

THE CITY OF THE ORPHANS.

From London Society.

A man who has a family of nine, even when he has a fair income, thinks he has a good many mouths to fill, but the remarkable peculiarity of Mr. Muller's case was that he had a family of nearly ninety, lodged in three large houses; that he provided them with wholesome food in abundance, and also with clothing as well as he could afford; that for many years his means were very low, but it is equally true that in his extremest need help always came. Sometimes he had help from strangers, for even in these early days of the institution it became known that the poor Prussian, whose heart yearned for the orphan, had a family of nearly ninety depending solely upon the public for support. Sometimes a five or ten pound note was dropped anonymously into his letter-box. Other contributors who had observed Mr. Muller's work sent him presents of oatmeal, of treacle, of vinegar, of cloth, of shoes, &c., but there was no ostentatious publicity to be got out of the contributions, whether they amounted to hundreds of pounds or to a single penny, nothing but the initials of the donor being given in the account in any case. Nor had the donors any right of nomination in respect to candidates for the institution. All Mr. Muller asked of persons who brought orphans to him was: Are both the child's parents dead? Was the child born in wedlock? Is the child destitute? If these questions were satisfactorily answered, there was nothing about the favor of subscribers or the religion of the deceased parents. The children were taken into the houses so long as there was room for them, in accordance with the order in which application was made for them. Mr. Muller's plan was a liberal application of the familiar phrase, "first come first served," and from that plan he has never deviated.

In 1839 there was a repetition of the previous year's experience—daily necessities strangely met, and the building confidence of Mr. Muller. On February 3rd he had not a penny in hand, and on the 12th there is similar report in the "Narrative." The same thing occurred at various subsequent dates up to the end of the year, and all through 1840, 1841 and 1842. About the middle of 1843 there were many applications for the admission of orphans, but as the three houses were as full as could be, having regard to the health of the children, Mr. Muller, to the astonishment of the neighborhood, rented another house and this too he soon filled with orphans.

Up to this time these strangely supported orphan-houses had been a marvel to everybody. Some had scoffed at the efforts of the poor Prussian mission, but many, struck with the true humanity of his daily life, his most tender care of the fatherless and motherless family of which he had taken charge, helped him. Some sent him silver spoons and half-worn trinkets and jewelry; poor men saved a portion of their wages for him; rich men gave to him liberally. But, as his expense was great, all he got occasionally failed him, and then the institution seemed on the verge of destruction, but only to prove once more that there was in it a principle of vitality, which, however incompressible it might be to ordinary observers, was nevertheless real.

But although the helpers were many, and were continually increasing, the institution was not without its difficulties in 1844. On the second of April Mr. Muller writes in his "Narrative": "The need of to-day was 25. 0s. 6d. Yesterday I had paid away all the money in hand, but in the afternoon there came in by sale of articles (given for the benefit of the orphans), 42. 17s. 6d., by the boxes in the orphan-houses, 5s. 6d., and by needlework of the orphans, 4s. 3d., so that we were enabled to meet the demands of the day."

On the 10th of June he had not a penny left, and on the 12th of June he had only threepence for the next day's maintenance of the orphans. "Timely help came, however," and the children, who knew nothing of the poverty of their protector, never went without a single meal. On the 24th of July Mr. Muller writes: "To-day two orphans were brought from Bath; for though we are so poor, the work goes forward, and children are received as long as there is room." The poverty and the expansion, in fact, went along together. Mr. Muller's plan being to take in children, irrespective of the present means, so long as he had space in his houses to accommodate them. At the end of July, 1844, Mr. Muller had received in donations 27, 74s. 16s. 4d., without having applied to anybody for a single subscription, and he had then in his four houses 121 orphans.

This large family often exhausted his means, notwithstanding the liberal donations he received. One day he was comparatively rich, another day he was exceedingly poor. Under the date August 7, he writes in his "Narrative": "There came in, when there was not one penny in my hands, 4s. and 3s. 6d. I also found 3s. in the boxes in my house, 10s. was given as the profit of the sale of ladies' bags, and 2s. 6d. as the produce of a forfeit-box at a young ladies' school. Likewise were given to me two gold rings, two gold watch-keys, a pair of ear-rings, a gold brooch, two watch-buckles, a pair of bracelets, a watch-hook, and a broken brooch. Thus we have a little towards the need of to-morrow." All through 1844 there were occasional days when the funds were exhausted, and other days when there was abundance of means, and these vicissitudes continued through 1845 and 1846. In the latter year Mr. Muller resolved to build a house specially adapted for the orphans. The large number of children he then had in his four houses in Wilson street were found to be a great inconvenience to the neighborhood, in consequence of the noise they made during their play hours, and there was also defects in the houses in respect of ventilation, the houses not having been built for so large a number of inmates. Mr. Muller accordingly bought a field at Ashley Down, and in July, 1847, commenced to build his new house, and thus laid the foundation of what we have called the City of the Orphans.

The new house was built to accommodate 300 children, namely, 140 orphan girls above seven years of age, 80 orphan boys above seven, and 80 male and female infant orphans.

(To be continued.)

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