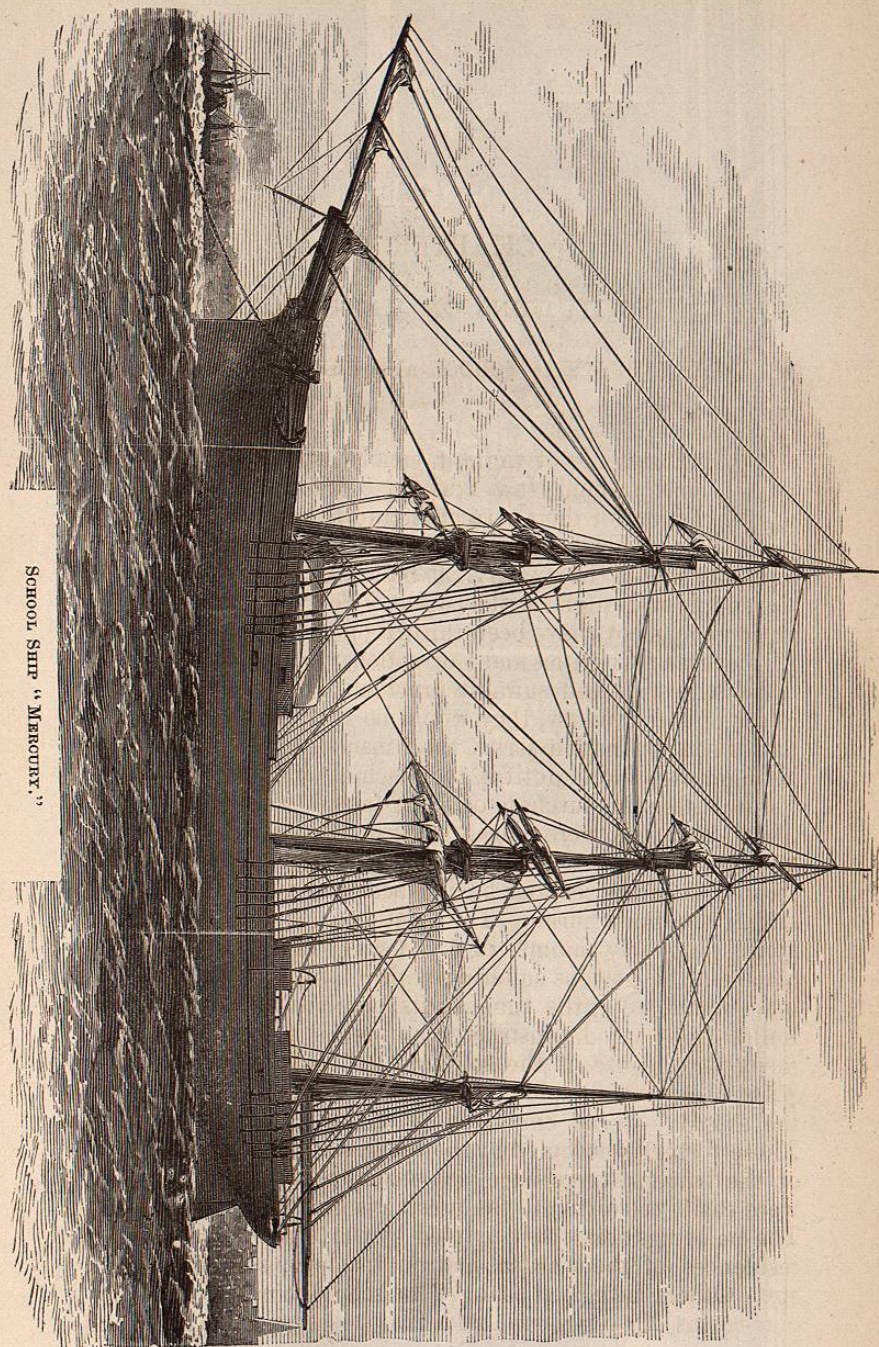


CHAPTER IX.

INSTITUTIONS ON HART ISLAND.

THE INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL AND THE SCHOOL-SHIP.

THE number of vagrant, vicious, and adventurous children around New York is so great, that a new institution for their correction and reformation springs up every few years, and though thousands are from these annually sent to the country, the buildings are always full, and the supply well nigh inexhaustible. For years past a class of large vicious boys have been thrown on the hands of the Commissioners of Charities and Corrections, for whom it has been difficult to well and suitably provide. If sent to the Workhouse or Penitentiary, they would be farther steeped in evil, and if sent to the Nurseries, their insubordination incited the younger and more dutiful to mischief and demoralization. Hence, after the purchase of Hart Island, which occurred in May, 1868, they were placed there in the capacity of an *Industrial School*. On this Island the Potter's Field has been located, separate sections having been set apart for Catholic and Protestant burial. The southern portion, during the spring and early summer of 1870, was also set apart for the treatment of persons suffering with relapsing fever. The Island contained at the time of its purchase more than sixty buildings of wood, constructed by the United States Government for the use of the soldiers, and said to have cost over \$200,000. The dilapidated buildings were pulled down, and the sound material employed in repairing other buildings. Those formerly occupied by the officers of the army and navy of the barracks were excellent structures of their kind, and were easily converted to the uses for which they were desired. The buildings formerly occupied by the officers are now the residences of the warden, matron, teachers, surgeon, clerks, etc. Others have been changed to school-rooms, dormitories, play-rooms, dining-rooms, and two houses for baking and



SCHOOL SHIP "MERCURY."



SCHOOL BETWEEN DECK.—SCHOOL SHIP "MERCURY."

cooking. A large ice-house has been erected, capable of containing a hundred tons of that invaluable antidote to mid-summer heats. The school began late in the year 1868, and on the 31st of December, 1869, the warden reported the reception of 504 boys. The utter neglect under which they had thus far grown up appears in the fact that seventy-five per cent. of them could neither read nor write, fifteen per cent. able to read only, leaving but ten per cent. in tolerable possession of the rudiments of an education. They are kept in school five hours per day, devoting the remainder to play or light labor. A vigorous system of discipline has been introduced, but no very serious corporal punishment is inflicted. During the last year, 972 boys were received into the school.

Many boys in each generation are wild and adventurous in their natures, fond of excitements and dangers, and who will not sober down to the quietudes of ordinary industry. Neglected, they become the roughest, harbor thieves, pirates, and fillibusterers of the world. As early as 1812, Rev. Dr. Stanford, chaplain of the penal institutions of New York, recommended the separation of the youthful criminals from those more advanced, and urged the importance of training this adventurous class in a nautical ship for service on the sea. But reforms "hasten slowly," and though a citizen of Manhattan was the first to originate and recommend the plan of a training ship, the authorities of New York lingered until the experiment had been successfully tried in England and in Massachusetts. Under authority conferred by the Legislature, the Commissioners, in July, 1869, purchased the sail-ship *Mercury*, formerly belonging to the Havre line of packets, a fine vessel of 1,200 tons burden, which they have fitted for this service. The vessel is calculated to accommodate 250 or 300 boys, besides the usual complement of officers and drilled sailors. The boys, whose features for the most part show their foreign origin and treacherous tendencies, are all clothed in bright sailor's uniform, and governed on the apprenticeship system of the United States Navy. From the Industrial School they are transferred to the school-ship, where a year or two of good drilling is expected, to fit the more advanced for useful service in the Merchant Marine, or in the United States Navy. The vessel has already made several trips to sea, remaining outside the bar on one cruise four months. At the 1st of January last, 826 boys had been received on board, and 565 discharged, many of whom had shipped as sailors in

the United States Navy, and others had entered the Merchants' Marine.

The daily routine adopted in port is as follows: At early daylight the reveille is beaten, all hands are called, and hammocks properly stowed by the Captains of Tops and other petty officers, to whom this duty belongs. This done, when the weather will permit, the decks are washed down, and if "Wash Clothes Day," hammocks and clothing are scrubbed, and triced up on the lines, while the boys are compelled to cleanse their persons, under the superintendence of the Officer of the Deck. At 7.30 A.M., the boys are mustered, the line formed, and at 8 A.M., breakfast is piped and the boys marched to their respective messes on the berth-deck. This is in the charge of the Master at Arms and ship's Corporals, whose duty it is to preserve order there at all times. One hour is allowed the boys for the morning meal and recreation. At 9 A.M., the "hands are turned to," sweepers are piped, and the decks cleaned fore and aft. Ten minutes before "Colors," the drummer beats their call, hands stand by to lower boats, Quartermasters bend on their colors, Coxswains report boats ready for lowering, sail loosers are sent aloft, when necessary; lower booms got ready for going out, one hand stationed by the bell. At 9 A.M. in winter, at 8 A.M. in summer, the drummer rolls off, the bell is struck; at the third roll colors hoisted, boats lowered, sails let fall, and booms rigged out, to which the boats when lowered are hauled and made fast. The boys now take their cleaning stations, warned by the roll of the drum of their duties, and polish all bright work fore and aft. The ship's company are divided into divisions, called the First; Second; Third, or Master's; Fourth, or Boatswain's; Fifth, or Powder Division, commanded respectively by the Second and Third officers, Sailing Master, Boatswain, and Master-at-Arms. At 9.30 A.M., the drummer beats to quarters for inspection, allowing the boys three minutes to gain their stations, where they are inspected and mustered by their respective officers, whose duty it is to see that their persons and clothing are clean and in good order, and that all are present to answer the muster, being careful to report all delinquents and absentees to the Executive Officer, who in turn reports to the Captain the condition of the ship and the divisions. The "Retreat" is now beaten, and the Starboard Watch is formed in line and marched into the school-room, where they remain at their studies in charge of the Instructor until 11.45 A.M., the

Port Watch in the meantime being engaged on deck working masts, yards or sails, or drilling with the great guns, small arms, etc.

At 11.30 A.M., the dinner is inspected, and if properly cooked, ordered to be issued to the messes; sweepers are piped and all work ceases; decks are cleared, and the mess-cloths spread. At meridian, dinner is piped, and the boys sent to their messes as at the morning meal; at 1 P.M., the "hands are again turned to," while the sweepers, in response to the pipes of the Boatswain and his mates, clean the decks; the Port Watch is now formed and sent to the school-room, while the Starboard Watch is called on deck, and receive practical lessons in seamanship and the various exercises and drill. At 4 P.M., school is dismissed, decks cleared up, and at 4.30 P.M., supper is piped; the evening hours are devoted to recreation; games of various kinds being provided for those disposed to avail themselves of the same.

At fifteen minutes before sundown, the drum beats to quarters for inspection, when the usual notes are made, and reports given to the Executive and Captain. At ten minutes before sundown, the "call" is beaten, lower booms got ready for coming alongside, boats hooked on, Quartermasters stand by their colors, and at the third roll of the drum the booms are rigged in, boats hoisted, colors hauled down, and the boys are called to stand by their hammocks, when they assemble in their own parts of the ship, and hammocks being piped down, they are removed to the Berth-Deck, and hung on hooks bearing their respective numbers.

The remainder of the evening is devoted to recreation, all work being laid aside for the day. At 7.30 P.M., the boys are assembled for evening exercises, which are held in the school-room, consisting of singing and prayer, conducted by the Instructor.

At 8 P.M., the tattoo is beaten, Boatswain and mates pipe down, the boys are sent to their hammocks, the "anchor watch" is set for the night, all unauthorized lights and galley-fires are reported "out" by the Master-at-Arms, and the night reports of the petty-officers as to the condition of their several departments are made to the Executive. At one bell (8.30 P.M.), all loud talking must cease; the berth-deck is in charge of the ship's Corporals for the night, who keep watch there until regularly relieved, paying strict attention to the condition of the lights, and inspecting the ship below the spar-deck

every half hour; being particularly careful that no irregularities occur on the decks in their charge.

Every boy when received on board is cleansed, and a complete outfit given him of clothing, suitable for the weather and season of the year; he is given a number and a station on the watch, quarter, and fire-bells; he is detailed to a certain mess, and placed in a certain boat, while he is, when admitted to the school-room, placed in such classes as his abilities will admit of. In all the maneuvers and exercises he must be at his station; his number at the gun must be filled, his station aloft must be supplied, and his absence from any of these duties is at once detected; no idle hands are permitted, no one is without a duty; from the time that the lad receives his number, which is immediately on his admission into the ship, he is entirely under control and subject to orders.

The ship's company is divided into two watches, called Port and Starboard, and these are sub-divided into first and second parts, forming quarter watches, which facilitates at times the duty of the ship. There are other sub-divisions, into which the boys are separated according to their stations, as follows: Forecastle-men, foretop-men, maintop-men, mizzen-top-men and afterguard. Each of these divisions are headed by a first and second Captain, the first Captain being in the Starboard Watch, and the second Captain in the Port Watch. All orders to be executed in a certain part of the ship are issued to the Captain of the same, whose duty it becomes to see that the boys stationed under him perform them, reporting to the officer of the deck when finished.

Precautions are taken against fire, by having stations for fire-quarters and duties assigned every officer, seaman, and boy on board, with frequent drilling at quelling this dangerous element.

Divine service is held on Sunday in the school-room at 10 A.M., and again in the evening at 6.30 P.M., the peculiar religious tenets of all respected, and religious instruction imparted by both Protestant and Catholic clergymen, who are granted access to the ship for this purpose at all times.

Nothing has been left undone that would enhance the comfort of the boys or assist them in their studies. Every encouragement is held out to them, and liberty on shore and other privileges granted to the deserving, while advancement to the grade of petty officer awaits the ambitious pupil. Positions, though they entail an additional responsibility, bring

with them certain privileges and distinctions which make them objects of desire to the aspiring lad.

The food furnished the boys is of a good quality and the supply is ample, and provided in accordance with the suggestions of a medical officer of acknowledged ability. Boys from a few wealthy families have been admitted whose parents pay \$10 per month for their subsistence and instruction. It is probable that an independent ship could be made to pay as well as an academy. The boys take great pleasure in going aloft to spread or furl the sails. We saw from a distance a hundred or less of them engaged in this exercise. The spars, tackling, and flapping sails, united to the rapid movement of the boys, presented the appearance of a handful of black ants caught and struggling for dear life amid the meshes of a great cob-web.

Much interest is being manifested in all parts of the country in the great undertaking, as is frequently shown by the numerous letters received from this and adjacent States, together with the visits received from many distinguished citizens, all of whom are unanimous in their approbation of this philanthropic enterprise. Delegates from adjacent States have journeyed some distance to examine into the leading features of this Institution, and returned to their own cities to indorse the movement and recommend a like action on the part of their authorities. One has well said:

"The Commissioners deserve the thanks of the community for having added this to the many other noble public charities which are receiving the benefit of their wise and efficient administration. It would be difficult to exaggerate the advantages likely to accrue to the public from a benevolence which, receiving these neglected, vagrant, and degraded boys, shall shield them for a season from the rough blasts of temptation, teach them their duty to God and man, impart to them the principles of a noble science, train them to skill in the application of those principles, and, finally, opening to them a path of honorable usefulness, shall bid them go forth and walk therein to the honor of God and the benefit of their fellow men. The very qualities of sagacity and daring, of earnestness and enthusiasm, which, under their former evil training, were likely to render them a pest as well as a terror to the community, will no doubt, in numerous instances, constitute a vigorous impulse to push them forward and give them success in their new career of virtue, honor, and usefulness."