

## DR. WICHERN AND HIS PUPILS.

"WOULD you like to spend a day at Horn and visit the *Rauhe Haus*?" inquired my friend, Herr X., of me, one evening, as we sat on the bank of the Inner Alster, in the city of Hamburg. I had already visited most of the "lions" in and about Hamburg, and had found in Herr X. a most intelligent and obliging cicerone. So I said, "Yes," without hesitation, though knowing little more of the *Rauhe Haus* than that it was a reform school of some kind.

"I will call for you in the morning," said my friend, as we parted for the night.

The morning was clear and bright, and I had hardly despatched my breakfast when Herr X. appeared with his carriage. Entering it without delay, we were driven swiftly over the pavements, till we came to the old city-wall, now forming a fine drive, when my friend, turning to the coachman, said,—

"Go more slowly."

"The scenery in this vicinity we Hamburgers think very beautiful," he continued, turning to me.

To my eye, accustomed to our New England hills, it was much too flat to merit the appellation of beautiful, though Art had done what it could to improve upon Nature; so I assented to his encomiums upon the landscape, but, desirous of changing the subject, added,—

"This *Rauhe Haus*, where we are going, I know but little of; will you give me its history?"

"Most willingly," he replied. "You must know that our immense commerce, while it affords ample occupation for the enterprising and industrious, draws hither also a large proportion of the idle, depraved, and vicious. For many years, it was one of the most difficult questions with which our Senate has had to grapple, to determine what should be done with the hordes of vagrant children who swarmed about our quays, and were harbored in the filthy dens which before

the great fire of 1842 were so abundant in the narrow streets. These children were ready for crime of every description, and in audacity and hardihood far surpassed older vagabonds.

"In 1830, Dr. Wichern, then a young man of twenty-two, having completed his theological studies at Göttingen and Berlin, returned home, and began to devote himself to the religious instruction of the poor. He established Sabbath-schools for these children, visited their parents at their homes, and sought to bring them under better influences. He succeeded in collecting some three or four hundred of them in his Sabbath-schools; but he soon became convinced that they must be removed from the evil influences to which they were subjected, before any improvement could be hoped for in their morals. In 1832, he proposed to a few friends, who had become interested in his labors, the establishment of a House of Rescue for them. The suggestion met their approval; but whence the means for founding such an institution were to come none of them knew; their own resources were exceedingly limited, and they had no wealthy friends to assist them.

"About this time, a gentleman with whom he was but slightly acquainted brought him three hundred dollars, desiring that it should be expended in aid of some new charitable institution. Soon after, a legacy of \$17,500 was left for founding a House of Rescue. Thus encouraged, Wichern and his friends went forward. A cottage, roughly built and thatched with straw, with a few acres of land, was for sale at Horn, about four miles from the city, and its situation pleasing them, they appropriated their legacy to the purchase of it. Hither, in November, 1833, Dr. Wichern removed with his mother, and took into his household, adopting them as his own children, three of the worst boys he could find in Ham-

burg. In the course of a few months he had increased the number to twelve, all selected from the most degraded children of the city.

"His plan was the result of careful and mature deliberation. He saw that these depraved and vicious children had never been brought under the influence of a well-ordered family, and believing, that, in the organization of the family, God had intended it as the best and most efficient institution for training children in the ways of morality and purity, he proposed to follow the Divine example. The children were employed, at first, in improving the grounds, which had hitherto been left without much care; the banks of a little stream, which flowed past the cottage, were planted with trees; a fish-pond into which it discharged its waters was transformed into a pretty sylvan lake; and the barren and unproductive soil, by judicious cultivation, was brought into a fertile condition.

"In 1834, the numerous applications he received, and the desire of extending the usefulness of the institution, led him to erect another building for the accommodation of a second family of boys. The work upon it was almost wholly performed by his first pupils. I should have remarked, that, during the first year, a high fence, which surrounded the premises when they were purchased, was removed by the boys, by Dr. Wichern's direction, as he desired to have *love* the only bond by which to retain them in his family. When the new house was finished and dedicated, the original family moved into it, and were placed under the charge of two young men from Switzerland, named Baumgärtner and Byckmeyer.

"Workshops for the employment of the boys soon became necessary, and means were contributed for their erection. New pupils were offered, either by their parents, or by the city authorities, and new families were organized. These required more "house-fathers," as they were called, and for their training a separate house was needed. Dr. Wichern has been very

successful in obtaining assistants of the right description. They are young men of good education, generally versed in some mechanical employment, and whose zeal for philanthropic effort leads them to place themselves under training here, for three or four years, without salary. They are greatly in demand all over Germany for home missionaries and superintendents of prisons and reformatory institutions. You have heard, I presume, of the Inner Mission?"

I assented, and he continued.

"These young men are its most active promoters. The philanthropy of Wichern was not satisfied, until he had established also several families of vagrant girls at his Rough House.—But see, we are approaching our destination. This is the Rauhe Haus."

As he spoke, our carriage stopped. We alighted, and rarely has my eye been greeted by a pleasanter scene. The grounds, comprising about thirty-two acres, presented the appearance of a large landscape-garden. The variety of choice forest-trees was very great, and mingled with them were an abundance of fruit-trees, now laden with their golden treasures, and a profusion of flowers of all hues. Two small lakes, whose borders were fringed with the willow, the weeping-elm, and the alder, glittered in the sunlight,—their finny inhabitants occasionally leaping in the air, in joyous sport. Fourteen buildings were scattered over the demesne,—one, by its spire, seeming to be devoted to purposes of worship.

"Let us go to the *Mutter-Haus*," (Mother-House,) said my friend; "we shall probably find Dr. Wichern there."

So saying, he led the way to a plain, neat building, situated nearly centrally, though in the anterior portion of the grounds. This is Dr. Wichern's private residence, and here he receives reports from the Brothers, as the assistants are called, and gives advice to the pupils. We were ushered into the superintendent's office, and found him a fine, noble-looking man, with a clear, mild eye, and

an expression of great decision and energy. My friend introduced me, and Dr. Wichern welcomed us both with great cordiality.

"Be seated for a moment, gentlemen," said he; "I am just finishing the proofs of our *Fliegende Blätter*," (Flying Leaves, a periodical published at the Rauhe Haus,) "and will presently show you through our buildings."

We waited accordingly, interesting ourselves, meanwhile, with the portraits of benefactors of the institution which decorated the walls.

In a few minutes Dr. Wichern rose, and merely saying, "I am at your service, gentlemen," led the way to the original Rough House. It is situated in the southeastern corner of the grounds, and is overshadowed by one of the noblest chestnut-trees I have ever seen. The building is old and very humble in appearance, but of considerable size. In addition to accommodations for the House-Father and his family of twelve boys, several of the Brothers of the Mission reside here, and there are also rooms for a probationary department for new pupils.

"Here," said the Doctor, "we began the experiment whose results you see around you. When, with my mother and sister and three of the worst boys to be found in Hamburg, I removed to this house in 1833, there was need of strong faith to foresee the results which God has wrought since that day."

"What were the means you found most successful in bringing these turbulent and intractable spirits into subjection?" I inquired.

"Love, the affection of a parent for his children," was his reply. "These wild, hardened boys were inaccessible to any emotion of fear; they had never been treated with kindness or tenderness; and when they found that there was no opportunity for the exercise of the defiant spirit they had summoned to their aid, when they were told that all the past of their lives was to be forgotten and never brought up against them, and that here, away from temp-

tation, they might enter upon a new life, their sullen and intractable natures yielded, and they became almost immediately docile and amiable."

"But," I asked, "is there not danger, that, when removed from these comfortable homes, and subjected again to the iron gripe of poverty, they will resume their old habits?"

"None of us know," replied Dr. Wichern, solemnly, "what we may be left to do in the hour of temptation; but the danger is, nevertheless, not so great as you think. Our children are fed and clothed like other peasant children; they are not encouraged to hope for distinction, or an elevated position in society; they are taught that poverty is not in itself an evil, but, if borne in the right spirit, may be a blessing. Our instruction is adapted to the same end; we do not instruct them in studies above their rank in life; reading, writing, the elementary principles of arithmetic, geography, some of the natural sciences, and music, comprise the course of study. In the calling they select, we do what we can to make them intelligent and competent. Our boys are much sought for as apprentices by the farmers and artisans of the vicinity."

"Many of them, I suppose," said I, "had been guilty of petty thefts before coming here; do you not find trouble from that propensity?"

"Very seldom; the perfect freedom from suspicion, and the confidence in each other, which we have always maintained, make theft so mean a vice, that no boy who has a spark of honor left will be guilty of it. In the few instances which do occur, the moral sense of the family is so strong, that the offender is entirely subdued by it. An incident, illustrative of this, occurs to me. Early in our history, a number of our boys undertook to erect a hut for some purpose. It was more than half completed, and they were delighted with the idea of being able soon to occupy it, when it was discovered that a single piece of timber, contributed by one of

the boys, had been obtained without leave. As soon as this was known, one of the boys seized an axe, and demolished the building, in the presence of the offender, the rest looking on and approving; nor could they afterward be induced to go on with it. At one time, several years since, there were two or three petty thefts committed, (and a good deal of prevarication naturally followed,) mainly by new pupils, of whom a considerable number had been admitted at once. Finding ordinary reproof unavailing, I announced that family worship would be suspended till the delinquents gave evidence of penitence. The effect of this measure was far beyond my expectation. Many of the boys would meet in little groups, in the huts, for prayers among themselves; and ere long the offenders came humbly suing for pardon and the resumption of worship."

During this conversation, we had left the Rough House and visited the new Lodge, erected in 1853, for a family of boys and a circle of Brothers, and the "Beehive," (*Bienenkorb*.) erected in 1841, in the northeast corner of the grounds, the home of another family. Turning westward, we came to the chapel, and a group of buildings connected with it, including the school-rooms, the preparatory department for girls, the library, dwellings for two families of girls, the kitchen, store-rooms, and offices. It was the hour of recess, and from the school-rooms rushed forth a joyous company of children, plainly clad, and evidently belonging to the peasant class; but though the marks of an early career of vice were stamped on many of their countenances, yet there were not a few bright eyes, and intelligent, thoughtful faces. Seeing Dr. Wichern, they came at once to him, with the impulsiveness of childhood, but with so evident a sense of propriety and decorum, that I could not but compare their conduct with that of many pupils in our best schools, and not to the advantage of the latter. The Doctor received them cordially, and had a kind word for each, generally in reference to their improve-

ment in behavior, or their influence over others.

"This," said he, turning to me, as a bright, blue-eyed, flaxen-haired boy seized his hand, "is one of our peace boys."

I did not understand what he meant by the term, and said so.

"Our peace boys," he replied, "are selected from the most trustworthy and exemplary of our pupils, to aid in superintending the others. They have no authority to command, or even to reprove; but only to counsel and remind. To be selected for this duty is one of their highest rewards."

"There must be among so many boys," I remarked, "and particularly those taken from such sources, a considerable number of *born-destructives*,—children in whom the propensity to break, tear, and destroy is almost ineradicable; how do you manage these?"

"In the earlier days of our experiment," he replied, "we had much trouble from this source; but at last we hit upon the plan of allowing each boy a certain sum of pocket-money, and deducting from this, in part at least, the estimated value of whatever he destroyed. From the day this rule was adopted all destructible articles seemed to have lost a great part of their fragility."

"Do the pupils often run away?" I asked.

"Very seldom, of late years; formerly we were occasionally troubled in that way. It was, of course, easy for them to do it, as no fences or other methods of restraint were used,—our reliance being upon affection, to retain them. If they made their escape, we usually sought them out, and persuaded them to return, and they seldom repeated the offence. Some years ago, one of our boys, who had repeatedly tried our patience by his waywardness, ran away. I pursued him, found him, and persuaded him to return. It was Christmas eve when we arrived, and this festival was always celebrated in my mother's chamber. As we entered the room, the children were singing the Christmas hymns. As he appeared, they

manifested strong disapprobation of his conduct. They were told that they might decide among themselves how he should be punished. They consulted together quietly for a few moments, and then one, who had himself been forgiven some time before for a like fault, came forward, and, bursting into tears, pleaded that the offender might be pardoned. The rest joined in the petition, and, extending to him the hand of fellowship, soon turned their festival into a season of rejoicing over the returned prodigal. The pardon thus accorded was complete; no subsequent reference was made to his misconduct; and the next day, to show our confidence in him, a confidence which we never had occasion to retract, we sent him on an errand to a considerable distance."

"How did they behave at the time of the great fire?" I inquired; "the excitement must surely have reached you."

"No event in our whole history," answered Dr. Wichern, his fine countenance lighting up as he spoke, "so fully satisfied me of the success which had attended our labors, as their behavior on that occasion. On the second day of the fire, the boys, some of whom had relatives and friends in the burning district, became so much excited by the intelligence brought by those who had escaped from the flames, that they began to implore me to permit them to go and render assistance. I feared, at first, the consequences of exposing them to the temptations to escape and plunder by which they would be beset; but at length permitted a company of twenty-two to go with me, on condition that they would keep together as much as possible, and return with me at an appointed time. They promised to do this, and they fulfilled their promise to the letter. Their conduct was in the highest degree heroic; they rushed into danger, for the sake of preserving lives and property, with a coolness and bravery which put to shame the labors of the boldest firemen; occasionally they would come to the place of rendezvous to reassure their teacher, and then in a moment

they were away again, laboring as zealously as ever, and utterly refusing any compensation, however urgently pressed upon them. When they returned home, another band was sent out under the direction of one of the house-fathers, and exerted themselves as faithfully as their predecessors had done. But their sacrifices and toils did not end here. Among the thousands whom that fearful conflagration left homeless, not a few came here for shelter and food. With these our boys shared their meals, and gave up to them their beds,—themselves sleeping upon the ground, and this for months."

I could not wonder at the enthusiasm of the good man over such deeds as these on the part of boys whom he had rescued from a degradation of which we can hardly form an idea. It was a triumph of which an angel might have been proud.

I was desirous of learning something of the industrial occupations of the pupils, and made some inquiries respecting them.

"A considerable portion of our boys," said Dr. Wichern, "are engaged in agricultural, or rather, horticultural pursuits. As we practise spade husbandry almost exclusively, and devote our grounds to gardening purposes, we can furnish employment to quite a number. For those who prefer mechanical pursuits, we have a printing-office, book-bindery, stereotype-foundry, lithographing and wood-engraving establishment, paint-shop, silk-weaving manufactory, and shoe-shop, as well as those trades which are carried on for the most part out of doors, such as masonry and carpentry. The girls are mostly employed in household duties, and are in great demand as servants and assistants in the households of our farmers."

Passing westward, we came next to the bakery and the farmer's residence, catching a glimpse through the trees of the Fisherman's Hut, at a little distance, near the bank of the larger of the two sylvan lakes on the premises, where another family are gathered, and then approach-

ed a large building of more pretension than the rest.

"This," said Dr. Wichern, "is the home of the Brothers of our Inner Mission, and the school-room for our boarding-school boys, the children of respectable and often wealthy parents, who have proved intractable at home."

"What," I asked, "do you include in the term, Inner Mission?"

"I must take a round-about method of answering your inquiry. When we found it necessary to form new families, our greatest difficulty was in procuring suitable persons to become house-fathers of these families. It was easy enough to obtain honest, intelligent men and women, who possessed a fair education and a sufficient knowledge of some of the mechanic arts for the situation; but we felt that much more than this was necessary. We wanted men and women who would act a parent's part, and perform a parent's duty to the children under their care; and these, we found, must be trained for the place. We then began our circles of Brothers, to furnish house-fathers and assistants for our families. We required in the candidates for this office an irreproachable character; that they should be free from physical defect, of good health and robust constitution; that they should give evidence of piety, and of special adaptation to this calling; that they should understand farming, or some one of the trades practised in the establishment, or possess sufficient mechanical talent to acquire a knowledge of them readily; that they should have already a certain amount of education, and an amiable and teachable disposition; and that they should be not under twenty years of age, and exempt from military service."

"And do you find a sufficient number who can fulfil conditions so strict?" I inquired.

"Candidates are never wanting," was his reply, "though the demand for their services is large."

"What is your course of training?"

"Mainly practical; though we have a

course of special instruction for them, occupying twenty hours a week, in which, during their four years' residence with us, they are taught sacred and profane history, German, English, geography, vocal and instrumental music, and the science of teaching. Instruction on religious subjects is also given throughout the course. For the purpose of practical training, they are attached, at first, to families as assistants, and after a period of apprenticeship they undertake in rotation the direction. They teach the elementary classes; visit the parents of the children, and report to them the progress which their pupils have made; maintain a watchful supervision over them, after they leave the *Rauhe Haus*; and assist in religious instruction, and in the correspondence. By the system of monthly rotation we have adopted, each Brother is brought in contact with all the pupils, and is thus enabled to avail himself of the experience acquired in each family."

"You spoke of a great demand for their services; I can easily imagine that men so trained should be in demand; but what are the callings they pursue after leaving you? for you need but a limited number as house-fathers and teachers."

"The Inner Mission," he replied, "has a wide field of usefulness. It furnishes directors and house-fathers for reform schools organized on our plan, of which there are a number in Germany; overseers, instructors, and assistants in agricultural and other schools; directors and subordinate officers for prisons; directors, overseers, and assistants in hospitals and infirmaries; city and home missionaries; and missionaries to colonies of emigrants in America."

"What is your annual expenditure above the products of your farm and workshops?" I asked.

"Somewhat less than fifty dollars a head for our entire population," was the reply.

It was by this time high noon, and as we returned to the *Mutter-Haus*, the



benevolent superintendent insisted that we should remain and partake with him of the mid-day meal. We complied, and presently were summoned to the dining-hall, where we found a small circle of the Brothers, and the two head teachers. After a brief but appropriate grace, we took our seats, being introduced by the director.

"At supper all our teachers assemble here," said Dr. Wichern, "and with them those children whose birthday it is; but at dinner the Brothers remain with their own families."

The table was abundantly supplied with plain but wholesome food, and the cheerful conversation which ensued gave evidence that the cares of their position had not exerted a depressing influence on their spirits. Each seemed thoroughly in love with his work, and in harmony with all the rest. Dr. Wichern mentioned that I was from America.

"Have you," inquired one of the Brothers, "any institutions like this in your country?"

"We have," I answered, "Reform Schools, Houses of Refuge, Juvenile Asylums, and other reformatory institutions; but I am afraid I must say, nothing like this. We are making progress, however, in Juvenile Reform, and I hope that ere long we, too, may have a Rough House whose influence shall pervade our country, as yours has done Central Europe."

"Dr. Wichern," inquired another, "have our friends visited the 'God's Acre?'"\*

"Not yet," was the reply; "but I will go thither with them after we have dined, if they can remain so long."

We assented, and one of the Brothers remarked,—

"Our boys have taken especial pains to beautify that favorite spot, this season."

"This disposition to adorn the resting-place of the body, so common among us, is becoming popular in your country, I believe," said our host, courteously.

\* The German name of a grave-yard.

I replied, that it was,—that in our larger towns the place of burial was generally rendered attractive, but that in the rural districts the burying-grounds were yet neglected and unsightly; and ventured the opinion, that this neglect might be partly traceable to the iconoclastic tendencies of our Puritan ancestors.

Dr. Wichern thought not; the neglect of the earthly home of the dead resulted from the prevalence of indifference to the glorious doctrine of the Resurrection; and whatever a people might profess, he could not but believe them infidel at heart, if they were entirely neglectful of the resting-place of their dead.

The close of our repast precluded further discussion, and at our host's invitation we accompanied him to the rural cemetery, where such of the pupils and Brothers as died during their connection with the school were buried. An English writer has very appropriately called the *Rauhe Haus* a "Home among the Flowers"; but the title is far more appropriate to this beautiful spot. Whatever a pure and exquisite taste could conceive as becoming in a place consecrated to such a purpose, willing hands have executed; and early every Sabbath morning, Dr. Wichern says, the pupils resort hither to see that everything necessary is done to keep it in perfect order. The air seemed almost heavy with the perfume of flowers; and though the home of the living pupils of the *Rauhe Haus* is plain in the extreme, the palace of their dead surpasses in splendor that of the proudest of earthly monarchs. One could hardly help coveting such a resting-place.

It was with reluctance that we at last turned our faces homeward, and bade the excellent director farewell. The world has seen, in this nineteenth century, few nobler spirits than his. Possessed of uncommon intellect, he combines with it executive talent of no ordinary character, and a capacity for labor which seems almost fabulous. His duties as the head of the Inner Mission, whose scope comprises the organization

and management of reformatory institutions of all kinds, throughout Germany, as well as efforts analogous to those of our city missions, temperance societies, etc., might well be supposed to be sufficient for one man; but these are supplementary to his labors as director of the *Rauhe Haus*, and editor of the *Fliegende Blätter*, and the other literature, by no means inconsiderable, of the Inner Mission. Dr. Wichern is highly esteemed and possesses almost unbounded influence throughout Germany; and that influence, potent as it is, even with the princes and crowned heads of the German States, is uniformly exerted in behalf of the poor, the unfortunate, the ignorant, and the degraded. When the history of philanthropy shall be written, and the just meed of commendation bestowed on the benefactors of humanity, how much more exalted a place will he receive, in the memory and gratitude of the world, than the perjured and audacious despot who, born the same year, in the neighboring city of the Hague, has won his way to the throne of France by deeds of selfishness and cruelty! Even to-day, who would not rather be John Henry Wichern, the director of the *Rauhe Haus* at Horn, than Louis Napoleon, emperor of France?

Would that on our own side of the Atlantic a Wichern might arise, whose abilities should be sufficient to unite in one common purpose our reformatory enterprises, and rescue from infamy and sin the tens of thousands of children who now, apt scholars in crime, through the purlieus of vice in our large cities, and are already committing deeds whose desperate wickedness might well cause hardened criminals to shudder. The existence of a popular government depends, we are often told, upon the intelligence and virtue of the people. What hope, then, can we have of the perpetuity of our institutions, when those who

are to control them have become monsters of iniquity ere they have reached the age of manhood?

The forces of Good and Evil are ever striving for the mastery in human society. Happy is that philanthropist, and honored should he be with a nation's gratitude, who can rescue these juvenile offenders from the power of evil, and from the fearful suggestings of temptation and want, and enlist them on the side of virtue and right! We rear monuments of marble and bronze to those heroes who on the battle-field and in the fierce assault have kept our nation's fame untarnished, and added new laurels to the renown of our country's prowess; but more enduring than marble, more lasting than brass, should be the monument reared to him who, in the fierce contest with the powers of evil, shall rescue the soul of the child from the grasp of the tempter, and change the brutalized and degraded offspring of crime and lust into a youth of generous, active, and noble impulses. But though earthly fame may be denied to such a benefactor of his race, his record shall be on high; and at that grand assize where all human actions shall be weighed, His voice, whose philanthropy exceeded, infinitely, the noblest deeds of benevolence of the sons of earth, shall be heard, saying to these humble laborers in the vineyard of our God, "Friends, come up higher!"

Those who are interested in knowing what has been accomplished by the reformatory institutions of Europe will find a full and entertaining account of most of them in a volume recently published, entitled "Papers on Preventive, Correctional, and Reformatory Institutions and Agencies in Different Countries," by Henry Barnard, LL.D. Hartford: F. C. Brownell, 1857. Dr. Barnard has done a good work in collecting these valuable documents.



## BEAUTY.

FOND lover of the Ideal Fair,  
My soul, eluded everywhere,  
Is lapsed into a sweet despair.

Perpetual pilgrim, seeking ever,  
Baffled, enamored, finding never;  
Each morn the cheerful chase renewing,  
Mised, bewildered, still pursuing;  
Not all my lavished years have bought  
One steadfast smile from her I sought,  
But sidelong glances, glimpsing light,  
A something far too fine for sight,  
Veiled voices, far off thridding strains,  
And precious agonies and pains:  
Not love, but only love's dear wound  
And exquisite unrest I found.

At early morn I saw her pass  
The lone lake's blurred and quivering glass;  
Her trailing veil of amber mist  
The unbending beaded clover kissed;  
And straight I hasted to waylay  
Her coming by the willowy way;—  
But, swift companion of the Dawn,  
She left her footprints on the lawn,  
And, in arriving, she was gone.  
Alert I ranged the winding shore;  
Her luminous presence flashed before;  
The wild-rose and the daisies wet  
From her light touch were trembling yet;  
Faint smiled the conscious violet;  
Each bush and brier and rock betrayed  
Some tender sign her parting made;  
And when far on her flight I tracked  
To where the thunderous cataract  
O'er walls of foamy ledges broke,  
She vanished in the vapory smoke.

To-night I pace this pallid floor,  
The sparkling waves curl up the shore,  
The August moon is flushed and full;  
The soft, low winds, the liquid lull,  
The whited, silent, misty realm,  
The wan-blue heaven, each ghostly elm,  
All these, her ministers, conspire  
To fill my bosom with the fire  
And sweet delirium of desire.