

preservation of documentary evidence. But God has ever chosen the weak things of the world to confound the wise, and so out of the refuse-heaps of departed cities have come to us "records that defy the tooth of time."



The Passing of the School.

By MISS B. J. BLACK.

THE fiat has gone forth, and we in Greenhoe are building a new Council school—*schools* rather, for the three departments are to be under one roof. I was taken to see and admire the new buildings the other day, and most sumptuous they are, with the latest ideas in ventilation and stoves, with cloak-rooms, meal-room, elaborate arrangements for hand-washing after meals—all complete. But in spite of the "central position" of the new schools, their ample provision for growth of population, and general "up-to-dateness," my thoughts turned with loving, lingering regret to the old school we have out-grown, with its history of nearly seventy years. To thousands of Greenhoe folk scattered about the world that picturesque old building, the "top school" of their early days, must be an abiding memory.

Its proud title of "top school" distinguished it from the older infant school further down the winding street. It also fairly described its position, for the Church Green, close to which the "top school" stood, crowns the long slope of the village street. It was reached from the green by a quaint archway, above which were the windows of a tiny cottage. A few steps beyond the arch you turned to the left, and a broad gravel sweep, bordered by fine laurels and ending in a garden gay with flower-beds, was before you. The master's house, with its little green lawn before the windows, faced the gravel sweep, and to the right stood the school, built for sixty children in 1837, when the population of the village was under 600.

It was made, they say, out of a fine old barn, and in the thirties was considered a most enlightened and model building. Large lattice windows and lofty roof, well ventilated from above, gave a very cheerful effect to the big schoolroom; and the squire-parson, who provided both building and staff at his sole cost, might be pardoned for the pride with which, in his diary of 1838, he speaks of the completion of "this beautiful school—the neatest country school in the diocese." The physical needs of the children were not forgotten. A large shady playground, a long shed for wet weather recreation, and even a "giant stride," were provided for them, the latter, however, leading to so much horse-play that in time it was abolished.

The choice of the first master was an anxious task, but one of the leading Norwich Church schools produced a young man of great ability, who was only waiting for a post before marrying a young teacher from another school in the diocese.

How shall I speak with due moderation of the dear old 'friend of all the world,' who, coming to Greenhoe as the young master of twenty-five, reigned for forty years in the school? Forty years of solid, exhausting work, followed by ten more of "calm decay," during which the little room where he sat, patient and crippled, was a centre of affectionate interest to the whole parish. In 1838 "Master" was a slight, fragile-looking young man. His Huguenot descent showed itself in his coal-black hair and keen, thoughtful face. But the young bride regarded the move to the bleak Norfolk coast with some dismay, as his chest had already shown signs of delicacy; nor was the doctor's opinion very reassuring. "It will either kill or cure him," he said. Happily the strong, bracing air "cured," and the young couple lived to celebrate their golden wedding!

There was no "religious difficulty" in those days. Master was a devoted Evangelical Churchman, and every child learnt the Catechism, and in the upper classes the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel as well, not to speak of a little manual called "Faith and Duty," useful in many ways, but given to the snare of "phrases." It was beloved of lazy children, who would reel off

“adoption and grace,” or any other catchword, as a suitable and satisfactory answer to every sort of question.

The large illuminated texts in Old English characters which decorated the schoolroom walls sometimes proved traps for the lazy ones. I remember a small boy, who had forgotten to learn his “Sunday text,” gazing stolidly at the opposite wall, and slowly enunciating, “Thou—shalt—not—go—up—and—down—as—a—*wheelbarrer*—among thy people”—“tale-bearer,” as illuminated, proving illegible.

Master’s Scripture and Catechism lessons, as I remember them, were models of direct and simple teaching, and one often hears the echo of them even now. “Master used to tell us,” said an old man to me last summer, “as there was two things went right back to the beginning—the law of marriage and the law of the Sabbath. I couldn’t never forget them words.”

But in religious teaching especially one feels the difficulty of kindling the Norfolk child’s imagination. Like the Rev. Amos Barton, in his famous discourse on “unleavened bread,” we have often “succeeded in carrying the imagination to the dough-tub,” but unfortunately have failed, like him, “to carry it upwards from that well-known object to the unknown truths which it was intended to shadow forth.” My sister was once giving a Catechism lesson in Greenhoe school. Having carefully explained the word “inheritor,” and illustrated it by the Prince of Wales, she was proceeding to question the children on their baptismal position as heirs of the kingdom of heaven, when a small boy, who had apparently been listening intently, held up his hand: “Please, ’m, *I know*. That mean, when my daddy’s dead, I shall have his spade for my own!” At any rate, the *teacher* learnt something from the reply.

A little girl in the same class, in the course of a lesson on “sacrifices,” was asked, “What was the first thing Noah did on leaving the ark?” She answered without a moment’s hesitation, “He opened the window and aired it *well*.”

With these prosaic, slowly-stirred natures, the best teaching is that of “line upon line, precept upon precept.” To get them

to grasp thoroughly a few great truths was Master's endeavour ; and surely never were the power of the truths he taught better illustrated than in the life he lived before them. " Ah, he *were* a good livin' man, he were !" How often do I hear the witness of his old scholars to that quiet, consistent life !

The secular teaching was simple, but very thorough, and the fame of Master's arithmetic classes soon attracted the tradesmen's sons, and even those of the smaller farmers, to the school. Of course attendance was purely voluntary at that time ; but a system of marks for regular attendance, translatable into really good prizes at the year's end, had an excellent effect in keeping a good school, and, moreover, parental discipline was still existent in the thirties. One little lad was brought to school for the first time by his father, with the curt remark, " Lather him well ; he need it !"

In those days outside help was gladly welcomed, and the squire's two daughters were regular and enthusiastic teachers, " Miss Helen " assisting " Governess "—as the schoolmistress was always called—with the needlework, to which the whole afternoon of the girls was devoted. And the needlework of Greenhoe school was something to remember. Exquisite " one-and-one " darning, stitching that would have satisfied Hannah More, and even delicate embroidery in the case of some of the elder girls ; for " Miss Helen " was an expert, and loved teaching.

There exists in manuscript an amusing rhymed account of the visit of the Marquis of Rocksavage, a great authority on education at that time, to the model school of Greenhoe. He arrived unexpectedly, but as he lunched at the Hall before his inspection there was time for hasty preparation :

" Then down to the schoolroom a messenger fled,
To see they were blameless in fingers and head,
And to tell every ' mawther ' to turn out her toes,
Not lifting the back of her hand to her nose.
Miss Helen's battalions were bid to be there
In pinafores snowy and smoothly brushed hair.
The Rixes, the Duffields, and Emily Dawes
Held six little baby-caps up in their paws.

Perhaps it was thought that it would not be meet
 His lordship should see them at work on a sheet ;
 But strict were the orders the caps to revere,
 And to set not a stitch till Miss Helen stood near."

It is satisfactory to note that his lordship expressed much approval of the methods used in teaching, and made elaborate pencil memoranda.

The singing was a very special feature, and the Greenhoe "rounds" were far-famed. Master had been trained under Miss Glover (in the earliest sol-fa system), and had a most sensitive ear for time and tune. His keen interest in music reflected itself in the children, and I well remember the delight with which, as small girls, my sister and I used to go to hear the "school singing," especially such a piece as "The Supposition," sung by girls and boys alternately with the utmost *brio*:

"*Boys.* If I should live, perhaps I shall be
 A weaver, and weave cloth, d'ye see?
 Some cloth, you know, is made of flax,
 And this we put upon our backs.

Are boys not useful, then ?

Girls. But after you've made your cloth of flax,
 Before you put it upon your backs,
 I'd like to know who makes your shirt,
 And mends and washes it from dirt ?

Are girls not useful, then ?

Boys. We weave.

Girls. We wash.

Both. Then, as we both are useful made,
 We'll try to give each other aid,
 As we were meant to do."

And so on through the various employments—farming, sea, building, tailoring—the girls always insisting on their indispensable share in each occupation. I hear the dear old song is "quite out of date" now. I wonder why? Is it that the old-fashioned teaching as to the "mutual help" of the sexes is "out-of-date" too ?

One curious custom of the school was that every child was known by a number instead of its name, the earlier numbers being assigned to the girls. These numbers frequently stuck

to their possessors through life. I remember going with my mother to see a stout, elderly matron, the parent of seven or eight tall sons and daughters. "That was 'Fidgety Forty,'" said my mother, as we left the cottage. "Never did we have such a restless child; she was like a bit of quicksilver on the form. And when she was seventeen she ran away with a neighbour's lad. Poor Forty! I *was* afraid about her then. But he married her at once, and she soon steadied down, poor thing!"

The school had a fine organ, presented by the "young squire," a devoted Churchman, whose delight it was, after a hard day's work, to drop in at the school, and join in the chanting of the evening psalms. His brother, a great child-lover, used often to appear at the noon recess with a huge bottle of sweets and a long, large-bowled spoon. "An exercise in mouth-opening" followed, which was highly appreciated.

In his later years Master had the help of a devoted daughter, who eventually succeeded him when the rheumatic gout, which partially crippled him, compelled him to resign; but he retained his name throughout the after-life of his many pupils. Many a tall, bronzed fellow have I seen, fresh from Australia or Natal, hurrying up to the school cottage to greet Master and Governess in their white-haired old age—and how welcome all were made! It was a beautiful relation that existed between the old man and his "boys"—on their side, reverence for a "good life," nowhere deeper than among the Norfolk working class; and on his, the sympathetic interest which never forgot their characters, their special difficulties, but followed them with the enduring love that "hopeth all things."

Ah well, the "old school" of masters and pupils has passed away never to return. Sometimes I wonder whether the keen intelligence of the new school, the desire to be in the forefront of progress, to secure "public school relations" between masters and boys, will be found to equal in results the "paternal government" of past days, of which Greenhoe school will always be a happy memory.