

THE EMPLOYMENT OF GIRLS.



EVERY thinking person must have been struck by the wonderful revolution which has taken place during the last few years in the aspect from which women's work is regarded. The time has only just gone by when a lady shrank from undertaking real honest work, either of a domestic nature in her own

home, or for remuneration out of doors, for fear of considerably damaging her social position in the eyes of the "polite" world generally.

Now a little reflection brings us to the fact that pride was at the bottom of this, as of so many other social evils. It was supposed that every one who claimed to live the gentle life must necessarily possess the wherewithal to be able to ignore work. We are not here speaking of occupation simply, for occupation does not necessarily mean work, but of really useful and defined employment, by which not only the worker, but those around her, and perchance some portion of the community at large, are benefited.

The key-note of reform has been unhesitatingly sounded by many distinguished champions, and work for women is now theoretically, and to a large extent practically, conceded to be a good thing. There are, no doubt, still existent some prejudiced minds who look upon remunerative work as detrimental to a girl's social position, but these are in the minority.

My object, however, is not so much to dwell upon the social position of lady workers as to insist upon the benefit, I might almost say necessity, of providing a girl with definite employment, whether it is to be followed as a means of livelihood, or for the sake of making her a useful, healthy, and happy member of society.

I am not prepared to follow the lead of some enlightened writers who declare that marriage is the sole aim and end of a woman's existence. A happy marriage is, without doubt, the brightest of all lots; but we know that a vast number of girls cannot marry, and as for every girl there is the possibility of coming among this number, it is simple cruelty to teach her to bend all her energies to this one point: to dress, to study, to attend places of amusement, aye, and even to go to church, in pursuit of this object. Such a course too often ends in misery; the girl looks upon her life as a failure; she thinks she is an object of pity, if not of contempt, for others have not been slow to note her actions; she is too soured and dispirited to take up

work for its own sake, even if she be ever convinced that the time has arrived when she must abandon her hopes. Thus her best years are wasted in a mode of life which has enervated her system, deteriorated her character, and unfitted her for life's burdens. This may seem an exaggerated picture, but who cannot recall many parallel cases in his or her own experience?

I would therefore urge that a girl's education should be made to tend towards some point of usefulness independent of marriage. If she is not likely to require to maintain herself, then still let there be a definite object in her studies, so that when she leaves school she may not settle down to an idle, useless life, rapidly losing the knowledge she has taken such pains to gain. If her circumstances allow her to continue her studies, so much the better for her. She has trodden the difficult paths of learning, and there lies before her a vast flowery meadow, from which she may cull as many blossoms as she will.

But even though she continue to advance her own education, there is no reason why *all* her attention should be devoted to self-culture. It is time she should turn to account the stores she has gained. If she has young brothers and sisters, it would be a great thing for her to undertake some portion of their education, though I do not believe in this home teaching unless there is real ability in the teacher, and a firm determination that the work shall be carried on systematically. Children, as a rule, prove the fact that familiarity breeds contempt, and unless a girl has some aptitude for governing and organising, the task will be more difficult than the teaching of strangers' children.

But although many girls may have neither the opportunity nor the ability to assist in the education of the younger members of the family, there are still many paths of usefulness open to them. An able writer on employment for girls, in an interesting book lately published,* advocates strongly the management and performance of domestic work by the girls of a household, and this on the score of the benefit to their health as much as for purposes of economy, or the practical knowledge to be gained thereby. But I am quite of the author's opinion that a knowledge of domestic duties is not the sole end and aim of a woman's life. I would neither under-value nor over-rate their importance. Such knowledge is not only desirable, it is absolutely necessary in these days. Without it there is very little chance of comfort in the home, and the girl who marries without having gained it is in a pitiable case; for after all a girl's training must be said to have failed if it does not fit her for a married life, although this may not have been the only object in view.

That a portion of a girl's time should be devoted to

* "What Girls can Do." By Phillis Browne. Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co.

these duties, is therefore clearly advisable. Mrs. Browne, in her excellent book, advises that every girl should be made responsible for the entire work of her own bed-room, with the exception only of window-cleaning. Whether the time might not be more profitably spent in looking after the general orderliness of the house, cooking, marketing, attending to the household linen, &c., than in such occupations as blacking stoves and washing hearths, is a matter of individual opinion; but I would urge that whatever work of this kind a girl undertakes, she should do it neatly and well, cultivating the knack of preserving her own spotless, tidy appearance, for in this art lies the principal secret of performing such duties without derogating from her own ladyhood. Short dresses, useful aprons which may well be pretty ones, and gloved hands should be the rule for all work of this kind.

Two hours a day is an ample proportion for girls to give to household duties, unless there is any special demand upon them. In this proportion such work is eminently useful. It affords exercise, it is a relief to mind and brain, benefits the household generally, and trains the girl to become an efficient mistress in her turn.

But a girl's work ought not to stop here, no, nor even with the manufacture of her own apparel, which is a very desirable point. It is a disgrace to a girl not to be able to use her needle, and there are few women who are able to dispense with a skilful use of it, yet a girl's time is obviously wasted in cultivating an elaborate mode of producing useless articles, when the same time spent in another way will produce really useful and lasting results. So-called "fancy work," especially that of an artistic nature, is well adapted for beautifying a home, but it should be the graceful employment of leisure hours, a relief from more severe undertakings, a means of gathering up the fragments of time, that nothing be lost. Of the more sober and useful kinds of work there are so many within a girl's range, that I cannot hope to speak at all fully about them in the compass of one short paper, but I cannot do better than refer my readers to the book I have already quoted for full and practical information on every aspect of this important subject.

If a girl has no actual need to work, or indeed if she be happily blessed with a greater provision than her own carefully regulated necessities demand, she is in the enviable position of being able to assist others with her time. Trained workers among the poor are urgently needed; indeed, any minister of religion will tell how his hands might be strengthened if he could only obtain the services of efficient, *i.e.*, trained helpers instead of the well-meant but often useless assistance of those who have an excellent will, but very little knowledge of what is required. Real hard work is required of those who train as sick-nurses, but it is an inestimable boon for a girl to receive such training, even if she does not take it up as a profession. Perhaps no work is more interesting and useful than the formation and superintendence of crèches in poor neighbourhoods. These institutions afford real help without exerting the demoralising influence of in-

discriminate charity, and are especially adapted to interest girls who are fond of little children, as the majority are. Sunday-school teaching is no easy work if properly performed, a careful preparation being given to each lesson. There are plenty of modes of work open to those girls who have time and money, but these are comparatively few.

Many girls, if not absolutely compelled to work for a livelihood, are extremely glad of the extra comfort and refinement remunerative work would be the means of bringing them. And there is no reason why they should not work for gain. There is no such inducement to thoroughness in our work as having its merits gauged by impartial critics.

A girl who possesses artistic talent has a tolerably large field open to her if only she will work hard and earnestly. No work can be taken up without special training, and the reason why so many fail is that their fancy talent is all that is needed. This is the most fatal mistake. Talent is very necessary, but unless it be guided and developed it is worthless for the purposes of remunerative work. It is for this reason that a girl's general education should be made to tend towards some given point, from the earliest moment that any special talent displays itself. Thus, if a child show signs of artistic talent, every endeavour should be made to cultivate that talent and attain excellence in some branch of it, not by any means neglecting the general education, but taking care that it is conducted in such a way as to strengthen and foster the special gift.

There is so great a demand in these days for artistic work of all kinds that excellence in this branch must meet with success, but excellence is required, and that is only to be had by diligent cultivation. Of course that worker has the best chance who can originate. Designs of all sorts are in daily requisition. The painting of Christmas, New Year, and birthday cards, designing book-covers, designs for pottery, for art needlework, and many other articles, keep vast numbers of women and girls in daily employ. Magazine illustration too is largely entered into by lady artists, and it is a fact that those who are really proficient in the art have more than enough work, but without a severe training and technical knowledge of details, no one however clever can hope for employment. For the right quarter in which to seek such training, the length of time required, probable cost, &c., I would refer my readers to a most useful book on this subject, entitled "How Women may Earn a Living," by Miss Grogan, published by Messrs. Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co.

There is at the present moment a large demand for skilled teachers in all subjects, but here again it is the well-trained proficient workers who carry the day, leaving the unqualified instructor to gain but a scanty subsistence in return for the greatest drudgery. I would strongly advise girls who intend to take up teaching as a profession to go in for special subjects, endeavouring to make themselves exhaustively acquainted with these *rather* than be satisfied with a poor average all round. Of course, if they can take

up two or three subjects in this way, they have the greater advantage, but a high standard of excellence is becoming more and more the demand of the day, and she who would command success must keep her eyes open to the requirements of the times. I know a lady who has her time fully occupied with literature classes in schools, her sister is making very fair way in the teaching of elocution, while yet another sister has more than she can do in preparing candidates for local musical examinations, for which she is well qualified. In all appointments that are worth having, there is no such acceptable reference as a certificate from one of the recognised examining bodies. Indeed it is extremely difficult to obtain remunerative teaching without one of these patents of ability, which are now placed within the reach of all. I may add that the demand for properly trained and certificated Kindergarten teachers is in excess of the supply.

The other remunerative employments open to girls,

such as post-office and telegraph clerkships, all imperatively demand the preliminary course of efficient training. The system of open competition is to be applied to these appointments, rendering the special preparation more than ever necessary. Of the medical profession, it is needless to say that very hard work and determined perseverance will alone compass the training required.

We find therefore, on investigation, that many more spheres of work are open to girls than there were in bygone times, and that as a natural result there are more workers than there ever were. The inevitable tendency of this state of things is to depreciate the value of the incompetent, and leave the prizes in the hands of those who are most qualified to hold them, and indeed it would be well for girls to remember that their claim for remunerative work can only be established by their proved ability to perform it.

M. B. H.

A "JAM OF LUMBER" IN NEW BRUNSWICK.

BY PROFESSOR J. P. SHELDON



SCENE of unique and singular strangeness was witnessed last October by a number of visitors at Grand Falls, about 150 miles up the noble river St. John. It must be understood that the "lumber-men" of the great Canadian forests frequently depend entirely on floating their logs down the rivers to the saw-mills below, and in some cases the trees are water-borne in this way many scores of miles, no other system of

carriage being practicable. The logs are cut in the forests and hauled to the river's bank, when they are floated along on the crest of a freshet. Last autumn a vast number of them were waiting in the upper part of the river, held there by booms to which they were moored; but the saw-mills were almost idle, and as the owners wanted the logs to go on with, orders were given to cast them adrift without waiting for a rise of the water. But the number of logs waiting was enormous, and the water was sinking rather than rising, hence the "jam" which we shall presently describe.

At Grand Falls, the river St. John has carved a deep, long gully or channel through the dark igneous rock, whose steep sides are crowned with pine and spruce and *lignum vitæ*, forming wild and beautiful scenery. The channel is some 80 to 100 feet deep, by 150 to 200 feet wide, forming curves and bends and sweeps, of wild and weird beauty, which is very striking when the splendid autumn tints have covered the forests. The scenery generally in this district is

very fine, and the Grand Falls are indeed beautiful, an enterprising American hotel-keeper advertising them as "Niagara Surpassed!" They are, however, far enough behind Niagara in magnificent and awe-striking splendour, but they are worth going a long way to see.

The annexed illustration, from a photograph taken on the suspension bridge, gives an excellent view of the gully, and of the jam of logs, which nearly obliterates the falls. The jam, indeed, is not even half given, for it extends a quarter of a mile or so below the bridge, but the portion seen gives a good idea of the rest. It was estimated that the jam contained no less than twenty-seven to thirty million cubic feet of timber, and it was blocked up there firmly, with the river surging and swirling beneath it, though breaking through in places, forming masses of foam and froth discoloured by the sap of the timber. The logs, some of which were very large, were piled up in all sorts of grotesque attitudes, some of them being nearly on end and trembling and nodding to the play of the torrent beneath; others were thrown high up against the rocks, which they butted in savage impotence; and for the most part they were piled on each other five or six deep, completely obscuring the water.

On the 20th of October, a party of gentlemen, of whom the writer was one, were paying a visit of inspection to the new Danish settlement in that part of the province, and took the chance of looking at the jam of logs, the like of which has not been seen before and probably will not again. Actuated by the love of dangerous adventure which seems to be a part of the Anglo-Saxon nature, the party decided to make a tour of the logs. Starting at the bottom, they carefully threaded their way over the damp, slippery