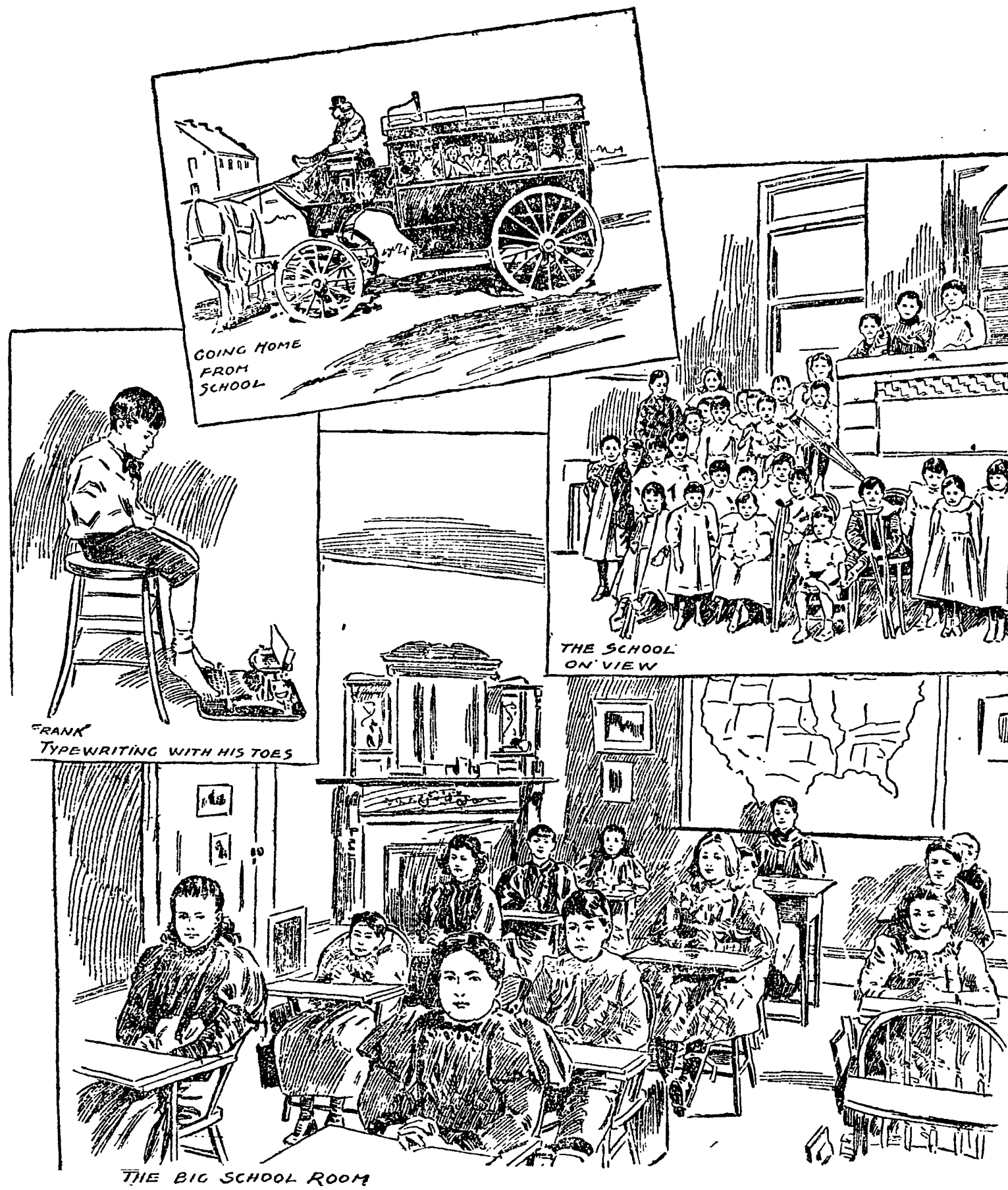


# HOUSE OF CRUTCHES.

What the Kind World is Doing for Children Whom Nature Has Not Endowed With Normal Forms—Industrial School on Newbury St Tries to Make Life's Path Easy for Many Little Ones—Charitable Work That Makes Sorrow Glad Through Tears.



No one has ever lived in a great city and threaded his way through crowded thoroughfares or made daily use of its street cars without coming into passing contact with fellow-beings not fashioned in the ordinary mold of humanity, or with those who have been rendered physically unlike by some accident.

These unfortunates, who by some strange perversity of nature, or by some inexplicable fate, have been handicapped from the start, always excite mingled emotions in the breast of him who walks life's ways fully equipped to fight and conquer or at least hold his place in the great human struggle.

He begins to speculate on the strangeness of the fate that made him strong and active while the man opposite drags a paralyzed leg after him, or displays an empty right sleeve, neatly pinned across his shabby, threadbare coat. Heredity can no more settle the question satisfactorily than does the effort to balance the account of individual care against the immeasurable forces of the unexpected and the unforeseen.

The fashionably gowned lady who crowds one side of a car with her silk petticoats and ruffles and laces bears the impress of robust health and constitutional vigor, and her fat, jeweled fingers, as they dive into her plethoric purse for her fare, seem to mock those patient, toll-worn fingers of the one-armed passenger who carries under his left arm a box bearing the legend, samples.

It seems a whimsical arrangement of nature to give his five fingers the work of 10 while the 10 rosy digits of the stik-lined lady have no heavier task in life than to count her change. Was it a chance, a fate, or only one of nature's practical jokes?

But it is when one runs across a crippled or deformed child, making its way through the busy marts of the city, that the most serious consideration arises as to what is to become of the children of the poor who are ushered into the world like Jenny Wren, with "queer legs and crooked back."

It is scarcely possible to walk through any crowded portion of Boston without meeting one or more of these curious little people, and their sharp, odd, old-looking faces seem to look out upon the world from the vantage ground of isolated dissimilarity, with an expression of unconscious inquiry, as if to say, "Why is the outside of me different from yours?"

The writer had been thinking of those singular, distorted waifs, who had somehow or other been turned out of the mold wrong, and had failed to bear on their little bodies the trade mark, "Made in his image," when a friend extended an invitation to go with her

to the industrial school for crippled and deformed children at 424 Newbury st. The invitation was gladly accepted.

The brick building on Newbury st, with its stone balustrade, has a bright, cheerful aspect, well suited to the work that goes on within its walls. It was the children's dinner hour, and the visitors were ushered into a room where a score or more of children were waiting to eat their midday meal of roast beef, potatoes, carrots, turnips, fresh bread and butter—each plate being flanked by a large china mug of milk or water. Various sizes of heads, ranging in color from black to white, for there was one small boy, whose head was absolutely white, were bowed on either side of the table awaiting the signal to sing their grace.

A moment later a chorus of shrill, childish voices were lifted in a verse of thanksgiving song, whose vociferous "amen" was instantly followed by a clatter of knives, forks and spoons, as the little people began to fall to upon their platters. The faces were all smiling and alert, looking with interest at the new visitors, but behind almost every chair leaned a little crutch.

These silent witnesses of physical loss or infirmity cast their forked shadows across the room, and seemed to darken the sunshine and smiles, encompassing the children with the sombre distinction of misfortune. In another schoolroom, the same scene was being enacted, where a dozen or more children, a grade or two higher in age and size, were also partaking of creature comforts, and to this special feature of the Newbury at school a great deal of its success is due.

The plain, substantial and nutritious food, properly cooked and comfortably served, has done as much to improve the physical being of the little cripples as the mental training has done for their intellectual growth.

When it is remembered that these children come from people who can do little more than provide their families with the barest necessities in the way of living, the provision of suitable food for the delicate, diseased little creatures becomes of paramount importance in a work of this sort, because without it, the mental development which is dependent on physical welfare, cannot be achieved. The directors and officers of the institution have fully realized this, and the gratifying results attest their wisdom.

One child has fattened 12 pounds during the last scholastic year, and although many of the children are hopelessly crippled, their appearance is comparatively wholesome and healthy.

Boston has always led the van in charitable work and organization, but the industrial school for deformed and crippled children is the most useful and far-reaching in its beneficial effects of any.

The deformed or crippled child, who is such a terrible burden in the house of toil, may, by means of the Newbury at institution, become in time self-sustaining. In this way the benefit is twofold, offering specific relief to both family and individual in America, where things there seem to be opening for hand manufactures, such as lace, delicate embroideries, artificial flowers, feather work, hand carving and the various crafts that require deft fingers and long patience.

Those who are by some physical infirmity compelled to lead sedentary, retired lives, are fitted by nature to become experts in such lines of industry, and when the children of the working classes, who are physically unable to earn their bread by ordinary labor are taught trades which they may be able to ply successfully, two important steps have been taken. In the first place, children who would otherwise be helpless and a burden upon the communities to which they belong, are enabled to become self-supporters, while the establishment of hand-made work, for which we usually go abroad, might be added to American industries.

Why not have, in time, American laces as beautiful as those made in Brussels or Valencia? Embroideries equal to those done in France and Italy? Hand-carving of an exquisite finish as that fashioned in Switzerland, the Tyrol and Naples? In European countries, these trades have become arts; why not train our deformed and crippled children into artisans who can furnish beautiful things to our own market for such handwork, and at the same time bring into the lives of this unfortunate class the light and strength of interest and self-respect?

These thoughts drifted through the visitor's head as one class room after another was inspected where the children were being taught sewing, millinery, sloyd, carpentering, drawing, modeling, color work, printing and typewriting.

The pupils of the school (which is limited to 26 pupils and now has 34, with a waiting list of 16) are divided into two departments, grammar and primary, with three classes in each, and since the school was opened, three years ago, the children who have been entered have made very creditable progress. The new house at 424 Newbury st is well adapted to the needs of the school, having a primary schoolroom on the ground floor, which has made it possible this year to admit several paralytics, who would otherwise have had to be denied admission. Color work has been introduced during the last session as an addendum to drawing, and clay modeling has lately been taken to the two upper grammar classes. Typesetting and printing were also this year introduced into the

institution, and all of the work that has been done in this school was set up by the scholars.

As the children are not very strong, they have received some assistance from their teachers, of course, but in looking over the amount of work done it seems wonderful that these little boys and girls, all of them wearing braces or splints or weights upon their distorted bodies, could have done so much. They have printed more than 5000 envelopes, 6000 circulars and as many notices for the institution, besides many hundreds of tickets, postals, slips and envelopes by special order.

The sloyd carpentering room presents a pleasant sight. A class of little boys of from 5 to 10 years of age were learning to use their little tools with skill and ease, and the eager and enthusiastic faces bent over the tasks showed how much real enjoyment they were getting out of their work.

As the children are all very delicate and unable to bear any continued strain of mind or body, there are frequent intermissions and changes of study. For two hours each day a nurse is in attendance, who keeps each child's apparatus in order, dresses painful abscesses, rubs aching backs and limbs with a motherly interest and kindness that gives comfort and encouragement to each little sufferer. The hopelessly crippled, or paralytics, have received the most careful treatment from the medical board, as such children stand in really greater need of the training given by the school than those suffering from joint diseases which may be arrested, and who may some day be able to take a comparatively active part in life.

In looking at the wasted forms of the pupils of the school the visitor naturally begins to wonder how the children, whose parents are usually laborers, are able to go to and fro from the building. The transportation committee of the school has solved the problem by forming a contract with the Armstrong transfer company, which fetches the scholars to school in the morning and calls for them at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, taking each one back to his or her home.

The drivers are trustworthy and careful, and the ride to and from school is a daily event of delightful excitement for the children. The arrival and departure is an interesting spectacle to everybody in the vicinity. It is a pleasant thought that here in our midst, the helpless are not only being provided for in the present, but are being fitted and trained so as to provide for themselves in the future. The majority of the girls and boys may become dressmakers, milliners, bookbinders, engravers, tailors and fancy joiners, while those endowed with specially artistic gifts may become high class artisans.

In Copenhagen the officers of the industrial school undertake to find a mar-

ket for the cripples' work, and since a great number of these, though able to do beautiful work, are unable to solicit it, this is a wise provision and worthy of imitation in America. Although it is of course difficult to equal the standard of excellence maintained in the older foreign institutions of a like nature, such as those of Milan, Italy and Copenhagen, in Denmark, the Boston school is endeavoring to combine the best methods of these foreign systems. The bathing facilities of the institute per Rachet of Milan are far beyond anything as yet at the command of the Newbury at school, but it is hoped that in the course of time this and other lacks may be supplied.

As one passes from one room to the other where the children are being taught, there is the same atmosphere of cheerful resignation everywhere. Little heads sunk far down between humped shoulders, little feet strapped up in iron braces or weighted down with heavy weights, paralyzed limbs at every turn, yet bright eyes and smiles, in spite of all the pain and weariness.

There is one boy, a brave little fellow, plying on with a broken back, who cannot attend the school, but who is visited by the teachers, and who is learning painting and drawing, and violin playing, patiently and cleverly, while at the branch school at Arlington much good work is being accomplished.

But the pupil who excites most general interest at the institution in Boston is a little Italian boy known as "Frank," who is learning typewriting in a very curious and remarkable way. Born into the world without arms and with very weak legs, this abbreviated atom of humanity seems destined to disprove the law of the survival of the fittest. "Click-click" goes the machine, as the child laboriously lifts his feet and strikes the lettered keyboard with his great toes. "Click-click," the machine goes on to the end of the line, when he shoves back the carriage with his right foot, smiles with conscious pride, and begins again. The thing seems a marvel.

Close up to his left armpit the stump of a hand issues with startling celerity, and two long fingers grasp, close to his breast the paper of copy, until the teacher relieves him by a lesson of dictation. Looking at the neatly done page the visitor blushed at the recollection of slipshod copy at home, for "Armless Frank" had unconsciously been a lesson, a reproof and an example all at one time.

A visit to the industrial school for deformed and crippled children makes one incline to optimistic contemplation of the world's progress, for from both an economic and a humanitarian point of view, the institution is noble in motive and efficient in result, and, upon reflection, 424 Newbury st becomes, to one who has visited it, not only "The House of Crutches," but also the house of loving help and patient endeavor.