

Female Industry, Harriet Martineau  
*The Edinburgh Review*, vol.109, n°222, April 1859

THE  
**EDINBURGH REVIEW,**  
APRIL, 1859.

---

---

No. CCXXII.

---

---



**T**HERE was a time when continental visitors called England 'the hell of horses, the purgatory of servants, and the 'paradise of women,' from the two former having everything to do, and the latter nothing. The lapse of centuries has materially altered this aspect of affairs. The railways have annihilated the hardest-worked class of horses; improvements in the arts of life have relieved our servants of a great amount of toil, while on the whole elevating their condition; whereas

the women of the United Kingdom have been led forth from their paradise into a life of labour and care, more strongly resembling that of men than either the men or women of old times could have anticipated. Wearied as some of us are with the incessant repetition of the dreary story of spirit-broken governesses and starving needlewomen, we rarely obtain a glimpse of the full breadth of the area of female labour in Great Britain; and it requires the publication of the 'Results of the Census,' or some such exhibition of hard facts, to make us understand and feel that the conditions of female life have sustained as much alteration as the fortunes of other classes by the progress of civilisation. (Sooner or later it must become known, in a more practical way than by the figures of the census returns, that a very large proportion of the women of England earn their own bread; and there is no saying how much good may be done, and how much misery may be saved, by a timely recognition of this simple truth.)

The idea itself expressed by the form of words 'earning one's bread,' is somewhat modern,—except indeed in the primitive sense in which Adam was set to do it. In the modern sense of 'earning one's bread,' the position arose, for men first, and subsequently for women, after the creation of a middle class of society. The thing and the name have been recognised for some centuries in regard to men. Women have been more and more extensively involved in the thing, especially during the last half-century; but the name is new and strange; and the extent to which they work for a maintenance is a truth known scarcely to one in ten thousand of us. It is as well to know it; and timely attention to the fact is the best way of knowing it to practical purpose.

There is no reason to suppose that women's lives were less laborious than now, in the early days when they had no responsibility about their own maintenance. When there was no middle-class, and no shopping and marketing, the mere business of living was very hard work, both to men and women. They belonged to somebody, except the few who owned the rest; and the owners had perhaps as much on their hands as the dependents. The gentlewoman of ancient times had to overlook the preparation of every article of food, clothing and convenience, for a whole settlement, in days when the corn had to be grown, reaped, and dressed at home; and the wool and hemp the same; and all the materials of building, furnishing, and adorning. ) The low-born women had to grind the corn before they could make the bread; to spin the wool, and dye and weave it before they could make the clothes. Every pro-

cess was gone through on every estate. Every step of daily life was laborious; and all working men and women were slaves. Not a few of them were called so in the days when the Irish used to purchase their workpeople from England. 'The spindle side' of the house, as King Alfred called the gentlewomen, ascertained how many hands were necessary to do the women's work of the establishment; and the useless were got rid of, by one method or another, and chiefly by sale to Ireland, or the estate suffered. In those times, there was no such idea afloat as that of self-dependence for subsistence. The maintenance was a matter of course; and hard work a common necessity, everywhere outside of the convent.

The lot of the labourer seems to have been little lightened when the middle class began to grow, though more and more articles were to be had by purchase, and much toil and time were saved by new arts of life. It was a great matter when the mill saved the pounding of corn. It was a great matter when the first Flemish weavers came over with their looms, and spared the women a world of trouble about 'homespun.' Before that, the foreigners used to say that the English were scarcely anything but shepherds and wool producers. More wool than ever was wanted; but the saving of the women's time and labour led to an increased production of poultry and eggs, butter and cheese, and many other good things. Still, the work must have been as hard as any that is known now. The days of the small yeomen had come on; the trading-class was beginning to appear; and all domestic matters rested on the women as entirely in the farmhouse and cottage as in the castle or mansion. 'To winnow all manner of corn, to make 'malt, to wash, and to make hay, shear corn, and in time of 'need, help her husband to fill the muck-wain or dung-cart, 'drive the plough, to load hay, corn, and such other, to go to 'market and sell butter or pigs, fowls or corn,'—such was the duty of the farmer's wife, according to Fitzherbert, in the first English work on husbandry. The women had to make the straw or flock beds, and the chaff pillows, when that luxury replaced the log of wood. They had to spin, weave, and dye the coverlets, and all the fabrics worn by the household, not being wealthy enough to employ the Flemings as the higher orders did. All the measuring and administration of the corn and pulse was the women's business, and the preparation of the winter food; that is, the salting and drying of the lean cows which were killed in autumn because no way was known of keeping cattle alive till the spring grasses were ready. The women made the candles and the salt, and the soap; and the

mead from the beehives, and the cider from the orchard; and they spent no little time in collecting the finest inner bark in the forest, and the best herbs in the fields, to make bread of when corn and pulse failed. In all the intervals, the spinning was going on;—that art which has given a denomination to the unmarried women of Great Britain and the United States to this day. First, in keeping the cattle, sheep, and swine, the women plied the distaff, as we now see the Alpine girls plying it amidst their goats, and the Arab maidens near almost every well or moist *wady* in the desert; and then, when the spinning-wheel came in, its whirr was heard all over the land, all day and the last thing at night. ‘It stops a gap, and so must needs be,’ was the reason assigned by the men; and in every house or hovel, there stood the wheel for every woman to sit down to, in the intervals of other business.

The gentlewomen first exhibited the change wrought by the rise of a shop-keeping class. It gave them more time than English women ever had before. There were seasons when, in the absence of husband or father, they had to govern large households or small districts, — with millions of details to attend to; but even then, from the time when the miller ground the corn, and the vintner supplied the wine, and stuffs were to be had from the merchant, the mistress of an establishment had something of the leisure of a princess for doing what she had a fancy for; — and that was, for the most part, working tapestry. While the priest wrote the letters, and the steward kept the accounts and made the purchases, the lady could overlook the garden from her lattice, and the kitchen from the gallery, without much interruption to the grave labour of stitching the siege of Troy, or the finding of Moses, in coloured wools or silks. These coloured silks bring us to a point of view whence we can get a glimpse of a change in the life of those times. When shops were so established an institution as that laws were made from year to year to regulate measures and weights, and exportation and importation, a rabid hatred sprang up against the Lombards who brought in silk ready for use, (‘deceitfully wrought’) so as to destroy the mystery of the silkwomen and spinners, ‘and all such virtuous occupations of women.’ This was in 1455. Half a century later, the new prohibitions of small articles of wrought silk from abroad went by the name of enactments ‘for silk-women;’ and it seems as if there were really women who made ‘knit articles,’ girdles, cauls, nets, laces, &c., for profit, as well as for household use. While reading the pulpit censures aimed at the ladies’ dress, in those days when silk was a bewitching novelty, the ‘headdresses, horns, tails, and ornaments of

'pomp,' we can easily imagine that there was a demand 'for 'silkwomen' beyond what separate households could supply; and hence the rise of one of the earliest branches of female industry.

(We can, at this moment, recall very few others capable of yielding a subsistence. In all ages and all nations there has been a tendency to commit medical and surgical practice to old women. It is so now, in the heart of Africa, and in the backwoods of America, and in the South-sea islands, and in remote parts of some islands which lie in a northern sea. One of the earliest figures in the lengthening series of female bread-winners is that of the doctress, with her simples and her ointments, and her secrets, and her skill in dressing wounds.) By a similar mysterious adaptation, the doctress has been, in all times, the fortune-teller, or the witch, or at lowest the match-maker, — vocations by any of which a good deal of money has been obtainable from age to age. In some analogy with these is, or was, the vocation of cook, — a profitable one also. Sending her messes from her own fire, or carrying her own saucepans and spices and herbs to the rich neighbour's kitchen, or the lady's still-room, the skilful cook was more patron than client, in times when English banquets were emerging from utter barbarism. There seems to have been little besides, in the way of paid industry. The occasional foster-mother took the infant home to be reared. The sick nurse was either one of the household, or the doctress. Orphans, or the daughters of impoverished gentlemen, entered the household of some great lady, as maids-of-honour did those of queens: but, beyond this, it does not appear that women sustained themselves by any other industry than the kinds we have indicated.

In those days, therefore, the supposition was true which has now become false, and ought to be practically admitted to be false; — that every woman is supported (as the law supposes her to be represented) by her father, her brother, or her husband. In those days, unmarried women were rare; and convents were the refuge of celibacy. It was not only in royal families that children were betrothed in their cradles. In all ranks, parents made matches for their children at any age that suited the family convenience; and the hubbub that ensued, when a daughter refused to marry at her parents' bidding, shows what a disaster it was considered to have a woman in the house who would neither marry nor become a nun. There was, in such a state of society, no call for female industry, except within the establishment, — whether it were the mansion, the farm, the merchant's dwelling, or the cottage.

From that time (the uprising of a middle class) to this, the need and the supply of female industry have gone on increasing, and latterly at an unparalleled rate, while our ideas, our language, and our arrangements have not altered in any corresponding degree. (We go on talking as if it were still true that every woman is, or ought to be, supported by father, brother, or husband: we are only beginning to think of the claim of all workers,—that their work should be paid for by its quality, and its place in the market, irrespective of the status of the worker:—we are only beginning to see that the time must come when such artificial depreciation must cease, under the great natural laws of society.) We are (probably to a man) unaware of the amount of the business of life in England done by women; and if we do not attend to the fact in time, the knowledge will be forced upon us in some disadvantageous or disagreeable way. A social organisation framed for a community of which half stayed at home, while the other half went out to work, cannot answer the purposes of a society, of which a quarter remains at home while three-quarters go out to work. This seems to be clear enough. It does not follow that extensive changes in the law are needed; or that anybody is called upon to revolutionise his thoughts or his proceedings. The natural laws of society will do whatever has to be done, when once recognised and allowed to act. They will settle all considerable social points,—all the controversies of the labour-market, and the strifes about consideration and honour. All that we contend for at this moment is, that the case should be examined and admitted. Under a system like ours, in which the middle-class of society constitutes the main strength of the whole organisation, women have become industrial in the sense of being the supporters of themselves and of a large proportion of households: and their industrial production is rapidly on the increase. The census of 1851 affords some idea of how the matter stands. ‘While the female population has increased (between 1841 and 1851) in the ratio of 7 to 8, the number of women returned as engaged in independent industry has increased in the far greater ratio of 3 to 4.’ (*Industrial and Social Position of Women*, p. 219.) We are not very far from another census, which will afford the means of learning what that progress will have been in ten years. Meantime, we can hardly do better than prepare ourselves to estimate the next disclosure, by looking at the case as it stands to-day.

The first head of industry is always Agriculture. The Americans pride themselves on employing no women in agriculture, and are exceedingly scandalised at the sight of the

peasantry in continental countries tilling their ground in family concert—the women and girls working there with their husbands and brothers. It may be questioned whether the yeoman's wife in New England, and the back settler's daughters, have an easier life of it than the German peasant-woman, or the Devonshire labourer's wife, or Highland lassies at a shearing. Considering the maple sugar-making, the soap-boiling, the corn-husking, &c., we should doubt whether any women work harder than some who would on no account be permitted to handle a hoe or a rake. However that may be, there seems to be no doubt of agricultural labour being relished by English women, and of its being, on the whole, favourable to health and morality. Health is morality, to begin with; and, if the woman's labour improves the family diet, and subscribes to the clothing club, while bacon and new shirts would be out of the question from the husband's labour alone, the fact may be less deplorable than a well-to-do young republic may consider it. If the children are not at school, they are with their mother in the field; and this is better than the fate of the town child, whose mother is out at work. It is not, then, to be regretted that the proportion of women employed in agriculture seems increasing in England. No census affords the means of more than an approximate estimate of the numbers, because we have not yet been told (as we must hope to be in 1861), how many of the rural labouring class become domestic servants. In the 'Industrial and Social Position of Women', we find this statement:—

'Going through the necessary calculation, we are led to the following conclusions, viz., that, of the whole number of domestic servants, nearly two-thirds are born in rural parts; that the agricultural class, although little more than half as numerous as the classes engaged in trade, commerce, and manufacture, sends out nearly twice as many domestic servants; that of the women of town families engaging in independent industry, about one-third become domestic servants; and that, of the women of country families engaging in independent industry, six-sevenths become domestic servants. To a great extent, therefore, the women of the rural classes monopolise that situation both in town and in the country.' (P. 192.)

According to the census of 1841, there were then 66,329 women, above twenty years of age, employed in agriculture, without reckoning the widow-farmers (who are not few), or the farmers' wives. The late census gives 128,418 as the number so occupied, exclusive of the 'farmers' wives' and 'farmers' 'daughters,' who are specially, but perhaps not completely, returned as being 289,793. Of the independent female agri-

cultural labourers, about one-half, or above 64,000, are dairy women. Neither in America, nor anywhere else, would dairy work be objected to as a feminine employment, conducted within doors, as it is, and requiring feminine qualities for its management: yet it is harder work, and more injurious to health, than hoeing turnips or digging potatoes. 'No end of work' is the complaint; and it is not an unreasonable one. On a dairy-farm, the whole set of labours has to be gone through twice a day, nearly the whole year round; and any one of our readers who has seen the vessels on a Cheshire farm, the width of the tubs, the capacity of the ladles, the strength of the presses, and the size of the cheeses, will feel no surprise at hearing from the doctors that dairywomen constitute a special class of patients, for maladies arising from over-fatigue and insufficient rest. There is some difference between this mode of life and the common notion of the ease and charm of the dairymaid's existence, as it is seen in a corner of a Duchess's park, or on a little farm of three fields and a paddock. The professional dairywoman can usually do nothing else. She has been about the cows since she was tall enough to learn to milk, and her days are so filled up, that it is all she can do to keep her clothes in decent order. She drops asleep over the last stage of her work; and grows up ignorant of all other knowledge, and unskilled in all other arts. Such work as this ought at least to be paid as well as the equivalent work of men; indeed, in the dairy farms of the West of England the same labour of milking the kine is now very generally performed by men, and the Dorset milkmaid, tripping along with her pail, is, we fear, becoming a myth. But even in Cheshire the dairymaids receive, it appears, only from 8*l.* to 10*l.* a-year, with board and lodging. The superintendent of a large dairy is a salaried personage of some dignity, with two rooms, partial or entire diet, coal and candle, and wherewithal to keep a servant—50*l.* a year or more. But of the 64,000 dairywomen of Great Britain, scarcely any can secure a provision for the time when they can no longer lean over the cheese-tub, or churn, or carry heavy weights.

Ireland has to be treated separately in all these surveys, from her having had no place in the census; and yet, in considering the female industry of the United Kingdom, that of Ireland is the most prominent, and commands the most surprise. It will be ever memorable that during the transition period in which Ireland passed over from destitution and despair to comfort and progress, the nation was mainly supported by the industry of the women. Our readers may remember the 'Cottage Dialogues' of Mrs. Leadbeater,—a homely book



which shows what rural life in Ireland was like before O'Connell broke up the good understanding formerly existing between the landlords and the peasantry. That book represented the ordinary life of the peasant women, spent in the field or the bog, and in managing the manure and the pig at home. (In the succeeding period, and after the famine, the desire for the lowest-priced labour led to the employment of women and children; and the strange spectacle was then common of the women toiling on the farms or pastures, while the strong men were nursing the babies and the grannies at home. It was not only, nor chiefly, the agricultural labour however which fed the peasantry, before the men resumed their proper place. The Scotch merchants employed 400,000 women and girls in 'sewing,' or what English ladies call 'working' muslins. The Glasgow employers paid 90,000*l.* a week in wages for this Irish work. A good deal more was earned by other kinds of fine fabrics. On the whole, the change from outdoor labour to this seemed to be unfavourable to health in one direction, and favourable in another, while the social benefit was indisputable. The sedentary employment was less wholesome than the laborious one; but the homes became cleaner and more comfortable. There is nothing in needlework, any more than in dairy-work, to make a woman a good housewife; and the Irish peasant woman had yet another step upwards to make, to constitute her the labourer's wife that we may hope to see her; but the pig no longer shared the cabin, and the children were not tumbling about in the midden all day. The family diet is of a higher order than the old potato; and, as one consequence, there is a stronger demand for dairywomen. The land which used to be sub-let for potato grounds is more and more devoted to the service of the butter-merchants, causing an expansion of female industry in that direction. Whenever cheese is added, there will be still more for Irishwomen to do. It is odd that the innkeepers in the most rural districts of that island have to get every ounce of their cheese from England. Even without this prominent kind of women's work, the female industry of Ireland must be very great. It is not less now than when it nearly supported the population, though the men have again taken the lead in the toils of life, and their reward.

In connexion with agricultural labour we should consider the rearers of poultry, pigs and lambs; the makers of cider and perry; and the bee-mistresses, who gain a living by their honey in many rural districts. The enormous importation of eggs from the continent, and especially from France, shows that there is more work for women yet in this direction: but the

reigning passion for poultry-yards must result in a great diffusion of the knowledge and skill which the upper classes are cultivating so diligently. In addition to the twenty thousand female farmers and land-owners of England, and the half-million and more of 'farmers' wives and daughters,' a separate class of poultry-women will soon be able to make a good subsistence out of eggs and chickens. Then there are the market-gardeners, — thousands of women, most admirably employed. There are the florists and nursery-gardeners, — not infrequently Quakers. It is a pretty sight, — a good nursery ground and set of conservatories, under the charge of a sensible Quakeress, whose shrewdness penetrates the whole management. There are the flax producers too, — not a small number, if we include the care of the crop, the pulling, steeping, beetling and dressing, and bringing to market; and, as 60,000 acres of Irish land are annually under flax, and as 500,000 acres would yield no more than is wanted; and as millions of pounds sterling (2,000,000*l.* in ten years) have been wasted in buying an impure seed from abroad when it might easily be obtained at home, we may conclude that flax-producing is, or might be, an extending branch of female industry. We may add that the demand for labour will increase, instead of diminishing, when the farmer consigns the preparation of the flax to establishments organised for the purpose, instead of insisting on doing it at home, and sinking in the market. At present, the women are in one place, poking in the ditch or pond at home, amidst an insufferable stench, and waiting on the weather for days or weeks; and then beetling with the old-fashioned instrument; while in another place they are about the same work in scutching-mills, to far greater advantage. The steeping, done without the stench of decay, and in a few hours or days in vats; and the dressing by patent machinery, are proper work for women, and will, no doubt, employ more and more of them, — especially as a great deal of seed is saved by the process. It is worth while to spend 170*l.* in labour to save 1,200*l.* in seed: and, as we spend 300,000*l.* in importing seed, the prospects of labour in the flax-producing department are well worthy of notice. When we have mentioned the itinerant classes of female agricultural labourers, — the hay-makers, reapers and binders, and the hop-pickers, we have reviewed, in a cursory way, the whole of that division of female industry.

On the whole, its prospects are good. The introduction of agricultural machinery does not at first please the Irish hay-maker, the Scotch reaper, the Berkshire bean-setter, or the Norfolk turnip-hoer: but neither did their grandfathers

like the threshing-machines in the days of Farmer George. Time and patience show that the results of that particular change are two, among others,—an increased demand for labour, and an elevation of the character of the employment,—two very good things in view for the scores of thousands of our country-women who are engaged in agricultural processes of one kind or another.

Next to those who draw commodities from the surface of the land should come those who draw commodities from its depths,—the women engaged in mining processes. We are happily spared the dismal chapter of coal-pit life which we must have presented a few years ago. It is true, the desire for an independent maintenance,—the popular craving for wages,—causes a good deal of evasion of the law; and women do get down into the pits in disguise, or by connivance; but the employment of women in coal-pits is no longer a recognised branch of industry among us. Who then are the 7000 women returned in the census under the head of Mines?

They are, no doubt, for the most part, the dressers of the ores in the Cornish and Welsh mines. The work is dirty, but not too laborious;—less laborious than the work which may perhaps be included under the same head,—the supplying porcelain clay from the same regions of the country. Travellers in Devonshire and Cornwall are familiar with the ugly scenery of hillsides where the turf is broken up, and the series of clay-pits is overflowing, and the plastered women are stirring the mess, or sifting and straining, or drying and moulding the refined clay. The mineral interest is, however, one of the smallest in the schedule of female industry; and it is likely to contract rather than expand,—except the light labour of sorting the ores.

Next to the produce of the land comes that of the waters. Here again, scores of thousands of women find employment (otherwise than as fishermen's wives and daughters) within our four seas. It is true the amount of fish-eating in our country by the lower classes of the population is inexplicably small. No one seems yet to have accounted for the neglect of, or prejudice against, a kind of food so excellent and so abundant. But the demand created by railway carriage, and by the removal of various restrictions, bids fair now to restore something like the fish-eating of the old Catholic days. A few years since, tons of good fish were buried in the sands of the coast because they could not be disposed of while they were fresh, though the price in the neighbouring districts was so high that fish came to be considered a delicacy for the rich. The ponds of old abbeys and mansions had fallen into ruin; the river fish were dwindling in

number and quality; and the uncertainty of the great coast and deep sea fisheries became so extreme as to render that branch of commerce a mere lottery. Through all this, the fishwomen of all kinds stood their ground, with more or less difficulty. We do not mean only the sellers,—the celebrated Billingsgate fair, or the Musselburgh dames, and the Claddagh women. The shrill voices of the fishwomen all round the coast, and in all the ports, will for ever forbid their being forgotten when the independent industry of women is in question. They seem to be appointed to show how independent industrial women may be. A far larger number, however, are employed in the curing, and even in the catching of fish; and these held on through bad times and good times; but, it is supposed, in decreasing numbers till a new period set in. We need not describe the change wrought by the railway system, which scatters fresh fish all over the country, so that you may meet a man on the Yorkshire hills with a string of mackerel, or enjoying his haddock or fresh herring in the midst of a sporting county in the heart of England. The new arrangements for the protection of salmon, and for pisciculture, in imitation of the French practice, point to a steady growth of fish-eating at home; and the extension of our colonies, and of new settlements all over the globe ensures an increased demand for the staple of our great sea-fisheries. The pilchard fishery, confined (with pilchard-eating) to two counties and exportation to Italy, employs thousands of women. Jersey oysters alone employ 1000 women, and this may give us some idea of the amount of independent support afforded to women by our herring and cod fisheries (which last includes a variety of kindred sorts); the mackerel and oyster, and lobster fisheries, round our own coast,—to say nothing of the remote cod and turbot,—and the whale fisheries, in which the women take a part when the cargoes return. There are probably few of us who have not seen more of this direction of industry than of manufactures and commerce in which women are the labourers. In every seaside place we have seen the women and girls pushing their shrimping-nets through the little lagoons on the beach, or visiting the lobster traps at low water. In the Scotch islands, and on many an Irish promontory, we have seen the curing-houses where rows of women were at work in a way suggestive of Red Indian life, where the squaws sit cleaning their fish on the margin of Lakes Ontario or St. Clair. The further north we go in our own island the more we find the women habituated to marine industry, as well as to preparing its products for the markets. From Berwick to the Ord of Caithness the hardy race of men who fish the German Ocean are bred and

nurtured by a race of women as amphibious as themselves, and busy all the year round in mending nets, vending fish, or salting and curing the 'crans' of autumnal herrings. They swarm along the bleak coast of Aberdeen, and they give at some seasons the activity of a vast manufactory to the little harbours of Helmsdale and Wick. In the sea-lochs and western islands of Scotland, it is common for the girls to ply the oar, whether at ferries or in the fishery. The art which young ladies now practise on the still waters of their fathers' pleasure-grounds, as an exercise to open the chest, the daughters of England all along her coasts, and yet more those of Scotland, have practised as naturally as walking, all their lives. Here the memory of Grace Darling will rise in all hearts,—as it ought; and with it the protest she made against being singled out for fame, on account of an act which she declared to be very common. Notwithstanding that protest, some of us prize above most of our cabinet treasures the statuette from the Northumberland monument which represents her sleeping after her battle with wind and tide, with her oar at rest upon her arm. Yet more do we prize the immaterial monument raised to her in that crypt within us wherein great deeds are laid by for eternal remembrance. Not the less, but the more, for her protest against her own fame is she become the type of a class of our hardy countrywomen, who are good angels in storm and shipwreck. As long as her monument remains, it should be remembered that she received her renown with grief and remonstrance, 'because,' as she said, 'there was scarcely a girl along the coast who would 'not have done as she did.'

Before we leave the margin of the sea, we must just glance at the smaller occupations pursued there by women. The most considerable of these was once the gathering and burning of kelp: but chemical science has nearly put an end to that. There is still a great deal of raking and collecting going on. In some counties, half the fields are manured with small fish, and the offal of larger, and seaweeds and sand. Then there is the gathering of jet and amber, and various pebbles, and the polishing and working them. The present rage for studies of marine creatures must afford employment to many women who have the shrewdness to avail themselves of it. Then there are the netting women, who supply that part of the fishermen's gear; and the bathing women, where visitors congregate. We have no means of learning the numbers engaged in such a variety of seaside occupations, but they must be considerable.

(As nearly two-thirds of our maid-servants are country-born, that class presents itself next for review. There are some

standing marvels in regard to the order; how it is that so few of them marry, and how they live in old age; both questions being pertinent to every inquiry into female industry.)

The small proportion of marriages among domestic servants is no marvel if we consider that nearly half a million of our maid-servants have come from country places, where the proportion of the sexes was about equal, to towns where their numbers are added to the women's side, while a considerable percentage of the men are absent as soldiers, sailors, fishermen, commercial agents, &c. We find the following passage in 'The Industrial and Social Position of Women':—

'Take for illustration the town of Edinburgh. In 1851 there were in that town (including Leith)—

Men above the age of 20	-	-	47,049
Women	„	„	64,638

the proportion being as three to four. In the same town the number of the sexes below the age of 20 was about equal. Turn then to the number of domestic servants. Of these there were no less than 12,449 above the age of 20, besides nearly half that number below the age of 20. In other words, 1 out of every 5 women in Edinburgh above the age of 20 is a domestic servant, while in Great Britain, on the average, 1 in 10 only is so. Even this large number of domestic servants does not suffice to account for the large disproportion of the female sex in the town in question. It is partly attributable to the seaport of Leith; and the even distribution of wealth in such a town as Edinburgh, besides drawing from rural districts an unusually large proportion of domestic servants, draws also many women from the same districts to the trade of millinery, and to other assignable and unassignable occupations. But, that the main cause of the disproportion of the sexes in Edinburgh is referable to domestic service, may be seen by comparing the statistics of that town with those of its rival Glasgow. Glasgow is in many respects a wealthier town than Edinburgh, but not in the same sense. In Edinburgh a large section of the population stand above the working ranks, and wealth is distributed. In Glasgow riches tend to accumulate in the hands of a smaller number of individuals; wealth is not distributed; a larger section of the population fall within the working ranks, and fewer persons can afford to have domestic servants. Hence, although Glasgow is one of the most extensive shipping ports, with many of its population absent at sea (an agency, however, that is probably counterbalanced by the influx of adventurers), the sexes in that town counted, in 1851, as follows:—

Men above the age of 20	-	-	83,455
Women	„	„	100,574

the proportion being as six to seven, or thereby, in place of three to four, as in Edinburgh. In Glasgow, the number of female domestic servants above the age of 20 is 9635; less than one in ten of the

female population of the same age, less than the average of Great Britain, and about one-half the proportion obtaining in Edinburgh.' (Pp. 194-6.)

This explains a great deal of the celibacy of the class. In houses where men-servants are kept the housemaids and cooks marry; and so they do in country mansions, where they are considered good matches by the young labourers round; but in middle-class households, in towns, it is rather a remarkable circumstance when a servant marries from her place. This tends to establish the independence of female industry. The class is so large, and their earnings are so completely at their own disposal, that their industrial position is as determinate as that of men. (The household, of which they form so useful and essential a part, becomes their home. Born for the most part in a cottage, and destined, if they marry, to struggle through married life in narrow circumstances and bitter privations, it is only in the houses of the middle and higher classes that they participate in those comforts and even luxuries of domestic life which capital, as well as labour, affords.) There are few changes in the life of a woman more severe than that by which she transfers herself from the security and ease of domestic service to the precarious independence of married life; accordingly, this check operates with great power on the propensity to marriage among female domestic servants, and, as we have seen, a very large proportion of them do not marry at all. As for the other question, how they are supported when past work, there may be several answers, none of which are very cheering. Our readers must be aware that this is one of the points on which we have found it necessary to consult the female members of the family council. They, and the clergyman, and the physician, can, among them, afford some degree of satisfaction, though of a dismal quality. (The physician says that, on the female side of lunatic asylums, the largest class, but one, of the insane are maids of all work (the other being governesses). The causes are obvious enough: want of sufficient sleep from late and early hours, unremitting fatigue and hurry, and, even more than these, anxiety about the future from the smallness of the wages.) The 'general servant,' as the maid of all work is now genteelly called, is notoriously unfit for higher situations, from her inability to do anything well. She has to do everything 'somehow,' and therefore cannot be expected to excel in anything. At the same time, her wages are low, because it is understood that a servant of high qualification in any department would not be a maid of all work. Thus she has no prospect but of toiling on till she

drops, having from that moment no other prospect than the workhouse. With this thought chafing at her heart, and her brain confused by her rising at five, after going to bed at an hour or two past midnight, she may easily pass into the asylum some years before she need otherwise have entered the workhouse. 'This is horrible!' some of our readers will exclaim, 'but it relates to only a small proportion of one out of many classes of maid-servants,—a very small class, probably.' Not so. Little as the fact is generally understood, the maids of all work constitute nearly half of the entire number of female domestics, as computed at the last census, including the large class of charwomen, who amount to nearly 54,000. We are apt to forget that all the households in the land have not each a cook and housemaid at least, and a nursemaid where there are children; but if we would consider the vast tradesman class, and the small manufacturers, and the superior artisans, we should not be surprised to find that in Great Britain (without Ireland) there are upwards of 400,000 maids of all work. Beginning upon five or six pounds wages in youth, they rarely rise beyond ten pounds. They have no time to take care of their clothes, which undergo excessive wear and tear, so that it is a wonder if there is anything left for the Savings' Bank at the year's end. Such is the aspect of one branch of independent industry in England.

How is it with the other classes of the sisterhood? What are their chances of escaping the workhouse?

The next in number to the 'general servants,' and rather more than one-eighth as many, are the charwomen, as we have just seen. In full practice, a charwoman makes from twenty to twenty-five pounds a year (at one shilling and sixpence a day, Sundays excepted), apart from her food. As 'advantages' of various kinds occur to occasional servants, she may obtain enough in that direction to provide her room and bed, and thus she can, if alone in the world, and at the head of her kind of service, lay by ten pounds a year: but the chances are much against it, and all the wives and widows, with children at home, must find it as much as they can do to live. Next in number, to our surprise, we find the housekeepers, who are scarcely short of 50,000. (The wages of a housekeeper, in the proper sense of the term, are, we are assured, not less than forty or fifty pounds, provided she has nothing to do with cooking; but a 'cook and housekeeper' is a domestic officer of a lower grade.) If, then, housekeepers wear out naturally, and are not heavily burdened, they may easily afford to purchase a small annuity (and, if a deferred annuity, a not very small one) from



their savings. The cooks come next; and in no class are the wages so various. A middle-class household, in which two servants are kept, pays the cook ten pounds, and from that point the wages rise (we are informed) to about forty pounds, when the man cook assumes the command of the kitchen fire. Of the 47,000 women cooks in our kitchens, the larger proportion receive from twelve to eighteen pounds a year. The housemaids are fewer than the cooks, their number being under 42,000. Their work is easier and lighter than that of any other class in domestic service, and it is somewhat less highly paid. We are told that they, for the most part, have twelve pounds, almost as many having ten pounds, and few rising above fourteen pounds. Among the nursemaids the lady's-maids must be included, unless they come in with the housemaids in the tables before us, which seems improbable. The nursemaids are set down as amounting to 21,000. It is a surprise to fond papas, who think that their children are not made of the same clay as other people's, that their personal attendant, the guardian of such treasures, should be paid no higher than the woman who sweeps the chambers and polishes the grates; but the truth is, the best nursemaids are young girls, properly looked after by the mamma. So think the children, and they are good judges. The nursery girl begins with her five or six pounds, and if, in course of years, she becomes the elderly head nurse in a dignified place, her wages rise to perhaps four times the amount. Indeed, we have recently heard of a case in which the head nurse, guardian no doubt of babies of price, receives in wages no less than forty pounds: but we trust, for the sake of the nurseries of England, that the case is a rare one, and that our indiscreet disclosure of the fact will not be followed by a general strike in that department. To make up the half million, there are the gate-keepers in country mansions (between three and four hundred), and the 20,000 inn-servants, whose receipts are not, for the most part, in the form of regular wages.

Now, how can half a million of women, accustomed to the comforts of our households, provide for the time when they must go and seek a home for themselves? Most of them belong to poor families whom they must assist; but if not, what can they save in the way of a provision? Two or three pounds a year is as much as the larger proportion can possibly spare. Where the choice is offered them of a money payment, to provide themselves with tea and beer (about two guineas a year for each), the two or three pounds may be made four or five; and this, we are assured, often happens. Still, with every

advantage of good health and quality, and consequent continuous service, and with all aids of economy, it is apparently impossible for domestic servants to secure for their latter days anything like the comforts they have been accustomed to from their youth upwards. The clergyman can tell how shockingly thankful they often are, in the cold and bitter season which closes their lives, for the bounty which passes through his hands. Our wives say they encounter old servants in every almshouse they visit. Too often we find that the most imbecile old nurses, the most infirm old charwomen, are the wrecks and ruins of the rosy cooks and tidy housemaids of the last generation. This ought not to be. We are not alone in the wonder we have felt all our lives at the exceedingly low rate at which we obtain such a benefit as having the business of living done for us. There must be a change. When society becomes aware of the amount of industrial achievement performed by women, the chief impediment to an equalisation of wages for equal work will be removed, and domestic servants will then require higher wages, or leave service. In fact, this change has already begun. Wages are rising to unprecedented sums, is the cry we hear from the domestic exchequer; they have probably increased in the last twenty-five years more rapidly than the price of any other branch of female emoluments; they are increasing more rapidly in towns than in the country, and most rapidly in London. Unhappily the taste for expensive dress increases in the same ratio, and a very large portion of these legitimate earnings is squandered to procure a smart bonnet, a silk dress, a mantilla, and a parasol for Sundays. It is certainly a moral duty of no slight obligation on masters and employers to endeavour to assist the members of their household to make a judicious use of their earnings. It is not difficult for them to do justice, without running the risk of putting too much money into unprepared hands. There are Savings' Banks and many kinds of Assurance societies where distant annuities may be secured on various terms.

Under the head of 'service' several kinds of independent industry occur which need only be pointed out: as sick and monthly nurses, matrons and nurses in asylums and hospitals; women who go out to brew, to cook, to wash, and to sew; the searchers at police and custom-house offices; matrons of gaols; light-house keepers; pew-openers; waiters at railway refreshment rooms, and the like. These lead us, by a natural transition, to the commercial directions of female industry, some of which partake of the character of service.

In looking over the census returns, the occupations mark

out the classes of women employed, the widows, wives, and maidens. (The shopkeepers, like the farmers, are almost always the widows, who, as wives, assisted their husbands, and who now endeavour to keep up the business for the sake of the children. The same is the case with the 10,000 beershop keepers and victuallers, and the 9000 inn-keepers, and the 14,000 butchers and milk merchants, and the 8000 waggon or hack-carriage proprietors. Considerable as these numbers are, they would range higher if women were taught bookkeeping in a proper style. So many are seen to decline in fortune, or to marry again, or in other ways to hand over the business to men, while in France, and in the United States, the same class prosper at least as well as men, that inquiry is provoked into the cause of the English failure; and it is usually found that the weakness lies in the financial ignorance of the women. The weak point is in the multiplication table;—in plain old English, they are bad at ciphering. This leads us to consider the wives. The 'shoemakers' wives' alone are nearly 94,000, their business being both shopkeeping and manufacturing. They serve ladies and children, and sell across the counter, and in the intervals do the lighter part of the shoemaking. Some other denominations are returned separately, as the 27,000 victuallers' wives, and the 26,000 butcheresses; but it is enough to say here that the industrial wives, specially so returned, amounted in 1851 to nearly half a million. It would be a prodigious benefit to their households if they were qualified to manage the accounts. That there is no good reason why they are not is proved by the recent rise of a class of female accountants in London, as well as by the instances in many of our large towns of the counting-house desk behind the shop, or in the manufactory, being occupied by women. We have never heard a doubt suggested as to the capacity of women for arithmetic; on the contrary, the girls in the Irish National Schools equal or excel the boys in mental arithmetic; and in every good girls' school of the middle-class there are some children, who had rather cover their slates with sums for play than go for a walk. Elderly people remember, too, the old-fashioned sight, in unregenerate shops, of the wife or daughter, well-shawled, and in gloves with the finger-ends cut off, sitting from breakfast time till dinner, and from dinner till dusk, with the great books before her, and the pen always in hand; the light of a candle being observed till late on Saturday evenings, when the accounts of the week were posted up. During the first period of the new style of shopkeeping, the desk class of women seemed to

disappear; but they are evidently coming back again. And this fact leads us on to the employments of the single women.

The shopwomen (distinguished from shopkeepers) are surprisingly few. The figures seem scarcely credible. The shopkeepers being nearly 29,000, the shopwomen are only 1742. This fact will remind many people of the controversy about the dignity of shopmen, during and since the late war, when not only newspapers but a quarterly review attacked 'the men-milliners' who smirk behind the counters of our shops,' and bade them be off to the army, and leave women's work to women. Our impression, on the whole, was that the shopmen exhibited a much better case than could have been anticipated by careless observers, though we are far from denying that, as a class, they are jealous of the competition of women, and act in the spirit of that jealousy. One or two of the facts of the case ought to be remembered; as, for instance, that the light business of 'dandling tapes and 'ribbons,' and exhibiting ornaments, &c., is usually coupled with work requiring bodily strength. In the shop where ribbons are sold, silk and velvet dresses are sold also; and it is more than most women can do to 'dandle' rollers of silk and whole pieces of velvet, at intervals for twelve hours per day. Where tapes are sold, there is demand for those very ponderous articles,—sheetings and shirtings, and table linen. In jewellery shops, men must attend, and a sufficiency of them, to deter thieves before whom such temptations are spread. Again, it seems to be proved, unexpected as is the fact, that our wives discourage the employment of women behind the counter. It is not very long since we met with the following illustration in the columns of a newspaper:—

'A large, well attended draper's and mercer's shop, in a good situation, became, by a sort of accident, the property of a benevolent and sensible person, who saw in the accident the means of employing female labour in a suitable department. He had always cried shame on the exclusion of women from the counter, where they could surely measure ribbons and cambrics as well as men. The well-stocked shop was served by women, picked for their aptitude and experience, as well as their respectability. The old custom fell off, and the proprietor was assured that it was because there were only women behind the counter. It became necessary to introduce some shopmen, to reassure the ladies who could not trust the ability of their own sex. Two shopmen were introduced. It would not do. They were worked off their feet, while the shopwomen stood idle; for the ladies had no faith in female ability, even behind the counter.'

Such incidents as this disclose the true reasons of the shopwomen of Great Britain being (apart from the shopkeepers)

only 1742. Now that girls, however few, are trained with a view to their becoming accountants, either as a separate profession, or as managers of the family business, we may expect to see the difference, from one ten years to another, in the census returns. The growing contrast between the recent and the coming time is exhibited in certain anecdotes now before us: one in 'Women and Work,' and the other in a Scotch newspaper. Mrs. Bodichon says:—

'There are now many trades open to women with good training in bookkeeping and knowledge of some special branch of business, not difficult to acquire, if fathers would help their daughters as they help their sons. Two or three young women together might enter upon most shopkeeping businesses. But very few young women know enough arithmetic to keep accounts correctly.

'We remember seeing two young women who kept a shop in a country village, slaving to answer the perpetual tinkle-tinkle of the shop-bell, dealing out halfpennyworths of goodies, bacon, or candles, who, when asked how much they were paid yearly for the hard work of attending the shop, hardly understood the question, and only knew that *generally* they did not have to pay more for their goods than they sold them for, and got their food into the bargain, week by week. "But how do you make your other expenses out?" "By "letting lodgings," said they.' (*Women and Work*, p. 15.)

'In taking a ticket the other day at the Edinburgh station of the Edinburgh, Perth, and Dundee Railway, we were pleasantly surprised on being waited upon by a blooming and bonnie lassie, who, along with an activity quite equal to, exhibited a politeness very rare in, railway clerks of the literally ruder sex. We observed that the department was entirely occupied by women, there being another giving out tickets, and a third telegraphing. This innovation thus far north is rather startling; but, instead of objecting to it, we think it highly commendable, and hope to see the employment of women in light occupations rapidly extended.' (*Scottish Press*, December, 1858.)

The mention of telegraphing in this passage reminds us of another example. The 'Times' gives the following account of the way in which it was enabled to supply London breakfast-tables with the speeches of Mr. Bright and others, on occasion of the Gibson and Bright festival at Manchester last December.

'It is only an act of justice to the Electric and International Telegraph Company, to mention the celerity and accuracy with which our report of the proceedings at Manchester on Friday night was transmitted to the "Times" office. The first portion of the report was received at the telegraph office at Manchester at 10·55 on Friday night, and the last at 1·25 on Saturday morning. It may be added that the whole report, occupying nearly six columns, was in type at a

quarter to 3 o'clock on Saturday morning, every word having been transmitted through the wire a distance of nearly 200 miles. Some of our readers may be surprised to hear that this report was transmitted *entirely by young girls*. An average speed of twenty-nine words per minute was obtained, principally on the printing instruments. The highest speed on the needles was thirty-nine words per minute. Four printing instruments and one needle were engaged, with one receiving clerk each, and two writers taking alternate sheets. Although young girls in general do not understand much of politics, there was hardly an error in the whole report.'

In the United States, the telegraphing is largely consigned to women; and with it the kindred art of the compositor. From what we have heard in various directions within a few years, we believe that the manipulation of type by women is found to be such an advantage here that a great deal of our printing is likely to be done by them henceforth. Much was said beforehand about the impossibility of their enduring the smells of the office: but the same thing used to be said of oil-painting; and in both cases it is a mistake. If printing is on the increase among women, much more so is painting in oils and on glass. Printing reminds us of book-binding, which affords an admirable occupation to women. One well-known firm was, some few years since, employing 200 young women, under careful arrangements for their moral welfare, technical improvement, and daily comfort. Such means of instruction were provided as prevented their domestic qualities from being spoiled by their regular business. For the sake of quiet and respectability, little was said where so much was done; but the few who saw the workrooms, and followed the processes, from the folding of the sheets to the highest ornamentation of the covers, are not likely to forget that spectacle of cheerful and prosperous industry.

Before quitting the commercial department of female industry, we must remark that in all countries, and at all times, the fitness of assigning to women what may be called the hospitable occupations has been admitted. In metropolitan hotels the presence and authority of a master may be requisite; but, all through the country, the image of a good landlady presents itself when rural inns are in question. Throughout our literature, the country landlady is a pleasant personage; and we hope it may be so for ages to come. She makes the angler welcome, and gives him a luxurious home during his summer holiday; and she cooks his fish as no other woman knows how to do. Her sister in the sporting county has a similar abode to offer in autumn, among stubble fields, and near some choice covers; and she is as admirable at game as her sister in fish.

A pleasant landlord is very well; but a widowed hostess is fully up to the duty, and seems rightfully to fill the place. And so it is where the scenery is the attraction. She is weatherwise for the advantage of her guests. She can tell them at what time of day they should see the waterfall with its rainbow or slanting sunbeam. She can fit up the boat comfortably for delicate ladies or dreaming poets. She puts up good luncheons for explorers and mountain climbers; and when they come home wearied and hungry, she has the bright little evening fire ready, and the tempting light supper, and the clean airy bedroom. The race of rural landladies ought never to die out; nor should woman's stake in institutions of hospitality ever be withdrawn.

We are told that boarding-house life will become more common than it has been. We have boarding-houses in London and Edinburgh, Liverpool, and Hull, and other towns, for foreigners accustomed to that mode of living at home. We see also, more and more, the tendency of our bachelors, young and old, to dine anywhere but at their lodgings. Some go to luxurious clubs; some to boarding-houses; some to chop-houses; and some to cooks' shops, of various grades. Bad cooking seems to be both cause and effect of the growing change. An ill-cooked dinner, repeated sufficiently often, sends the lodger elsewhere for his chief meal; and the want of daily practice on the lodger's dinner causes the landlady to lose any skill she might once have had. Thus is swelled the popular lamentation over the decay of the art of cookery among the working women of England, from the peasant's wife, who gives her household dry bread or watery potatoes, to the great lady of the first-class inn, who is as helpless among her own servants as if she had come from another planet.

This is a topic worth a pause;—if indeed it be a pause or interruption to speak of an art which would, any day, make the fortune of any working woman who was skilled in it. Some of us, it may be hoped, have wives who are not bent on inflicting on us, in our leisure hours, the kitchen troubles of our own or our neighbours' houses: yet every man of us is aware that one of the irksome cares of life at present is the difficulty of obtaining cooks who can send up wholesome meals to the nursery (a thing of superlative importance), or satisfy the most moderate tastes of the dining-room. We are constantly hearing that the art of domestic cookery is declining in this country, and almost gone. After some deep reflection, and comprehensive observation on this matter, we are disposed to think that there is a good deal of exaggeration in some directions, while the evil is plain enough in others. Count Rumford's

Essays prove that cottage cookery was, throughout many counties, as bad in the last century as it is now. The contrast which he pointed out between the prisoners of war who made a warm, savoury dinner, out of a red herring and bread and water, and the natives round their prisons who ate up the same value in the shape of a slice of dry bread, and whose wives and mothers insisted that it must come to the same thing because it cost the same, was as striking as any cottage picture of a skill-less meal that we can offer now. Our religious tracts and other sermonising books for the poor tell us, as imaginative grandmothers used to do, of the labourer's home, where the wife made a good stew every day, and there was always the hot juicy rasher or the Welsh rabbit for the good man's supper; but Count Rumford's account was the true one; and the people (of more ranks than one) laughed to scorn his news that the process of cooking could alter the actual nourishment conveyed by a given portion of food. But there can be no doubt that the middle class of our countrywomen are far less skilled in the knowledge and practice of cookery than their grandmothers, who were themselves apparently inferior to *their* grandmothers. We are not going into the old controversy about how much time and thought the cares of the store room and kitchen used to occupy, and how much they ought to occupy. It is enough that the gentlewomen of a former century could not be said to be inferior in sense, intelligence, and manners to those of our own time; and that we have therefore every reason to believe that our wives and sisters would be no worse for understanding the business of the kitchen. The learning and graces of some of the ancient ladies of England compel us to suppose that, in each age, such narrowness or shallowness as exists is owing to restrictions on intercourse, by war or other influences; and that if the opportunities of our day had been granted to our ancestors, the dames would have been as accomplished as ours are, without being worse cooks. Well! is the art to be lost? or will an effort be made to recover it?

Our wives complain that they never had an opportunity of learning it. Their mothers took no notice of their natural wishes (every girl has an innate longing, we are confident, for the household arts, if nature had but her way); and the consequence is—a heavy weight of care on the heart in marrying, and many an hour of keen mortification afterwards, in addition to the constant sense of inability and dependence, and dread of shame and tacit reproach. Such is the wife's confession, when she can bring herself to make a clean breast of it. But what can be done for the daughters? There used to be means of



instruction in cooking and in sewing, as there now are in drawing and music. Why is it not a branch of female industry now to give such instruction, instead of leaving those departments of knowledge a blank, while hundreds of governesses are starving or living on charity, in the workhouse or out of it? It may not be necessary or desirable for young ladies to spend so many hours in the still-room, among conserves and quackeries, as the damsels of three centuries ago, when kitchen cookery was gross and wholesale; and it might be better that they should learn from their mothers how to order and superintend the administration of food; but if their mothers have not the requisite knowledge, skill and ideas, it would be a great blessing to have a professional instructress within reach. By none, we fear, is such a training more needed than by the heads of boarding-houses in England. Our ordinary tables-d'hôte are almost as bad as the American, in regard to the cookery. How different are the German, where every lady is a trained cook! If the ladies of London complain that their husbands spend more and more time at the clubs, and take fewer meals at home; if boarding-house keepers find the business not a good one in England; if lodging-house keepers complain of the small gain of inmates who only sleep at home; let them all look to their consciences as to the table they offer, and say whether it is not reasonable that we should go for our dinner where we can have a good one for the same cost as a bad one.

A suggestion has been made and repeated, but not yet acted on, we believe, that lecturers should travel through the country with a portable kitchen, to give instruction in plain cookery, as improved by modern science and art, and especially by the discoveries of the lamented Soyer. Humble housewives were chiefly in the view of the adviser,—the wives and daughters of small tradesmen, artisans and cottagers, who might become convinced, by the evidence of their senses, of the economy and luxury of a good treatment of the commonest articles of food. It would be a great work if some educated woman would try the experiment. Its direct success is more than probable; and it might introduce into our towns a regular method of instruction in establishments where young women of almost every rank would thankfully become pupils. Is not this one of the undisclosed paths of industry in which there would be no interference by the jealousy of men?

If the complaint be well founded, that there are no good cooks to be had for middle-class households, why is such an evil permitted? If womankind has always had a faculty for that kind of achievement, how comes it to be in abeyance in

England at present? Whose fault is it, if we are ill-supplied with cooks? The only use of asking the question is to learn how to supply the need. One mischief, no doubt, is the wrong-headedness with which we have gone to work in our popular schools, in our zeal to elevate the labouring classes. A letter on our desk, — from a lady who can cook and sew, after having been an excellent governess before her marriage, — indicates the case. She says: —

‘I am in a state of periodical irritability on the government education schemes, owing to the visit of Mr. —, the inspector. His tastes are philological; and he has written what, I have no doubt, is an excellent grammar for those who are worthy of it; and he seems to think that grammar in its uttermost niceties is to be the great intellectual engine in training our poor children. I have not a word to say against it in the case of the teachers (always provided they have made the elementary steps safe and sure), but I am quite certain that the highest class have learned far more practical grammar from me, indirectly, by conversation and writing, than by the scientific analysis, on which such stress is laid. Mr. — went through a sentence yesterday with girls who were made to point out predicate, extensions of predicate, classifying the latter, and other minutiae, when I had in my pocket papers from these very girls, with shameful spelling, and the most elementary agreements of subject and verb disregarded.’

Some people will think, as we do, that this way of teaching girls whose business is to lie in domestic service, or something lower, is like insanity. Let us see whether we can find better sense in other directions. In one, we light upon what we want in the point of cooking; and in another we find the cooking so treated as to fill us with hope and cheer.

First, Mrs. Austin quotes, in her useful little tract, the prospectus of a school, instituted by Miss Martineau of Bracondale near Norwich, for the education of a few girls of the shopkeeping and artisan class, apparently. Two old-fashioned adjoining houses are devoted to the object; and there is a good playground. For sixpence a week a sound practical education is given.

‘This is the skeleton of the scheme,’ Mrs. Austin says of the prospectus, ‘which differs in nothing from a common day school, save in the things taught, and, above all, in the direction given to the tastes and habits of the pupils. Without seeing it in operation, it is impossible to imagine the life and energy which Miss F. Martineau and her excellent assistants have infused into it. The lessons on objects, which I heard, those on arithmetic, and the writing, were excellent. The attention of the children never flagged. Their eyes were fixed with eager inquiry on the cheerful animated

face of their young mistress. But excellence in these branches is not rare. Miss Martineau, in a letter now before me, touches the true points of superiority in her school and its mistress: "I think myself very fortunate in having a mistress so capable of teaching the higher branches of knowledge, and yet so anxious to give an interest to all home and useful duties. The idea of *taking pleasure* in cutting out their own clothes, washing, &c., seems so new to the children."

'According to Miss F. Martineau's wise plan of feeling her way, and attempting nothing on a large scale till she has proved its success on a small one, the girls at present only wash for the mistress and the housekeeper, who is their instructress in this department.

'On the same principle of slow and cautious advance, cooking has, as yet, not been attempted. This will come hereafter. Every needful appliance is ready. Meantime, an important step in domestic education has been gained. Those of the girls who live at a distance bring their dinners. Their humble repast is set out and eaten with the nicest attention to cleanliness and propriety. I saw the table exactly as it had been left by the girls who had just dined. Not a thing was out of its place, nor was there a trace of untidiness or disorder. The service of the table is performed by the girls in turn. They clear away the dishes and plates, knives and forks, clean them, and deposit them in their places. I saw one at her work washing the earthen vessels, wiping, *not smearing* them, and arranging them, dry and bright, on pantry shelves of spotless whiteness. It was with peculiar satisfaction that I soon afterwards saw the same girl come into the school and teach a class of younger girls arithmetic.' (Pp. 18-20.)

By an introduction of a subsequent date, we learn that at first the cooking was a difficulty,—the parents preferring sending the children with cold food of greater cost to paying a small sum which would enable them to have a warm meal, with the benefit of learning to cook it. But the opposition was gradually giving way.

A letter to the 'Times' (January 29. 1858), from the Vicar of Sandbach, Cheshire, exhibits the next scene of progress;—a scene which contrasts remarkably with that of a learned philological inspector, hammering his abstractions into girls who had no idea how to discharge any one duty in life, and were certainly not at all likely to learn it from him.

'The results of the Sandbach National School kitchen for the sick and aged poor, are—that with the sum of 77*l.* 12*s.* 6½*d.*, derived chiefly from the offertory collections, 852 dinners of roast mutton, 307 of mutton chops, &c., making in all 2,104 meat dinners, with 176 puddings, and 102 quarts of gruel, were supplied to the village, simply by the adoption of a judicious and economical system of cookery.'

Mr. Armitstead adds —

‘It is a matter of thankfulness, though not of surprise, that a system so easy and simple of operation should have excited an amount of inquiry, personal and by letter, to an extent which leads to a well-grounded hope that in a few years a kitchen will form a necessary part of the National School of every large parish throughout the kingdom, a result no less beneficial to the sick poor than to the children themselves, thus early initiated in industrial employments well suited to their condition in after life.’

This topic leads us directly into the middle of the great question, — perhaps the most important of all the practical considerations connected with the subject of female industry; — the effect of manufacturing employment on the domestic qualities of women. We have no space here, — and it is no part of our present duty, — to discuss the *pros* and *cons* of factory life for our female population. We have to glance at the facts of the extent of that kind of occupation, and at the probabilities of its being reconciled with that domestic existence for which women are constituted, and to which they sooner or later return, after every experiment which the progress of civilisation inflicts, amidst its play of social changes.

The number of women employed in textile manufactures in 1851 were nearly 385,000. Under this head are included cotton and its fabrics, woollen, flax, silk, straw, lace, and articles in fur, hair and hemp, and the paper manufacture. In the mechanical arts which usually rank in the same class, such as metal-works and earthenware, there were nearly 40,000. With these two classes may be united the third, — the women engaged in providing and treating Dress; — making, mending, and washing articles of dress. These are set down as above half-a-million. The three amount to within a fraction of a million. If we could include the women of Ireland, so largely engaged in the linen, cambric, and muslin manufactures of Ulster, and in the embroidery of muslins (as we have already shown), and in lace-making and knitted goods, the number would be greatly increased. Now, what a section of the nation this is, — a million and a quarter of women above twenty, earning an independent subsistence by manufacturing industry! The condition, claims, and prospects of such a section of the population ought to be as important and interesting to us as those of any class of men in the community.

The three sorts of employment need not here be considered separately. In the case of textile manufactures, the greater part of the work is done in factories; but not a little is carried on at home, — looms being set up in the cottage, or in the

town lodging. In such old towns as Norwich, and in many a village in the eastern counties, the click and smack of the loom is heard in the narrow streets and over garden walls, as it is in the singular region of Spitalfields. A visitor will find the family engaged in winding, piecing and weaving, — father, mother, boys and girls all doing different parts of the work: and this is just the case of a large proportion of the Birmingham metal workers. They have a light room which they call a shop, where they work together at the articles which are to be completed by a certain time. So it is with the occupations which relate to dress. The lace-maker is an old-fashioned figure in English life, — sitting at her door with her pillow before her, and her fingers busy among the bobbins. So it is with the straw-platter, and the clear-starcher and mender, and the artificial-flower maker, and the embroiderer, and, as we may see in every street, with the dress-maker. The ‘Song of the ‘Shirt’ tells us that this is the way also with poor needlewomen. On the other hand, the factory, and gregarious occupation in many modes, is not now, as formerly, supposed to mean cotton or flax spinning. Silk, cotton, and flax mills may still be the representatives of the factory life of English women; but genuine factory-life can be seen at Birmingham as truly as at Manchester or Leeds. Long ranges of upper apartments in Birmingham factories are occupied by women, sitting in rows, quiet, diligent and skilful, putting together the links of cob-web gold chains, or burnishing silver plate, or cutting and polishing screws (a manufacture mainly in their hands, because the machinery requires delicate manipulation), or sorting needles, or painting *papier-mâché* trays. Of the 40,000 female workers in metals and clay, the greater portion now are factory-women, as much as any Lancashire or Yorkshire spinners or weavers. As for the third class, not only are the Nottingham and Leicester lace-makers and hosiery weavers of the genuine manufacturing class, but the London dressmakers may be called so; and the upholstresses too. They are collected, not always in large apartments alas! but in considerable numbers, and under a scheme of division of labour, — which is, we suppose, on an extensive scale, the distinction between domestic and factory labour; a distinction not interfered with by the distribution of portions of the work to different members of the family at home. Whatever may be the respective proportions of the factory and domestic workers who make up the million and a quarter of industrial women now under notice, it is a question of the deepest interest to us all, in every view, whether the factory-work is likely to increase or diminish in years to come.

At first sight, most of us are disposed to pronounce that the number will certainly increase. The demand for industry seems at present rather to exceed the supply,—generally speaking. We want more soldiers, more sailors, more agricultural labourers and rough workers, while emigration carries off tens of thousands every year: The rapid increase of labour-saving machinery indicates a want, rather than a superfluity, of hands; and so does the liberty to work which has been acquired by women within a few years. It is not very long since the Coventry men were as jealous and tyrannical about the women winding silks and weaving ribbons as they are still about their engraving watch plates; yet now many thousands of women are earning a subsistence in the ribbon and fringe manufacture. The increasing use of sewing-machines, at centres of dressmaking, tailoring, and blouse and shirt making, points in the same direction. In a community where a larger proportion of women remain unmarried than at any known period; where a greater number of women depend on their own industry for subsistence; where every pair of hands, moved by an intelligent head, is in request; and where improved machinery demands more and more of the skilled labour which women can supply, how can there be a doubt that the women will work more and more, and in aggregate ways, as combination becomes better understood and practised? Such is the first aspect of the case: but there are others. It will not be going out of our way to show by an example that factory-life is not everywhere the same; that it does not necessitate the evils of which too many of our manufacturing classes are examples. We conclude, as a matter of course in England, that a factory-girl cannot make her own clothes, cannot cook her father's dinner, cannot do the household marketing, or cleaning; is, in short, fit for nothing but the spinning or weaving, burnishing or sorting, in which her days are passed. If we can find good evidence that the occupation need not have these effects, it will be a great comfort. There are such evidences in abundance, and the facts work in opposite directions,—on the one hand, extending the inducements to factory labour for women, and, on the other, giving the women themselves a freer choice, and a stronger disposition to remain at home.

Twenty years ago, there were about 4000 women employed in the cotton-mills of Lowell, in Massachusetts. They worked seventy hours per week, earning their meals and from one to three dollars per week. They had built a church, and a Lyceum, and several boarding-houses; and in the winter they engaged the best lecturers in the state to instruct them in their Lyceum. These factory girls issued the periodical called the 'Lowell

'Offering,' which Mr. Knight reprinted in his series of Weekly Volumes, under the title of 'Mind among the Spindles.' Prefixed to that volume was a letter from Harriet Martineau, in which the factory life of these literary spinsters was described. They are the daughters and sisters of the yeomen of New England,—some aiming at disencumbering the farm, or educating a brother for the church, whilst others club their earnings to build a house in which to live under the sanction of some elderly aunt or widowed mother. Whole streets of pretty dwellings adorn the factory settlement; and books, music, and flowers within testify to the tastes of the young proprietors. The girls are well-dressed, week-days and Sundays; and the Savings' Bank exhibits their provident habits. At the date of this account, in 1834, there were 5000 work-people at Lowell, of whom 3800 were women and girls; and the deposits, after all the public and private edifices were paid for, amounted to 114,000 dollars.

In a recent publication there is a contrasting view of the same class, employed in a silk-mill, under one of those dozen, or twenty, or fifty, or hundreds of good men who are each called by all who know them 'the best employer in England.' It is cheering to find how many 'best' there are. The writer was evidently taken aback at first, confounded by the 'yelling and screaming' of the women in the lane, which she supposed to mean some terrible accident, and astonished at the universal supposition that everybody was purely selfish, and bent upon cheating everybody else. The experiment of inducing a more womanly mode of life among the girls is described in a very interesting way in the tract called 'Experience of Factory Life,' which is in the list at the head of our article. The passage is too long for quotation; but it is to be hoped that our readers will turn to it, if they have any desire to see what the differences between the factory girls of Old and New England really are, and to ascertain whether any part of what is repulsive and lamentable here is owing to the occupation, or to any mode of life which it necessitates. We believe that the conclusion of the best observers will be that it is not the labour of the factory which hardens and brutalizes the minds of men or women, but the state of ignorance in which they enter upon a life of bustle and publicity. The Lowell factory girls are great reciters, and even writers, of poetry: the Sunday sermon is quite a pursuit to them,—as in puritan New England generally. Literature and music are the recreations of many of the factory girls of the mills. Now—can the chasm be bridged over which divides these conditions of factory life? Can the English fac-

tory girl be made as womanly as other people? If so, what is the effect on the industrial aspect of affairs?

We find something like an answer to this in such accounts as we can obtain of the operation of evening schools on this class of people. There was a narrative published in 'Household Words,' we remember, some years ago, which afforded great encouragement. In that case, the girls were eager to learn to write, above everything, one explanation being 'Hur wants to write to hur chap,' who was gone to Australia; but, where it was possible to deceive themselves about their own ignorance, they did so. No girl could pretend to write when she did not know a letter; but whenever they could fancy themselves treated like children, they put on airs of resentment,—as when one, who had to spell *ox* and say what it meant, exclaimed 'As if everybody didn't know 'that a *lox* is a cow!' They fancied they could sew till a pull at the thread undid half a yard at a time. They were averse to bringing clothes to mend, but liked making new smart gowns. They were partly interested and partly offended at the instruction given about the human frame and its health—one, who was laced up into the shape and stiffness of a tree-stem, exclaiming that she had 'got only six-and-twenty whalebones.' Some of them had witnessed a sad misfortune,—the first and fatal quarrel of a married couple from the bride having rendered her husband's one white shirt unwearable, the first Sunday after their marriage, by starching it all over, 'as stiff as a church.' She had spent two days on the job: neither of them knew how to get the starch out: and the bridegroom cursed his spouse as a good-for-nothing slattern. Such cases were coming before them every day. The handsome shawl which the lover so admired on Sundays was found to be pawned on Monday mornings, and redeemed on Saturday nights. All clothes had to be bought ready-made, and all food prepared, as far as it could be. The bread and the ham,—a shilling plate at the time,—were obtained on credit at the huckster's shop; and, to obtain that credit, every article of every sort had to be bought at that miscellaneous shop. The wives could not boil potatoes, nor mend stockings, nor wash a garment, nor even scrub the floor. These deficiencies sent pupils—married women as well as single—to the evening school, eager to learn. What was the consequence? A vast complacency in carrying home a garment of their 'own making,' and a desperate set-to at arithmetic in its ordinary form. The sorters could reckon by grosses, miraculously; but had no notion of pounds, shillings and pence: and, sooner or later, the notion dawned that it might be *worth while* to be comfortable at home, and that their teachers meant to show them how to manage it.



At a more advanced period, came further discoveries. The wife who locked her door before daylight, and turned her back upon her home till dark, except on Sundays, obtained a good deal of money : for at that time women's factory wages had risen twenty-per-cent., and were still rising : but yet there was never any cash left over, and generally more or less debt at the huckster's shop. When able to keep accounts, even in the humblest way, the wife occasionally found a penny set down in the shilling column,—not necessarily from dishonesty, for the small shopkeepers themselves are often very ill-educated. This discovery led to inquiry and thought ; till the grand idea presented itself that it might answer better, even in regard to money, to stay at home than to work at the factory. No more plates of ham or light loaves ! no more expensive washing-bills, or heavy purchases of ready-made clothes, or fancy headdresses which cost nearly a week's wages ! No more hard potatoes, smoky fires, and tea smoked accordingly ! No more damp, half-grimy floors on Saturday nights ; nor husbands driven elsewhere in search of comfort ! If they earned twelve shillings a week less, they saved twelve shillings a week, and much of more valuable things that no money can buy.

Since those early attempts at schools for wives were instituted, great improvements in particular cases have become common : but there has not yet been that distinct step in civilisation which gives every woman in a manufacturing town the clear understanding that she has to choose between being an earner of money in a way which precludes her being a housewife, or being qualified for a housewife, at the expense of some of her power of earning, but with great power of saving her husband's earnings. We need not despair of seeing girls so educated as that they may be capable of both employments ; and this is well, as there can be no expectation that, within any time we can look forward to, the employment of women in factories will cease. If it is ever superseded, it will not be by the labour of men, but by new inventions : and in the interval, it will do no good to declaim, and exhort, and lament. We must take in hand the evils of the case, and improve its conditions. We must see whether we cannot make needlewomen and plain cooks of the little girls, and sensible housewives as they grow up. This done, we suspect that not even the best paid factory labour will throw them back to the point from which many of the class are now rising.

This leads us on to the class of manufacturing operations which can be carried on by women in their own homes. As the era of female industrialism has set in, indisputably and irreversibly,

it is of the utmost importance to contemplate this phase of it, and to assist it as far as possible:—which means to relieve it from oppression and hindrance. We need say nothing of the ordinary ‘woman’s work’ which may be done at home,—the needlework of various kinds; nor of the weaving which men have long ceased to oppose. But there are arts to which female faculties are particularly appropriate which women cannot practise on account of the monopolising spirit of the men. Take the watch-making business as an instance.

Watches are so dear in this country that labouring men, the working-classes generally, and young people of all but the wealthy orders, are placed at a disadvantage about the use and economy of time, from the absence of the means of measuring it. The dearness of watches is proved to be a gratuitous evil, imposed by the mistaken selfishness of a small class of the community. In this country 186,000 watches per annum are manufactured; and, as this goes a very little way towards supplying the demand, there is a large importation from Switzerland,—exceedingly profitable to somebody at our expense, as the price of the article is kept up by the artificial scarcity at home. Now,—who makes the watches that we import?—In the valleys of Switzerland, in the cottages on the uplands, in the wildest recesses that men can inhabit, as well as in the streets of the towns, there are women helping to make watches. We are told that 20,000 women are actually so employed. Why not? The metal in the inside of a watch costs about sixpence in its unwrought condition. By the application of the fine touch so eminently possessed by women, guided by their fine sight and observation, that sixpenny-worth of metal is so wrought and adjusted as to become worth several pounds. If there are 20,000 Swiss women at work at their own windows, with their children about them, and their husband’s dinner at the fire, making watches for Europe and America, why are there not 40,000 Englishwomen helping the family independence in the same way? Simply because the caste or guild of watchmakers will not permit it. We need not explain to our readers that the monopolists punish themselves, as well as the public, and tens of thousands of our countrywomen. In Switzerland, the greater the number of women so employed, the greater the number of men also. By simply meeting the demand for watches at home, and yet more by preparing a due supply for America and our own colonies, our watchmakers would open a new vein of employment and profit for themselves and their households. Instead of this, what do they do? One case which fell under our own know-

ledge, is this:—The wife of a respectable watchmaker wished, as did her husband, that she should work with him at his special division of the manufacture: but they dared not attempt it, under the eyes of the craft. She therefore engraved the ‘brass work,’—a commoner and easier kind of work. As soon as the fact was discovered, an outcry was raised, and intimidation was tried, to drive her from her occupation. She kept her husband steady to their household plan: but it was only by permitting their friends to set up a plea of apprenticeship, on the ground of her father having been seen to do that kind of work in her presence, that she obtained any peace and quiet. She brought up her two daughters to the business, while training them in housewifery as well. By this time we hope many daughters and sisters are seen, as we have seen a few, enamelling the faces of watches, polishing them, inscribing the hours, and conducting the nicest mysteries of the art. If it is true, as we are assured, and as may well be, that the parts of watches made by Swiss women are imported into this country, it seems impossible that our countrywomen should be long excluded from that province of industry. It seems incredible that some thousands of foreign women should be supported by making watches for us to buy dear, while thousands of needlewomen should be starving in London, for want of permission to supply us with cheaper watches. Mr. Bennett’s exertions seem to be making the case clear to an increasing number of the public; and the time cannot be far distant when the tyranny of a virtual guild will be overthrown, like that of so many actual guilds. As for the mode in which the change will be made,—we may obtain a hint from the Swiss. The watchmakers are an educated class; and the more highly they are educated the better are the watches they produce. The fact appears to be undisputed; and the lesson is sufficiently plain.

This last topic would naturally lead us to consider other arts, requiring a higher education, which women have found it difficult to get leave to practise: but we must first devote a few moments to the miserable class of poor needlewomen,—whether the makers of shirts and trowsers or of gowns and petticoats. The sempstresses are returned as nearly 61,000 at the time of the last census; and the milliners and dress-makers as nearly half a million.

The wretched dependents on the slop shops are suffering under the last struggles of their art with the improvements of the time. We see the sewing-machine coming into use. It will do great things; and it will bring in further methods which will extinguish the craft of the poor needlewoman. Already we hear

of more than one establishment in London which uses seventy of these machines, each of which dispatches as much work as fifteen pairs of hands; and of provincial shops, where the introduction of one machine has caused the dismissal of thirty women and girls. At first, it was supposed that only long rows of plain work could be done in this way; but now we hear of shirt-collars, gloves, and other delicate pieces of stitching being done, as well as saddlery and harness-making, and shoes. Both the needle and the awl are largely superseded by it; and it can be managed by even young children. Thus is the case of poor needlewomen to be solved! They can scarcely be worse off than at present; and if the change should reintroduce the art of genuine sewing, our countrywomen will have reason to rejoice. At present, we hear it said, that the art of sewing seems wellnigh lost in England, except among the ladies who have a taste for it, or who were trained by an unfashionable grandmother. The superiority of French *lingères* to English sempstresses is most remarkable, and proves that the handiwork of sewing is far better taught and practised in France than in England.

No machinery can supersede sewing altogether, though it may, and ought to, extinguish slopmaking at fourpence a day: and whereas scarcely a good sempstress can now be obtained, for love or money, we may hope to witness so much restoration of the art as is needed for economy and neatness. It is not desirable to wear out eyes, and spend precious time in marking letters, with a fine needle and coloured thread, on a cambric handkerchief, when we are in possession of marking inks, and practised in drawing with a free hand: but we must have a release from the ragged edges, loose buttons, galling shirt-collars, and unravelled seams and corners which have come up as the quality of needlewomen has gone down. Let our wives undertake the case of the remnant of the poor sempstresses, — the last, we hope, of their sort. Many may be retained for the management of sewing-machines. Many may emigrate, under careful arrangements. The younger may possibly be even yet taught to sew properly, or to do something else that is useful; and all might, by a sufficient and well-concerted effort, be kept out of the hands of the middleman. That department of the industrial market is undergoing vital changes. If some thousands of suffering women are to see their loathed occupation extinguished, the ladies of England should see that the two or three millions of girls who are soon to be maintaining themselves by their industry shall be exercised in all household arts, (and the needle, not last nor least) as the proper foundation

of all others. In order to justify our estimate of the value of good needlework, and also to give pleasure to our readers, we cite a passage from a Report of one of the Inspectors of Schools, Rev. J. P. Norris, in the Privy Council Minutes for 1855.

‘It appears to me that girls’ schools have a great advantage over boys’ schools, in the fact that nearly half the day is spent in industrial work. Independently of the practical value of skill in needlework, it would be well worth while, for the sake of the effect on the girls’ characters, to occupy half their time at school in this way. No one can have marked the quiet domestic aspect of one of our better girls’ schools when arranged for needlework, the scrupulous cleanliness which their work necessitates, the continual interchange of kindly offices, and that most wholesome union, which a boys’ school seldom presents, of industry with repose, of a cheerful relaxation of mind, with the most careful and decorous order, without seeing at once that it is here rather than during the morning lessons that the character of the future woman is formed. When we add to these considerations the paramount importance of skill in needlework, picturing to ourselves the contrast that a few short years will show between the slattern, in her cheap tawdry shop-finery, and the white-aproned tidy housewife, with her knitting in her hands, or a shirt for her husband in her lap, we shall, I think, be more than ever anxious that this most valuable department of schoolwork should not be neglected. It has often occurred to me that one serious objection to mixed schools is the great probability of the needlework being slighted. The girls, thus brought into competition with the boys, regret the time spent away from their books. And, besides, the afternoon sempstress will appear to disadvantage when compared with the more intellectual morning teacher; her authority will come to be slighted, and the discipline will be impaired. I have often found that in these schools the girls get a notion that the needlework is of little or no consequence; and, with few exceptions, all the schools that produce the best needlewomen in my district are separate girls’ schools.’ (Pp. 480, 481.)

To return to the difficulties created by the jealousy of men in regard to the industrial independence of women:—it shows itself with every step gained in civilisation; and its immediate effect is to pauperise a large number of women who are willing to work for their bread; and, we need not add, to condemn to perdition many more who have no choice left but between starvation and vice. The jealousy which keeps Coventry women from the employment of engraving the brass work of a watch, and from pasting patterns of floss-silk upon cards, for trade purposes, long kept the doors of the School of Design in London closed against female pupils, and renders it still almost impossible for an Englishwoman to qualify herself for treating the diseases of women and children. The same jealousy cost many

lives in the late war, by delaying the reception of the nurses into the hospitals in the East, and by restricting their action when there. In the Staffordshire potteries women are largely employed in painting porcelain,—an art which they are better qualified to practise than men. It will hardly be credited, but we can vouch for the fact, that such is the jealousy of the men that they compel the women *to paint without a rest for the hand*, and the masters are obliged by their own workmen to sanction this absurd act of injustice.

The immediate and obvious consequence is, that women who must earn their bread are compelled to do it by one of two methods,—by the needle or by becoming educators. Often and emphatically as this has been said, we must say it again in this place; but we need not go into the description either of the miseries of needlewomen or of the tremendous mischief done by driving shoals of incompetent persons into the ranks of educators. Good and qualified governesses are as sensible of the evil as the employing class; and they are perhaps as keenly afflicted by it. The only certain remedy is to leave open every possible way to employments of the most various kinds that are suitable to the abilities of women. The merely incompetent instructress would never have placed herself in a position so painful and precarious if a way had been open to support herself by something that she could do better. The injury to the qualified governesses is cruel. The reputation of the whole class suffers by the faults of its lowest members; the emolument is depressed, first by the low average quality of the work done, and again by the crowded condition of that field of labour. The wretched condition of many of these unfortunate persons can hardly be exaggerated. We find under our eyes the following passage in one of the Reports of the ‘Governesses’ Benevolent Institution’:—

‘On a recent occasion, there were one hundred and twenty candidates for three annuities of twenty pounds each. One hundred and twenty ladies, many reared in affluence, and all accustomed to the comforts and luxuries of at least our middle ranks—all seeking an annuity of twenty pounds! Of these, ninety-nine were unmarried; and, out of this number, fourteen had incomes of, or above, twenty pounds (eleven of which were derived from public institutions or private benevolence, and *three* from their own savings); twenty-three had incomes varying from one pound to seventeen pounds; and eighty-three had absolutely *nothing*. It will be recollected that all these ladies are above fifty years of age; and, of the utterly destitute, forty-nine were above sixty.’

One way out of the desperate position is obvious and open. It is now a recognised truth that education is an art requiring

instruction and training, as much as the function of the divine, the physician, and the lawyer; and the unprepared are cast out, more and more every day. The immediate misery thus caused is dreadful. It is that of the hand-loom weavers, and the slop-makers, with the aggravation that the sufferers are, generally speaking, gentlewomen by birth, and universally accustomed to the comforts, and many of the luxuries, of life. It would open a dismal chapter to show how many of them have reversed the old rule of woman's destiny, — that of being supported by father, brother or husband, — having given all their earnings to pay a father's debts, to sustain an idle or struggling brother's professional appearance, or to indulge the vices, or to neutralise the shiftlessness, of a husband. Facts seem to show that the proportion of governesses who have the advantage and use of their own earnings is very small. Instead of such just and pleasant results of their industry as a small independence at a time of life when some power of gratuitous usefulness and of enjoyment of ease is left, we read, till sheer pain of heart stops us, of the cases which come before the Governesses' Institution: — old age, or impaired health in middle age, amidst perfect destitution; failing sight, paralysed limbs, over-wrought brain, and no resource or prospect whatever; though (or because) the sufferers have supported orphans, saved a father from bankruptcy, educated brothers, or kept infirm and helpless relatives off the rates. We need not go on. The evil is plain enough. The remedies seem to be equally clear; — to sustain and improve the modern tests of the quality of educators; and to open broad and new ways for the industrial exertions of women; or at least to take care that such as open naturally are not arbitrarily closed.

The function of industry which might be supposed to be always standing wide for women is not in fact so, — the nursing function in all its directions, in private dwellings, in work-houses, in hospitals and in lunatic asylums, where it is at least as much wanted as anywhere else. We shall not argue it, or plead for it here. Florence Nightingale and her disciples have inaugurated a new period in the history of working-women, and the manifest destiny of the nursing class will fulfil itself.

There may be more difficulty about the kindred function, — that of the physician and surgeon: but it cannot long be a difficulty. The jealousy of the medical profession is, to be sure, proverbial: but it is not universal. — From our youth up, some of us have known how certain of the wisest and most appreciated of physicians have insisted that the health of women and their children will never be guarded as it ought to be till it is put

under the charge of physicians of their own sex. The moral and emotional considerations involved in this matter need no discussion. What has been done in the most advanced of the United States of America, where social conditions most nearly resemble those of England, shows what will be done here, and very soon. Some of the medical colleges have, after long opposition, or protracted deliberation, admitted ladies as students, and have conferred degrees; so that several of the cities have the blessing of highly qualified female physicians. The thing could not have been done without the sanction and practical encouragement of some of the first professional men in the community. That sanction and encouragement have been freely rendered, and are still continued, so that there is now a history of the change to be told. There are charters and grants of money by state legislatures for dispensaries, and medical colleges, and attendant hospitals, for the training and practice of female physicians, an increasing number of whom are established in the great cities from year to year. Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, whose excellent work on the 'Laws of Health' is one of the list which heads this article, led the way; and by the influence of her high character, attainments, and success, she has conquered prejudice, and established the enterprise. In our country, more time will, no doubt, be required. Prejudices are stronger; the capabilities of women are less tested and understood; and social service is not so earnest as in the younger country: but, if English physicians of two generations ago desired and foretold the change, it is for us to reckon confidently on it. In the branch of practice too much encroached upon by ignorant poor women, a few desultory efforts have been made, with no other success than preparing the way for more. Mrs. Hockley was a professional accoucheur for many years, and in excellent reputation. Dr. Spencer, of Bristol, educated his daughter for the same office; but the prejudice was too strong for her endurance, and she entered the ranks of governesses, where her honour and success indicated what her career as a physician might have been. The institution of the medical profession as a career for women in any one country facilitates its opening every where else; and we have no doubt whatever of the approaching conversion or supersession of such opponents as would deny the means of special training to educated women who demand it.

There remain the classes which speak so well for themselves as to leave others little to say;—the artists and authors. Here nature indicates the path of action; and all that we are practically concerned with is that her behests are not disobeyed,—her guidance not perverted,—her elect not oppressed, through our



mismanagement. A Jenny Lind cannot be stopped in her singing, nor a Siddons in her dramatic career, nor a Currer Bell in her authorship, by any opposition of fortune: but none of us can tell how many women of less force and lower genius may have been kept useless and rendered unhappy, to our misfortune as much as their own. We have adverted to the opposition made to opening Schools of Design to female students. We must permit no more obstruction of that kind, but rather supply the educational links that are wanted, if we would render the powers and the industry of women available to the welfare of society. For one instance;—it is a good thing to admit students freely to Schools of Design, and to train them there: and it is a good thing that manufacturers of textile and metal productions employ women at rising wages, in proportion to their qualifications. But there is a chasm between the training and the work which requires bridging. The greater part of the higher order of designs are practically unavailable, for want of knowledge on the part of the designer of the conditions of the particular manufacture in question. The economic possibility and aptitude are not studied; and hence, the manufacturers say, an enormous waste of thought, skill, and industry. This want supplied, a field of industry practically boundless would be opened to female artists, as well as artisans; and it would be an enlightened policy to look to this, while the whole world seems to be opening its ports to our productions.

It seems not very long ago that the occupation of the Taylor family, of Ongar, was regarded as very strange. The delightful Jane Taylor of Ongar and her sisters paid their share of the family expenses by engraving. Steel engravings were not then in very great demand; yet those young women were incessantly at work,—so as to be abundantly weary of it,—as Jane's letters plainly show. For a quarter of a century past, many hundreds of young women, we are assured, have supported themselves by wood engraving, for which there is now a demand which no jealousy in the stronger sex can intercept. The effort to exclude the women *was* made, in this as in other branches of art; but the interests of publishers and the public were more than a match for it. One of the most accomplished 'hands' in this elegant branch of art has built herself a country house with the proceeds of her chisel; and will no doubt furnish it by those of her admirable paintings on glass.

Strangely enough, the Report before us lumps together the female artists, authors, and teachers, so that we have no means of knowing the numbers of each. They are set down collectively at 64,336. The artists have an unlimited field before them;

and the annual exhibition of the works of female artists proves the disposition to occupy it. The contributors have it now in their power to ascertain whether there is any other than an educational barrier in the way of their attainment of excellence in painting and sculpture. Lord Lyndhurst said the other day, in stating to the House of Lords the claim which the Royal Academy of Arts undoubtedly has to the respect and gratitude of the public, that all Her Majesty's subjects have a right to the gratuitous instruction afforded by the first artists in the country to the students who attend its classes, on the simple condition of good moral character and a competent knowledge of elementary drawing. But women are not at present included in this our principal National School of Arts, though, from the use they make of the National Gallery, no class of students would derive greater advantage from it. This deficiency should be remedied. Photography has annihilated the secondary class of miniature-painting, which a considerable number of female artists practised with success. But photography itself has opened an enlarged field to their industry, both in the operations of that art and in the application of painting to it.

We look to cultivated women also for the improvement of our national character as tasteful manufacturers. It is only the inferiority of our designs which prevents our taking the lead of the world in our silks, ribbons, artificial flowers, paper-hangings, carpets and furniture generally. Our Schools of Design were instituted to meet this deficiency: and they have made a beginning: but the greater part of the work remains to be done; and it is properly women's work. There is no barrier of jealousy in the case, for our manufacturers are eager to secure good designs from any quarter.

For the rest, the female artists can take very good care of themselves. Music will be listened to, if it is good; and sculpture and painting must assert their own merits. Miss Herschel sat unmolested in her brother's observatory, discovering comets; and Mrs. Somerville became a mathematician in a quiet way, and after her own fashion. Our countrywomen have the free command of the press; and they use it abundantly. Every woman who has force of character enough to conceive any rational enterprise of benevolence is sure to carry it through, after encountering more or less opposition. For a Catherine Mompesson, supported by her husband's companionship in a plague-stricken village two centuries ago, we have had a Mary Pickard doing exactly the same work, but alone, within our own century. Mrs. Fry in Newgate, Florence Nightingale and Mrs. Bracebridge at Scutari; Miss Dix reforming lunatic asylums; Sarah Pellatt

reclaiming the Californian gold-diggers from drink; Mary Carpenter among her young city Arabs: all these, and several more, are proofs that the field of action is open to women as well as men, when they find something for their hand to do, and do it with all their might.

Out of six millions of women above twenty years of age, in Great Britain, exclusive of Ireland, and of course of the Colonies, no less than half are industrial in their mode of life. More than a third, more than two millions, are independent in their industry, are self-supporting, like men. The proceedings in the new Divorce Court, and in matrimonial cases before the police-magistrates, have caused a wide-spread astonishment at the amount of female industry they have disclosed. Almost every aggrieved wife who has sought protection, has proved that she has supported her household, and has acquired property by her effective exertions. It is probable that few of our readers have ever placed this great fact before their minds for contemplation and study: yet it is one which cannot safely be neglected or made light of. The penalty of such neglect or carelessness is an encroachment of pauperism at one end of the scale, and the most poisonous of vices at the other. How do we meet the conditions which stare us in the face? Mr. Norris's Report supplies us with the answer.

‘But I much fear the chief reason that more is not done in this direction, is the very general apathy that prevails in the matter of girls' education. Why is it that, where you find three or four good boys' schools, you will find barely one efficient girls' school? Why is it that in pamphlets, and speeches, and schemes of so-called national education, they are almost uniformly ignored? The reasons are twofold: a very large number of the people who are interested in the progress of education think of it only in connexion with our national wealth; they mean by education the extension of skill and knowledge as essential elements of productiveness, and, therefore, with them, girls' schooling is a matter of little or no moment. Another still larger class of persons, who, from native illiberality of mind, are opposed to all education, though ashamed to confess this generally, do not blush to own it with respect to girls. So that on either hand the girls' school is neglected. And what is the result? For want of good schools for girls three out of four of the girls in my district are sent to miserable private schools, where they have no religious instruction, no discipline, no industrial training; they are humoured in every sort of conceit, are called “Miss Smith” and “Miss Brown,” and go into service at fourteen or fifteen, skilled in crochet and worsted work, but unable to darn a hole or cut out a frock, hating household work, and longing to be milliners or ladies' maids. While this is called education, no wonder that people cry out that education is ruining our servants, and doing more harm than good!

‘But there are other evil results arising from the neglect of girls’ education, far more serious than the want of good servants; — as the girl is, so will the woman be; as the woman is, so will the home be; and as the home is, such, for good or for evil, will be the character of our population. My belief is, that England will never secure the higher benefits expected to result from national education, until more attention is paid to girls’ schools. No amount of mere knowledge, religious or secular, given to boys, will secure them from drunkenness or crime in after life. It may be true that knowledge is power, but knowledge is not virtue. It is in vain for us to multiply the means of instruction, and then sit down and watch the criminal returns in daily expectation of seeing in them the results of our schooling. If we wish to arrest the growth of national vice, we must go to its real seminary, *the home*. Instead of that thriftless untidy woman who presides over it, driving her husband to the gin palace by the discomfort of his own house, and marring for life the temper and health of her own child by her own want of sense, we must train up one who will be a cleanly careful housewife, and a patient skilful mother. Until one or two generations have been improved, we must trust mainly to our schools to effect this change in the daughters of the working classes. We must multiply over the face of the country girls’ schools of a sensible and practical sort. The more enlightened women of England must come forward and take the matter into their own hands, and do for our girls what Mrs. Fry did for our prisons, what Miss Carpenter has done for our reformatories, what Miss Nightingale and Miss Stanley are doing for our hospitals.’ (*Minutes on Education*, 1855-6, pp. 482, 483.)

Further illustrations may be found in the group of good books with which we have prefaced these remarks. The volume on the ‘Industrial and Social Position of Women,’ and the Reports of the Census and the School Inspectors, are written by men; and the rest are even more worthy of attention as being by women, who best know their own case, though they must appeal to us to aid them in obtaining free scope for their industry. The tale is plain enough,—from whatever mouth it comes. So far from our countrywomen being all maintained, as a matter of course, by us ‘the breadwinners,’ three millions out of six of adult Englishwomen work for subsistence; and two out of the three in independence. With this new condition of affairs, new duties and new views must be accepted. Old obstructions must be removed; and the aim must be set before us, as a nation as well as in private life, to provide for the free development and full use of the powers of every member of the community. In other words, we must improve and extend education to the utmost; and then open a fair field to the powers and energies we have educed. This will secure our welfare, nationally and in our homes, to which few elements can contribute more vitally and more richly than the independent industry of our countrywomen.