

The Hospital World.

HER MAJESTY'S HOSPITAL AT STEPNEY.

In a few days the body of Dr. Thomas J. Barnardo, one of the most practical workers in the realms of philanthropy of this or any age, will be laid to rest in his quiet grave at Barkingside, Ilford. His funeral ceremonies are being made the occasion of a great public ovation and recognition of his unique life's work, spent in helping to raise from their submerged depths the most unfortunate, poverty-stricken, and hopeless class of human beings to be found in this city of stupendous wealth—the class which exists as a shameful reflection on the incompetence of our municipal organisation, and as a monumental evidence of our hardness of heart.

To the dwellers in East London the name of Barnardo has stood for brotherhood these many years; indeed, ever since that memorable evening now nearly forty years ago, when one of the waifs who had crept into his ragged school, situated in the heart of Stepney, entreated permission to stay in the schoolroom after the others had left:—"What would your mother say?" asked Barnardo. "Ain't got no mother." "But what would your father say?" "Ain't got no father." "Where do you live?" "Don't live nowhere."

He asked the boy—Jim Jervis by name—whether there were others like him in London without a home or friends, and the reply was: "Oh, yes, sir, 'eaps on 'em; mor'n I could count."

In the company of this poor lad Dr. Barnardo went warily through the gutters in search of these starving, heart-broken children. The dedication of his life to the amelioration of their sorrows was the result.

The story of his struggles for their sakes, and his stupendous success, are written in tongues universal, and the thirty-ninth annual report, which was about to be issued at the time of his death, shows that the year 1904 began with 7,078 children in residence in the various Homes, and that at the end of the year there were 7,855, an increase of 777. Last year saw the largest number ever admitted to the Homes in any single year—namely, 3,827. In addition, 120,239 free meals and 31,032 free lodgings were supplied to boys and girls, and 92,533 garments were given away. In the same period the donations amounted to £187,508 15s. 1d., but the report points out that notwithstanding the increased generosity of the public, "we are growing more rapidly than our income." At the end of the year the council was faced with an overdraft at the bank of £33,000, and the expenditure during 1904 exceeded the income by £44,598, a deficit which caused the Founder much terrible anxiety.

Those who can find time to visit the Central Home at Stepney Causeway by stepping across the street may be shown Her Majesty's Hospital,

which contains ninety cots and beds, which are always full of the sick and maimed. Wee babies from one week to a few years old have their own pretty ward, gay with red and white striped quilts, flowers, and toys. I paid a surprise visit to this interesting children's hospital on Monday, and in the absence of the devoted Matron, Miss McCaw, on holiday, I was courteously shown over the institution by Miss Fountain, her assistant. The wards were charmingly neat and clean, and yet, each child was happily employed with books, work, or toys, especially toys; one and all seem to have been trained in gentle manners and with entire lack of shyness, saluted, welcomed the visitor, and with trusting confidence and pride permitted her to enjoy a sight of various treasures.

Many of these children were very bonnie, and of refined appearance, and their little hands plump and pink, or transparently white, were beautifully shaped, hands intended for honest bread earning, and not for thievish tricks.

To work amongst these rescued innocents must be ennobling work, and as probationers are admitted at twenty, here is an opportunity for those too young for admission to the big hospitals, to come into living touch with great human problems, and to the very heart of things. Her Majesty's Hospital stands upright, surrounded by densely populated little streets, and from the flat roof one gets a bird's-eye view of life as it is down East, in the hidden back yards of the homes of the poor. In one yard an enormous tub of golden toffee was bubbling. By and by, a pale youth came forth with a tray of cocoanut chips, rind and all. This was tipped into the tub and stirred around with a flat piece of wood—and very black was the handle. Now we know where those piles of this delectable and indigestible delicacy hail from, which we see trundled about on barrows, in company sometimes with red herrings and shoe leather, in our meaner by-ways.

Close by cocks and hens peck and strut, and a variety of home trades are carried on. Just one attempt at a garden was to be seen, where some green shrubs flourished and a few pale yellow flowers seemed to have gathered to themselves the last of summer's sunlight. On the whole, these yards were fairly tidy, perhaps in deference to the hospital eye, as the private rooms of the medical officer open cabin-like on to this deck roof, a quaint and airy arrangement. Although in such good order, we learned that Her Majesty's Hospital is conducted with the utmost economy, which should encourage the charitable to increase their gifts.

All hope of raising the masses is centred in the rescue of their destitute children, giving them, as far as possible, healthy minds, healthy bodies, and training them as honest wage-earning citizens, a truly national work in which the more fortunate should feel it their duty to take a part.

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