

CHAPTER XVII.

A VISIT TO THE CRYSTAL PALACE.

"We know not from a burning brand,
Which spark kindles the flame."

IN how many hearts has the desire to see the Crystal Palace, with its many wonders, been awakened, and how varied has been the nature of that emotion!

From a vague and simple curiosity to see the outward manifestation, without the slightest thought respecting the world of science and of art which stood thus revealed, to the most thoughtful analysis of the wondrous power of man's physical and mental nature, which is declared in each specimen of handiwork thus displayed, every phase of desire has been elicited and gratified.

When, therefore, that wish found utterance in the Five Points Mission school, it was deemed desirable to gratify it. From the earliest establishment of the mission, these children had awakened the most anxious thoughts of the Society. The question to be settled was not merely, how can we educate the mind?

Our successful public-school system had satisfactorily answered that; but how can we educate the hearts of children who have no homes in which their young affections are expanded, or their childish desires sympathized with and gratified?

A poet sings,

"How little is the happiness
That will content a child—
A favorite dog, a sunny flower
A blossom growing wild."

But that is only true where the young heart's deeper yearnings are first satisfied. There was a restlessness and wildness about these neglected children, which for a long time it seemed impossible to subdue, a selfishness which their independent habits of life had naturally engendered, and a grasping spirit which no amount of favors appeared sufficient to satisfy. Kindness, *which they could appreciate*, added to those higher forms which *we knew* would elevate and improve them, appeared to be the main element of success. And as their hearts could only be reached through their senses, we not only clothed and fed them, but took them to see sights and hear sounds; that by gratifying them in every way, those young affections, which in happier children are placed upon kind and

strangely simple end. In all the varied forms of beauty, which met the bewildered gaze, was written the triumph of intellect, the subjugation of matter to the control of mind, the rapid approach of that glorious era "when that which is perfect has come, and that which is in part, shall be done away."

We gazed above, around, and the eye rested where—on what? Upon the children of the Five Points! denizens of one of the most morally degraded spots on this wide earth. Thought travelled back for years, when not one redeeming influence was resting upon them; it paused a moment on the present: they were there awakened into purer life, beneath the fostering care of Christian benevolence, and they would be where? when, amid

"The wreck of matter and the crush of worlds,"

this "wide magnificence" of thought, design and execution, would be among the ephemeral things of earth—forgotten amid the inconceivable splendor of "the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Our meditations were soon banished by the innumerable questions pressed upon us—not very wise, nor pertinent to the scene, but still to be answered if

possible—for the day was theirs, not ours. We wandered around two hours, and if their anticipations were realized, it was well; for ours were not.

We had started in the morning with some very philosophical views. We thought we would watch the direction of unsophisticated tastes—we would listen to the expression of wondering admiration from uncultivated mind in its simplicity, and then we would make comparisons and draw inferences, and positively decide upon "innate ideas," and other similar points, which from ancient times have puzzled bookish men who had not the Five Points of human nature open to their inspection—but, alas! for our philosophy. Our *young ladies* only wished for the handsome dresses and big dolls! Machinery, painting and statuary failed to awaken their admiration, and as this evidence of genuine taste was not particularly flattering, we deferred our system until a more favorable opportunity. Other friends, however, were more successful. Writes one, "Being tired, we sat down. One of the little girls asked me if I thought Heaven was as beautiful as this place? I tried to explain the difference to her childish mind. I referred to the description of the New Jerusalem in the Apocalypse, and said, 'Maggie, do you know what figurative language means?' She signified her assent.

I dwelt upon the figures there used, and tried to make her understand how every thing that was beautiful and costly on earth was mentioned to represent those glorious scenes above; and assured her that all she saw in the Crystal Palace, were but faint emblems of those wondrous things which all would behold who would eventually enter into the Palace of our God. She listened with profound attention, and said, "Well, I am determined to be good, so that I can get there." "I am trying my best," said another little girl, "but I do not know what is the reason I cannot be good; some of the children are so ugly they make me so, too." I explained to her the way to grow better, &c. Another little one being asked what pleased her most, replied, "The Saviour and his Apostles are the very best things; the Saviour has such a loving face." On the following Sunday, that child referred to it again with the remark, "I seem to see Him all the time." Some of the boys manifested much interest in the machinery, and made some very thoughtful remarks. In after conversation we found that the case which contained the Lord's prayer, traced on a gold dollar, had riveted their attention most fully. On the next Sunday before school, one remarked to two of the larger boys, "What did you like best in the Crystal Palace?" One answered, "The

machinery;" the other said, "The things from France." "Boys," said the lady, "did you remember that all those beautiful things were made by men's hands, and that all those men were once boys, many of them poor boys, and if you are good and industrious, there is no reason why you should not learn to make such." Pat laughed and turned away his head, but his companion sat with his large expressive eyes riveted on the lady's face, and as she spoke, his countenance lighted up, and he was about to say that which she would have liked to hear, when the bell rang which summoned them to order and to prayer.

The utmost decorum was observed by all. We had felt it to be somewhat of an experiment, for in no other exhibition had there been so much to tempt them to touch and to handle. To our great pleasure we found that various influences produced as much self-control in these as in any other children who had gazed upon these exciting scenes. The superintendent of the exhibition remarked to one of the teachers, that among the many schools who had visited the Palace, the Five Points Mission school stood preeminent for order and good conduct.

At one o'clock, we reassembled at the appointed place, to be ready for some refreshments which had

been provided. We marched in order to the refreshment saloon, where we found a long table laden with abundant substantials, beside cakes and ice cream. The large punch-bowl filled with orangeade occupied the centre, and while we were thinking of the provident care of our superintendent, to our surprise we were informed that all had been provided gratis by Mr. Pettilier, proprietor of the saloon, who had only been informed that morning of our intended visit. If more than a hundred happy childish faces were a reward, if the silent gratitude of a score of more reflective minds was a compensation, for the trouble thus voluntarily assumed, then our kind host had a full measure awarded him during the busy hour spent in his saloon. We sang the doxology, the missionary pronounced the blessing, and then all partook until we believe all were satisfied. Mr. Pettilier was introduced to the children, and made a few appropriate remarks; after which his little son presented the children with a basket of candies, which were duly distributed among them.

One pleasing evidence of their regard for truth was given. At the conclusion of the feast, a fresh supply of ice cream was brought in. The taste for ice cream we have found to be rather excessive, and very difficult to satisfy. The remark was made, that if any child in the

room had not been helped to ice-cream, he or she might come forward and get some. The Superintendent stood by the inviting pyramid, and waited for the suppliant. But not one child, from the rank of one hundred, moved or spoke.

Once more we formed and left the saloon, again sang, again surrounding the statue, marching until notified that the cars were ready, when we left the splendid palace with grateful hearts for the many favors thus bestowed upon our Mission school, and with the full assurance that this visible proof of what the Ladies' Home Mission Society had already effected for the children of the Five Points would strengthen their hold upon the public interest, and lead to yet more liberal aid for their establishment.

indulgent parents, might be transferred to us; and thus enable us to exert that *moral* influence which no scholastic training can create.

Again; the Society have remarked that these children are citizens of a free and happy land, in which are no insuperable barriers to the highest moral and social elevation of each and all, whose course is rightly directed, and whose ambition is properly awakened. Therefore, they have rejoiced in the opportunities of showing their children those public exhibitions, which teach them that there is a world of science, of industry, and of art, into which they, too, may enter, and earn a name and secure a position such as they see others now occupy and enjoy.

With much pleasure, therefore, we prepared to comply with the invitation of Theodore Sedgwick, Esq., President of the Association of the Crystal Palace.

The scholars assembled at the usual hour, prepared for their excursion, clean, comfortably clad, and happy. After receiving sundry directions relative to their behavior, they started with their teachers, the missionary, and a number of ladies connected with the mission, for the cars in Chambers street. A pleasant drive brought us to the Palace, which was hailed by a simultaneous shout from the delighted children. Again forming a

line, with the banner of the school before us, we entered the spacious building, singing "merrily, merrily," as we advanced toward the central dome, and formed a ring around the colossal statue. As the interest of the numerous visitors seemed to be excited by the children, and much pleasure was audibly expressed, the missionary engaged them in singing, while the necessary preparations were made by the superintendents and teachers. Six children were then assigned to each lady and gentleman, and we dispersed to roam at pleasure amid the bewildering scenes around us, with the simple direction not to touch any thing, and to meet at that spot at one o'clock.

That was a strange position we occupied once and again, beneath that lofty dome, which crowned this most perfect specimen of original design, and successful execution. Around us was the congregated wealth of nations—man's mental and physical power was stamped on every picture that entranced the artist's eye, or by its life-like power, evoked the passing gazer's praise—by every sculptured form which, in its inanimate beauty, seemed only awaiting the word which should speak it into instant and most perfect life—it was proclaimed by the powerful yet noiseless machinery which so fully accomplished its complicated, yet