

# VARIOUS

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL  
OF POPULAR  
LITERATURE, SCIENCE,  
AND ART, NO. 707, JULY  
14, 1877

Various

**Chambers's Journal of Popular  
Literature, Science, and  
Art, No. 707, July 14, 1877**

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Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature, Science, and Art, No. 707,  
July 14, 1877 / Various — «Public Domain»,

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## A 'VILLAGE HOME.'

Industrial schools, in which poor children, the waifs of the streets, are fed, lodged, and taught some useful employment, have been in existence for more than thirty years, and are on all hands acknowledged to have been successful as a means of preventing – or lessening the amount of – juvenile crime and vagrancy. The weak point in the organisation of these schools is that they rely for support on the voluntary contributions of benevolent individuals, instead of forming part of the poor-law system, and being thereby maintained by the whole taxable community. Some will think there is a more serious drawback in their constitution. By whatever name these schools are known, they are in effect asylums for the grouping of children to the number of several hundreds in a large establishment; and so far are a repetition of the old species of hospitals, which are now generally condemned. On a late occasion we brought under the notice of our readers a method of boarding-out pauper children among the families of rural labourers and small tradesmen in country towns, which has proved eminently successful wherever it has been tried in Scotland. As this method of boarding-out is under the administration of parochial boards relying on rates, it has, with other merits, that of not specially taxing the benevolence of particular individuals.

What we peculiarly admired in the boarding-out system was its conservation of the family-home as a means of juvenile nurture and intellectual and moral culture. We now propose to give some account of a family-home system which has been established in England. It differs materially from that prevalent in Scotland, and further labours under the objection of being a voluntary charity similar to that of the Industrial schools. Though not quite to our mind, it is much better than nothing, and we bespeak for it the kindly attention of the public.

This English 'Village Home' system originated in the efforts of Dr Bernardo, who began with a 'Home' for Arab and gutter boys in London. No sooner was this Home in operation than he set about founding a similar establishment for girls, in which good work he was ably assisted by his wife. 'The Village Home' at Ilford in Essex, for orphan, neglected, and destitute girls is the result.

Little girls up to the age of eleven or twelve are rescued weekly from misery and danger and placed under the care of a Mother. Even babies of only twelve and fifteen months are admitted, in cases where the detective, employed by Dr Bernardo to find out wretched and abandoned children, learns that the child will be brought up by a 'tramp' to a life of infamy. Before a girl thus rescued is permitted to join the family of which she is to become a member, she is carefully tended for several weeks in a Home in London, in order that her freedom from disease and her personal cleanliness may be secure; after which she is sent down to Ilford, and becomes at once a member of a *family*, with a dozen other girls of varying ages for playmates and sisters. The Mother gives her a kiss, and tells her to be a good girl, and they will all love her dearly; and in a few days the forlorn little one is transformed into something human and child-like. In order to become acquainted with the internal organisation of this 'Home' training of large numbers of destitute children gathered together from all parts of London, we recently visited Dr Bernardo's 'Village Home' at Ilford, the third and most recently founded establishment of the kind. Thither we repair, and find that the pretty red cottages which compose the Village form an oblong square, which surrounds a large open space of ground, intended hereafter to inclose a piece of grass of sufficient size for the grazing of a few sheep. A

picturesque gateway admits the visitor to the governor's house, which is built in the same style as the cottages. We were met at the entrance by the governor.

'The children are all in school now,' said he; 'what do you say to going there first, and then you will see them all together?'

During a walk of some five or six minutes, past a dozen cottages and through two or three turnstile gates, we met on our road half-a-dozen happy-faced little children minding babies younger than themselves. The school-rooms occupy a long detached building. We entered one, a large cheerful room furnished with desks and forms, and hung with maps, pictures of animals, and illustrated texts of Scripture and homely proverbs.

The girls regarded us with bright cheerful curiosity. There was no stolid indifference or sullen discontent expressed in any of their faces. They stood up as the governor took off his hat, and each one dropped us a quick little courtesy and smiled pleasantly as we passed by her desk. The ages of the children in this room varied from perhaps ten to fourteen or fifteen; and we observed that their hair was not cropped, that it was braided close to the head, according to the fancy of the owner, where it was long; and that those who had it short wore either a round comb or piece of dark ribbon to keep it from falling over their eyes.

On our remarking to the governor that this in itself was a great improvement on the usual habit of keeping the hair cropped, he replied: 'We do all we can to develop nice womanly habits in the older girls, so we make it a rule *never* to cut their hair, so long as they keep it clean and tidy; and we find the plan succeeds very well, each girl knowing the penalty she will have to pay for slovenliness in this respect; and as you see for yourself, they take care to keep their locks.' The girls are not dressed in uniform, which we consider to be advantageous.

A pleasant-faced schoolmistress presided over this room. The hours perhaps are a little longer than is absolutely necessary; but still, although morning lessons were just over, we searched in vain for one over-tired listless face. All the children looked happy and bright and clean, and most of them were so healthy in appearance that it was a real pleasure to watch them eagerly putting away their slates preparatory to scampering back to their various homes.

The school-room education is sound and practical, and suited to the position the girls will occupy on leaving the Village.

An animated scene met our view as we turned into the square around which stand the various Homes. About a hundred girls, from fourteen years old down to babies only just able to toddle, were laughing and chatting merrily as they hurried along the broad pathway, and gathered in clusters in front of each cottage, glancing shyly at the visitors walking behind ere they disappeared indoors like bees returning to their hives.

We entered the first Home; and as they are all alike in form and arrangement, a description of one will suffice for all. They are of red brick, detached, and of Gothic style, containing day-room kitchen, scullery, and pantry on the ground-floor, besides a tiny private sitting-room for the Mother. The sleeping apartments are up-stairs, five in number; four for the little family, and one small one for the Mother.

From half-past twelve to one is dinner-hour, so we arrived just in time to see the meal served. Each cottage is presided over by a woman carefully selected for the post she has to fill, capable of both firmness and gentleness, of an affectionate disposition, and accustomed to manage children. She is called Mother by the little ones under her care; her will is law; all in her cottage obey it; or if not, are treated as naughty children would be in homes of their own. The various arrangements of the household are made clear to each inmate, and the conscientious carrying out of them is inculcated on each member of the family for the comfort and well-being of all. The cottages are large enough to hold twenty girls, five in each bedroom; but when we were there, none of the cottages contained more than fifteen or sixteen.

The rooms in which the girls sleep are plain and homelike. Small iron bedsteads painted green, and covered with a counterpane bearing the name of the Village, woven in the centre, occupy the corners; a washing-stand with basin and jug and soap-dish of simple ware, is placed on one side, to enable the girls to learn to use and lift such breakable articles without fear or awkwardness; combs and brushes are kept in a drawer, and a square looking-glass hangs on the wall, that there may not be any excuse for untidy appearance.

Nothing is done in the Home by forced routine. The older girls take it in turn to help to cook the dinner, to lay the cloth, to keep the house in order, and to imitate Mother in everything she does. Each small domestic duty is performed over and over again, till each child learns to be quite an adept at cooking potatoes, or cleaning out a room, or washing and dressing a younger one; and takes a pride in her work, so as to be able to do it *as well as Mother*. The child is daily and hourly accustomed to perform small services for the household, to keep down her temper, to give sympathy and willing aid to those who have not been so long in the Home as herself, and to do all she can to help Mother; hence, when she enters service, she has already learnt in her Home to do thoroughly all the commonplace duties which are likely to fall to her lot as a servant. In these Homes every girl has a motive for which to work; she is taught to love truth, to be gentle and modest, and to give and accept the affection to which all have an equal right from Mother down to the youngest in the house. Family interest is encouraged in every cottage; the girls are taught to regard each other as adopted sisters; individuality of character is carefully studied by the head of the household, and as far as lies in her power, is trained into usefulness for the benefit of the whole community.

Every day, in each household one or two stay from school for an hour or so, in order to learn the art of cooking the simple dinner partaken by their sisters when they come home. The table is carefully laid; every article in the kitchen is scrupulously cleaned; the rice, if it be rice-day, duly weighed, washed, boiled, and constantly watched by the eager pair of eyes whose duty it is to see that it does not burn; and then, when all, with clean hands and faces, are seated round the table, the little cook of the day has to carry the plates full of rice to Mother, to add the treacle or sugar allowed, according to the wish of each child.

The furniture of the cottage throughout is solid and plain, and of a kind that can be kept clean by scrubbing. The children amuse themselves in the room in which they dine; at one end of which are shelves divided into pigeon-holes, in which each girl may keep her work and small treasures. These pigeon-holes are left unclosed, to teach the children to resist the temptation of touching a sister's things without leave. In this room they play, work, mend their clothes, darn their stockings, and talk to Mother, who sits with them for the greater part of the evening. She has her own private parlour at the side, from whence she can command a view of the kitchen and scullery and see that all goes on well there; and at the same time she can hear, without being seen, the conversation that takes place between her children and any relative who is permitted to visit them; an arrangement which often avoids harm from injudicious influence.

One of the special duties of the Mother is to inculcate habits of domestic comfort in a home on a small scale, and so to cultivate the powers of contrivance of each girl as to obtain the greatest possible amount of household pleasure for all.

Each girl's clothes are kept on a shelf in a press; the elder ones superintend mending operations, and the tidiness of the younger ones. There is *no number* marked on their things, not even on the shoes and boots, which are kept beautifully clean and ready for use in a recess at the foot of the press.

Everything about the cottage bears the stamp of ordinary home-life; nothing is institutionised. Every natural social feeling is fostered and developed in this Home life, so that when the time arrives for a girl to go into service, she carries with her into her new home not only a practical knowledge of the duties expected of her, which fits her to hold her own among her fellow-servants, but the firm conviction that she has only to do well to get on; added to which she wears in her heart the very best

preservative against doing badly, the talisman of the love and affection of the family amongst whom she has been reared.

Each cottage is called at Ilford after the name of a flower – Hawthorn, Rose, Forget-me-not, Sweetbrier, and so on; and as far as possible the hats and cloaks for Sunday and holiday-wear are identified, each with its Home; so that the groups belonging to the various Cottages may be distinguished in church by the differing colour of the hat or style of the cape.

A large laundry is attached to the cottages. Here the girls learn laundry-work, from the clean washing and ironing of a coarse towel to the careful goffering and ironing of a lady's ruffle or a gentleman's shirt. They all take their turn in every department of the work, not doing a set piece and then leaving it because the task is done, but taking an interest in the part assigned to them, and each one vying with the other in quickness and thoroughness. The pride with which they exhibited their ironing shewed plainly that it was no forced task, but a labour of genuine pleasure. Bright pleasant-spoken women superintend this part of the Home, inculcating that 'everything that is worth doing at all is worth doing well,' and seeing that nothing is left till it is finished. Although it was the dinner-hour, several of the girls were still busy at the tables.

'It won't take you five minutes to finish that shirt, Lucy,' we heard one of the women say to a rosy-cheeked girl; 'and it would be a pity to leave it; the starch will get so dry.' The girl answered with a smile, and went on ironing cheerfully, quite as anxious that her work should look nice as the Mother was for her. Such training as this cannot fail in its desired effect; and girls taught thus early to take an interest in the labour of their hands, cannot fail to do honour to the Home they have been reared in, and the kind Mother, whose affections they hope to retain to the end of life.

A girl who had been thus trained for two or three years waited on us at lunch at the governor's table. She is about thirteen, and not very big for her age; but she managed not only to supply us with all we required in a handy way, but to carry up to the nursery the babies' dinner. Her movements were quiet, her manners dignified and self-contained, and she kept an eager watch on us, to observe if we had all we needed. She was evidently intent on doing her best, and was ambitious enough to even try and divine if anything was missing. We were informed when this girl left the room that she had been in the Home some time, that she had a fearful temper, but that great hopes were entertained of her turning out at sixteen a good useful servant.

We were all the more impressed with this specimen of the results of the Home training system, as we had only a short while since had in our house a pattern girl from one of the workhouse schools. She was sent to us as *quite* fit to enter service. She was fourteen, a year older than the Ilford little maid, and had been brought up from a baby in the Union. She could read and write perhaps better than most young ladies of her age; she knew a smattering of geography, a jumble of history and poetry, but such an amount of bad language and viciousness that we were horrified at her knowledge. Not one simple piece of household work did she know anything about or cared to learn to do. She was stolid and indifferent if shewn how to clean, insolent if reproved for a fault, and not to be trusted either in what she said or in what she did. She had no standard of morals; stared absently, as if one were addressing her in an unknown tongue, if spoken to about trying to do her best to please her mistress; and when waiting at table or performing personal service, merely acted like a machine; and yet she was naturally a much cleverer girl than the Ilford child; and if she had been subjected to the refining and humanising effects of Home surroundings, might have developed into a thoroughly useful maid.

Dr Bernardo entreats all who can to join him in carrying on the work he has begun of rescuing vagrant girls from destruction. Like many institutions dependent on precarious contributions, it is sadly in need of funds, and will gratefully receive presents either in linen, simple stuffs for girls' frocks, or in money; and we can answer for it, that all those who are interested in the Home and would like to see it, will be kindly greeted by the governor if they will take the trouble to visit the pretty little Village at Ilford.

## THE LAST OF THE HADDONS

### CHAPTER XXXII. – BENT, BUT NOT BROKEN

An hour later I slipped noiselessly in at the cottage door, which stood hospitably open for me, passed the parlour, where I could hear Mrs Tipper and Lilian talking together, and stole up to my own room. Gusts of wind and rain were beating in at the open window. I afterwards heard that a terrible storm had swept over the country that night, laying waste the crops and spoiling the harvest in all directions; *I* only knew of the storm which had devastated my hopes. I imagined that I had myself sufficiently under control to venture to return – but alas! Another bitter struggle, another wrestle with my weaker self, amidst wild prayers for help – for death.

Then I was on my feet again, telling myself, in a pitiable would-be jaunty strain: 'No; you will never slip out of your misery in *that* way, Mary Haddon, and it is folly to hope it. You are not the kind of person, you know. You could not die of a broken heart if you were to try. Your vocation may be to suffer, but you will not die under it – certainly not without a long preliminary struggle to live. You are not made of the material which fades gracefully away under pressure; and yesterday you would have affirmed that you did not wish to be made of it. You have always scouted the idea of being at the mercy of circumstances; you have been a little hard upon those who succumbed under trial – in your inmost heart, you know that you have not had much patience with weakness; and now has come the opportunity for proving your superiority to ordinary mortals.'

Then my mood changed. I dragged myself towards the dressing-glass, thrust the damp hair from my brow, and stared at my face with miserable mocking eyes, as I reviled it for its want of loveliness, and taunted myself with not being able to keep a good man's love. Then I fell to weeping and pleading again; and thank God, it was this time for help to *live*. Alas, would the victory *ever* come? Do others find as much difficulty as I did in overcoming? Have others as much cause to feel humble in the hour of victory as I had? I know that it is all very pitiful to look back upon; though the consciousness of my weakness under trial did me great service afterwards. Weak and faint, but thank God, not worsted, I at length rose from my knees, bathed my face and hands, and after a while had my feelings sufficiently under control to think over the best way of doing what it was my resolute purpose to do. My power of self-command was very soon put to the test. I was conscious of another sound besides that of the sighing and sobbing of the wind, which like a tired child who has spent its passion, was sinking to rest again. Some one was tapping rather loudly at the door.

Alas! how weak I still was. How could I meet Lilian's eyes? Not yet, I dared not. But whilst I stood with my hands pressed against my throbbing heart gazing at the door, I recognised Becky's voice. What a reprieve! I hastened to admit her, and then locked the door again.

'If you please, Miss, Mrs Tipper was afraid you was out in all this storm, and' – She stopped; looked at me for a moment with dilating eyes, and then her tears began to flow. 'O Miss Haddon, dear, are you ill? What's the matter?'

'You must not cry, and you must not speak so loud, Becky.'

She saw that I waited until she had ceased, and hastily rubbed the tears out of her eyes.

Then in a low quiet voice, I said: 'A great trial has to be gone through, Becky. It *must* be borne, and I think you can help me to bear it.'

'I knowed it was coming – I knowed it!' said Becky, under her breath.

'What did you know was coming?'

She appeared for a moment to be searching in her mind for the best way of telling me, and at the same time expressing her sympathy; then with lowered eyes replied: 'I loved Tom – I always shall love him – and he can't love me.'

She knew then! Probably every one but myself had seen it!

'In that case, you know that such things are not to be talked about, Becky.'

'Yes, Miss; only' —

'I know that it was your regard for me which made you mention it. But we need all our strength just now – you as well as I – and we must not think or speak of anything that will weaken it. I want your help, and to help me you must be cool and quiet and strong. Will you try to be that?'

'Yes; I will – I will indeed, dear Miss Haddon;' eagerly adding: 'What can I do?'

I stood pressing my two hands upon my temples in anxious thought a few moments, then asked: 'Do I look unlike my usual self, Becky – ill? Tell me exactly how I look to you?' thinking of the effect which the first sight of me had had upon her!

'Yes; you look terrible white, and wild, and trembling; and there's great black rims round your eyes,' gravely and straightforwardly replied Becky.

'As though I had been frightened by the storm. There has been a storm; hasn't there?'

'Yes; there's been a terrible storm, Miss; but' —

'Go on, Becky.'

'You're not the sort to look like that about a storm.'

'I see.'

If that was Becky's opinion, the storm would not do for Lilian and Mrs Tipper, and the alteration in my appearance must be accounted for in some other way. I was seeking about in my mind for a way out of the difficulty, when Becky unconsciously helped me with the exclamation:

'O Miss Haddon, dear, what have you done to your hand?'

Looking down, I saw that there was a slight wound in it – made I suppose when I fell, by a nail or sharp stone – and that it had been bleeding somewhat freely.

'Nothing to hurt, Becky,' I murmured; 'but it will serve my purpose. Give me a handkerchief – quick! and now another!'

She understood me; and when Lilian presently came running up, she found appearances sufficiently sanguinary – quite enough so, to account for my looking strange and unlike my usual self.

'Dear Mary, what is it? Oh, how have you hurt yourself?'

It was really a very superficial wound; but of course I did not explain that; making a little demonstration about the wrapping up with Becky's assistance.

'It has made you look quite ill, dear!' went on Lilian, kneeling down by my side. 'Let *me* tie that, Becky.'

But Becky would not yield an inch until I had given her a little look of reminder, and then did so very reluctantly.

'And your clothes are quite wet, darling!' ejaculated Lilian. 'You must have been out in all that storm. Fearful, wasn't it? Could not you find any shelter?'

'No; it had to be borne as best it might,' I grimly replied; though I called myself to order at once; a startled look in Lilian's eyes shewing me that I could not talk about storms with impunity as yet.

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