

The first thing that comes to my mind, when I think of the antithesis of the type which deals unrelentingly with Negroes, is the Leonard Street Orphans' Home for Negro girls in Atlanta.

At various times in my life chance has thrown me into contact with charities in great variety and philanthropic work of many kinds. I have seen theoretical charities, sentimental charities, silly charities, pauperizing charities, wild-eyed charities, charities which did good, and others which worked damage in the world; I have seen organized charities splendidly run under difficult circumstances (as in the present Department of Charities under Commissioner Kingsbury, in New York City), and I have seen other organized charities badly run at great expense; I have seen charities conducted with the primary purpose of ministering to the vanity of self-important individuals who like to say: "See all the good that I am doing!" and I have seen other personal charities operated (as in the case of the Rockefeller Foundation) with a magnificent scope and effectiveness.

Nevertheless, of all the charities I have seen, of all the efforts I have witnessed to improve the condition of humanity, none has taken firmer hold upon my heart than the little home for colored orphans out on Leonard Street.

The Mystery of Miss Chadwick

The home is a humble frame building which was used as a barracks by Northern troops stationed in Atlanta after the Civil War. In it reside Miss Chadwick, her helpers, and about seventy little Negro girls; and it is a fact worth noting that several of the helpers are young colored women who, themselves brought up in the home and taught to be self-supporting, have been drawn back to the place by homesickness. Was ever before an orphan homesick for an orphans' home?

Miss Chadwick is an Englishwoman. Coming out to America a good many years ago, she somehow found Atlanta, and in Atlanta somehow found this orphanage, which was then both figuratively and literally dropping to pieces. Some one had to take hold of it, so Miss Chadwick did. How successful she has been it is hard to convey in words. I do not mean that she has succeeded in building up a great flourishing

(The Mystery of Miss Chadwick - cont'd.)

plant with a big endowment and all sorts of improvements. Far from it. The home stands on a tiny lot, the building is ramshackle and not nearly large enough for its purpose, and sometimes it seems doubtful where the money to keep it going will come from. Nevertheless the home is a hundred times more successful than I could have believed a home for orphans, colored or white, could be made, had I not seen it with my own eyes.

Its success lies not in material possessions or prosperity, not in the food and shelter it provides to those who so pitifully needed it, but in the fact that it is in the truest and finest sense a home, a place endowed with the greatest blessings any home can have: contentment and affection. What Miss Chadwick has provided is, in short, an institution with a heart.

How did she do it? That, like the other mystery of how she manages to house those seventy small lively people in that little building, is something which only Heaven and Miss Chadwick understand. But then, if you have ever visited the home and met Miss Chadwick, and seen her with her children, you know that Heaven and Miss Chadwick understand a lot of things the rest of us don't know about at all!

--- Mr. Street's article from Collier's Weekly, 1916

See: American Adventures by Julian Street
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