of mercy to lost sinners with tenfold fervor and faithfulness. God is doing a great work here, and its effects are manifest all around. The following testimony on the latter point, will, I think, be considered impartial, when I assure you it is from the columns of the Register—a paper that has hitherto not only not given any countenance to the movement, but opened its columns to the most wanton and vulgar attacks upon both the originators of the reform and the movement itself.

"There can no longer be a doubt in the mind of any but that the revival at present in progress among us has been instrumental not only in bringing individuals to a sense of their duty and a change of conduct, but at the same time, has exercised a wonderful influence upon the whole community. While many have been converted among us, we believe all of our citizens have been more or less benefited, and should the interest in the reform be kept up, it is to be hoped that even more may yet be accomplished. What the officers of the law and the vigilance of the authorities have failed to effect, has been quietly brought about by the influence of these religious meetings. We refer to the moral reform in the community which has taken place within the past few weeks—evidences of which are constantly observable.

"Even the fears for the safety of life and property which pervaded society so recently, have been expelled, as it were, by an unknown power, and a sense of security seems now to be felt by our citizens, such as has not been known before for several years. If we are wrong in attributing this change wholly to the religious influence brought to bear upon society, we must at least partially account for it in this manner. We know of naught else which has thus suddenly arisen to bring about such a reform—a reform that has only been noticeable since the inauguration of these meetings."

GRANT AND STANTON AND LINCOLN.

When Grant was about to leave Washington to enter upon that sublime campaign which began with those terrible battles in the Wilderness, and closed with the capture of Richmond and the total overthrow of the rebellion, he called upon Secretary Stanton to say good-by. The Secretary was anxiously awaiting him. During the two and a half years that the President and Secretary of War had managed the Eastern armies, it was the first point in their plans to keep Washington heavily garrisoned with troops. Large bodies of men were stationed in the fortifications around the city, and other large bodies were kept within supporting distance. Now that Grant had come into power, Stanton wished to see that the defense of Washington was not overlooked. Accordingly, after a few preliminaries, the Secretary remarked:

"Well, General, I suppose you have left us enough men to strongly garrison the forts?"

"No," said Grant coolly, "I can't do that."

"Why not?" cried Stanton, jumping nervously about. "Why not? Why not?"

"Because I have already sent the men to the front," replied Grant calmly.

"That won't do," said Stanton, more nervously than before. "It's contrary to my plans. I can't allow it. I'll order the men back."

"I shall need the men there," answered the Lieutenant-General, "and you can't order them back."

"Why not?" inquired Stanton again.

"Why not? Why not?"

"I believe that I rank the Secretary in this matter," was the quiet reply.

"Very well," said Mr. Stanton, a little warmly, "we'll see the President about that. I'll have to take you to the President."

"That's right," politely observed the General, "the President ranks us both."

Arrived at the White House, Grant and the Secretary asked to see the President upon important business, and in a few minutes the good-natured face of Mr. Lincoln appeared.

"Well, gentlemen," said he with a genial smile, "what do you want with me?"

"General," said Stanton, siffly, "state your case."

"I have no case to state," replied Grant, "I'm satisfied as it is;" thus outflanking the Secretary, and displaying the same strategy in diplomacy as in war.

"Well, well," said the President, laughing, "state your case, Mr. Secretary."

Mr. Stanton obeyed; General Grant said nothing; the President listened attentively. When the Secretary had concluded, Mr. Lincoln crossed his legs, rested his elbow on his knee, twinkled his eyes, and quaintly said:

Bible, which is the revelation of God, having heard the glad tidings of salvation, responded to them, received them, and lived them out in our lives, what a wonderful and mighty influence would be exerted. And that such a Bible Society should be formed, and that from among all nations many such should be added to the church, this is the great object and work of our Bible Society, which may God prosper and bless to the glory of that eternal word which was from the beginning, and which shall be for ever and ever.—Rev. A. Sopher.

THE ECHO.

A little boy knew nothing about an echo; but one day he cried out as he jumped about in the grass, "Ho! Ho-o-p!" and immediately from a little wall close at hand, he heard "Ho! Ho-o-p!" Astonished he called out: "Who are you?" The voice at once answered: "Who are you?" "You're a stupid little fool!" cried the boy, beginning to be angry. "Stupid little fool!" came back from the wall. The boy grew enraged, and in his passion shouted all manner of abusive names; the wall gave them all faithfully back again. Then the child searched all over for the mocking boy, that he might take vengeance on him; but no creature could he find but a harmless pussy hunting sparrows.

Indignant and surprised, the child ran home and complained bitterly how a wicked boy, hidden somewhere behind the old wall, had been calling him bad names. "There!" said his mother, "you have betrayed yourself! You heard only your own words reflected from the wall, as you have seen your own face, sometimes, reflected from a glass. If you had given kind tones and friendly words, kind tones and friendly words would have returned to you again. And so it always is; the conduct of others is but the echo of our own. If we treat others kindly and considerately, they will treat us kindly, and considerately in return; but if we are rough and rude to them, we must expect nothing more ourselves."

This Albany Argus says that at a recent trial at Auburn, New York, the counsel for the Government, after severely cross-examining a witness, suddenly put on a look of severity and exclaimed:—"Mr. Witness, has not an effort been made to induce you to tell a different story?" "A different story from what I have told, sir?" "That is what I mean." "Yes, sir; several persons have tried to get me to tell a different story from what I have told, but they couldn't." "Now, sir, upon your oath, I wish to know who those persons are." "Well, I guess you've tried 'bout as hard as any of them."

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