

THE CITY OF THE ORPHANS.

From London Society.
This building cost over £15,000, and Mr. Muller transferred his orphans to it from the four houses in Wilson street in June, 1849. The size and accommodation of the house may be estimated when it is stated that it contains about 300 large windows, lighting work-rooms, school-rooms, bakery, store-rooms, teachers' rooms, play-rooms, dormitories, &c. There are also connected with it large open playgrounds with swings, jumping-boards, &c., for the children.

Since the opening of this new orphan-house at Ashley Down in 1849, the progress of Mr. Muller's work is one of the most extraordinary romances that ever was written. It was remarkable that he should have been supplied with the means of building the first large house at Ashley Down, considering that he never asked any man for help; but what followed was still more remarkable.

He had not had possession of the new house long before he had filled to its utmost capacity with children. It was wonderful to see three hundred orphans amply provided for in such a noble house through the instrumentality of one man—a simple-minded man who prayed for help when he needed it, and believed that his need would be supplied. As soon as his new house was full, Mr. Muller found that he had to turn away from his doors many orphans who were just as worthy of admission as those he had under his care. He had a great responsibility, for 300 children is no small family, but the insufficiency of his house gave him great anxiety.

When Father Mathew set out on his great crusade against intemperance, he made use of the memorable words, "Here goes, in the name of God." Mr. Muller, on finding the house containing his 300 children too small, resolved to build another, saying that it was God's work and not his. He made his second house larger than his first, and soon filled it with 400 more children, making a total of 700. Still the orphans came to his doors, and, in spite of the warning of people, who said the institution was already too large, he resolved to build a third house, larger than either of the other two, for the accommodation of 450 more orphans. This also he soon filled, thus increasing his family to 1,150.

Number One, Number Two and Number Three, as the houses are called, have been in full operation for some years; and as the three proved inadequate, Mr. Muller resolved to build two more houses, Number Four and Number Five, so that he might increase his family to upwards of 2,000!

And these two new houses are now almost completed, and in a few months will be fully occupied. When Mr. Muller had forty orphans, people said he had too many; what will they say now to his 2,100? The objectors have disappeared, and the institution is accepted as a great fact. Success has made it so; and now, when Mr. Muller's needs are greater than ever, he never has to complain of poverty. He counts his balances by thousands sterling, and continues to extend his "city" till people wonder where it will end. The sum of £250,000, which was the amount in which the orphans are lodged amounts to about £100,000, a large sum when it is remembered that all this has been contributed without the name of any donor being published.

The total sum which Mr. Muller has received for the orphans, since he opened his house for them in 1836, is upwards of £280,000. The letter box of his humble house, which is at 21 Paul street, Bristol (for Mr. Muller does not reside in the institution, although he spends the greater part of the day there), is as valuable as the cap of Fortunio. Passers by drop in all sorts of jewelry, and cash, and banknotes without stint. It is no uncommon thing for him to acknowledge in his "Narrative," which he publishes annually, a penny from an errand boy or domestic servant, and in the same line a thousand pounds from "A. B." or some other equally unpersonal initials. He has often received gifts of £500, £1,000, £2,000, £3,000, £4,000, up to £8,000 at one time, and these vast sums are all anonymous, so far as the public are concerned. Last year (from May, 1897, to May, 1898), the expenses connected with the orphans were nearly £34,000. Of this about £12,000 was the current expenses in connection with the orphans, and the chief part of the remainder was in providing new buildings. The cost of each orphan during the year was £12 10s, inclusive of every expense without exception. The general expenses for the previous year were upwards of £27,000.

What becomes of the children when they grow up? The girls remain in the institution till they are able to go to service. Mr. Muller keeps them till they are sufficiently qualified for a situation, and especially till their constitution is sufficiently established. They generally remain under his care till they are over eighteen years of age. If there happens to be any who are unfit, on account of delicate health, for domestic service, they are apprenticed to some light business. The girls are greatly in demand as servants, and their thorough training fits them admirably for such a position. Many of the girls now in the institution have been under Mr. Muller's charge for over seventeen years. They are instructed in reading, writing, arithmetic, English grammar, geography, English history, a little universal history, all kinds of useful needlework and household work.

The boys are generally apprenticed between fourteen and fifteen years old, but in each case Mr. Muller regards the welfare of the individual orphan without having any fixed rule. They have a free choice of trade, but when once they have chosen they are not permitted to change. Boys, as well as girls, have an outfit provided, and any other expenses that may be connected with their apprenticeship are also met by the funds of the orphan establishment. The boys have the same mental cultivation as the girls, and they learn to knit and mend their stockings. They also make their beds, clean their shoes, and do a little garden work in the way of digging, planting, and weeding the vegetable plots around the institution.

The health of the orphans is remarkably good, a fact which may be easily understood when the hygienic arrangements of the orphan houses are known—lofty, airy, warm, and thoroughly ventilated rooms for school and play, and sleeping apartments which cannot

be surpassed for healthful comfort. The rate of mortality is considerably lower in the City of the Orphans than the average mortality of England. While in London—one of the healthiest of the large cities—the rate of mortality is over twenty per annum for every thousand living, the rate in the city at Ashley Down is little more than half this, a fact which is remarkable when it is known that many of the orphans have naturally a weak constitution. The healthful and cheerful appearance of Mr. Muller's children is a matter of remark by all who see them. In their play-rooms there are plenty of toys—contributed by the public—and it is a matter of real interest to see hundreds of them together in these vast apartments indulging in all kinds of childish sports and games. They are a happy community, full of animal spirits, and apparently as capable of enjoying life as the most favored children in the country. It is long since the City of the Orphans acquired far more than a local interest. We have only to look through the most recently published of Mr. Muller's "Narratives" to see how widely the institution is known. As we glanced casually over the pages we see that a baker in Bedfordshire sends £5, being a penny on every sack of flour he bakes, and the first money he makes in a morning in his little shop; a Bristolian sends £100; from Devonshire (no further particulars being supplied), £190 2s. 11d.; from Appenzell, Switzerland, £2; from Holland, 40 florins; from Blackheart, £100; from a shipowner, £100 instead of insuring his ship; from R. S. T., Calcutta, £5; from Demerara, £4; from Bengal, 100 rupees; from the neighborhood of Bath, £500; from Scotland, £50. From every point of the compass, from far and near, Mr. Muller now receives aid; and it may be truly said that there are few foreign mails which do not bring donations towards the support of the orphans at Ashley Down.

(Concluded.)

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