

noticing the crowds with which it was thronged, and mechanically returning the salutes of his acquaintances.

One day, as he was pursuing his listless way, a lady called him; and turning, he saw a pretty girl pulling up her horse under one of the trees in the Row.

"Ah! Lord Wivenhoe," she said, "I am glad to see you; they said you were too ill ever to come home."

"Much obliged to them, Miss Peyton, I am sure," said Gervase. "How is your father?"

"Quite well, I believe," was the reply. "But I am no longer Miss Peyton: my name is Clough. Bobbie and I agreed to run in double harness some time ago, and we have to thank you that we managed it."

"You have married Robert Clough?" was Gervase's astonished remark, "and you thank me for assistance? I am *entirely* in the dark as to your meaning."

"Well," said the lady, "I ought to have said—'Thank Beatrix;' for Bob and I fell in love—awfully—while I was at Brighton, at school. When I left, father wouldn't hear of his coming to the house (I had met him when I stayed with friends one holidays), and I couldn't even correspond with him at home; so I thought of Bee, asked her to send letters on to me from a friend—put her on her honour. Bee—safe as a church—told nobody, though she *was* angry when she found it was Bob who was writing. Jolly girl! One fine morning we were married. I can keep a curb on Bobbie, and I handle it so that he thinks it a snaffle; and I mean that he shall ride straight. Ta-ta!"

The rapid young lady touched her hat with her whip by way of adieu, and went off at a smart trot.

Gervase remained for a few minutes, watching her with a stunned feeling. This, then, was the "explanation"! He must rush at once to Wivenhoe.

A dash into his club, a hurried look at "Bradshaw," a jump into a hansom, and soon he was flying past the familiar country on his way home.

Arrived at the little station, he was reminded by the station-master's scarcely-recognising glance that he

was looking unlike himself. He had on a frock coat and tall hat, which were out of place here; and he was so thin that the garments hung upon him in a fashion which it would have distracted his tailor to see.

He soon found himself at the Court; and hearing from the servant that Beatrix had gone to the Ruin, he sped rapidly across the park in search of her.

At the foot of the tower he paused. He had caused the roof to be repaired, and had placed there a seat, which commanded a lovely view; and here many happy hours had been spent with Beatrix. Now she was there alone.

How would she greet him? Would she forgive his want of trust? His aunt had mentioned in her letter that she was looking ill; and, agitated by doubts and fears, he ascended the crumbling staircase.

At the sound of his step Beatrix rose from the spot she had always chosen for her seat, and he had time to notice that she looked pale and sad as he walked towards her, exclaiming eagerly—

"Bee, I have come to beg your pardon. I met Lady Clough in London, and she has told me of the promise by which she bound you. How unhappy it has made us! Surely it was a mistaken sense of honour that made you keep it, darling! I may call you so once more, may I not? I shall believe that you will keep your promise to love me as sacredly as you have done this one to Sophie, if you will make it once more. Do you love me still? Will you love me always?"

"I have never changed," said the girl, as she placed her hand in his; "but I could not break my word, even for you, Gervase."

The pair who walked into the drawing-room an hour later looked entirely happy, and kind Miss Royston rejoiced in hearing all they had to tell her.

The festivities at Lord Wivenhoe's wedding will long be remembered by his friends and tenants, but Sir Robert and Lady Clough were not invited to grace the ceremony with their presence.

M. R. L.

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## VILLAGE INDUSTRIES: PUNNET-MAKING IN KENT.

**I**N this work-a-day world of ours, to labour seems the lot of the larger portion of the community, and they accept it without complaint, but the variety in the conditions of this toil is a fit subject for more than a mere passing thought. The industries of great cities often entail grievous hardships on the journeyman and artisan: Sheffield cutlers, paint manufacturers, even those who have to do with wool and cotton, can tell sad tales of the difficulties and trials with which their work is surrounded, and which are quite unknown to some of their more fortunate brethren.

How different is the scene of their labour from that

of the man engaged in some handicraft in a village! The blacksmith, wheelwright, or carpenter thus placed can spend his leisure time, if he be so minded, in the pure air of the woods and fields around him; he has no smoky atmosphere to breathe, no tall chimneys towering above his dwelling and poisoning the air with their noisome blackness; he need not live in a long, dull street, where each house exactly resembles its neighbour, but for his home he has a cottage, with roses and honeysuckles climbing over its porch, and a patch of garden which he can make bright with flowers.

His children are healthy, because their days are spent in the open air, and the smaller wage he earns



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is compensated by the reduced price of many articles of food, and by the ease with which he procures vegetables and fruit—things which are luxuries to the dwellers in towns.

Besides the recognised workmen to be found in every village, there are in many places small industries occupying the leisure of the women and children, and greatly helping towards the comfort and well-being of the community. It seems a pity that these cannot be increased in number, so that every hamlet should possess its own speciality, and be a recognised centre for work of some kind. It is true that many large towns send forth small colonies, as lace-making spreads from Nottingham, and boot-making from Northampton, into the neighbouring villages; but that is not the same thing as the



work of straw-plaiting, knitting, pillow-lace-making, glove-stitching, and other small handicrafts which flourish in some of our English counties.

A large portion of the pleasant land of Kent is

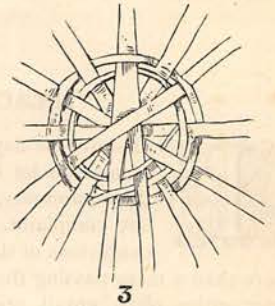
given up to the production of green-grocery, instead of being devoted to the cultivation of wheat, barley, oats, or rye; and here we find fruit-farms, hop-gardens, strawberry-grounds, and vegetable-fields innumerable.

The peasantry are, as a rule, far better off than in the districts where the land is arable, for whole families can take part in the out-of-door work. All the year round there is something to be done by those who are industrious and willing, and that not only by the men of the family.

In February begin the taking up, trimming, and replanting of strawberries, weeding, stone-picking, gathering turnip-tops, and attending to other vegetables. Then comes the laying of straw beneath the strawberry plants, followed by vegetable-planting, and green gooseberry-picking. After this is the long process of gathering and punnetting strawberries, picking raspberries, currants, ripe gooseberries, plums and greengages. Then the straw must be raked away from the strawberry plants, and by that time it is September, and all the families who have been thus busied flock to the hop-gardens, their numbers being recruited by "hoppers" who come from London, and who look upon the "hopping" as other folks do on a visit to the seaside. All the summer there has been the picking of peas and

other vegetables to employ the hands, and huge carts have been starting off at two in the morning, laden picturesquely with daintily-packed vegetables, or with fragrant baskets of fruit, filling the spots where they stood with the odours of their contents, and leaving scented traces of their passage through the country lanes.

In October and November come the digging of potatoes, "clamping" them, and the cutting of greens and Brussels sprouts, and after that the men are engaged in getting the land ready for the operations of the next spring. Women and children have meanwhile no reason to be idle, they can work at punnet-making for the strawberries or "rasps" of the next summer.



We never give a thought to the little baskets we see in the streets and shops in such numbers; they are thrown aside after once using; and yet each one has required care and deftness in its construction,

and their manufacture is a source of considerable profit to the women and children of many villages. In the one of which we speak from acquaintance, the cottages in winter-time seem brimming over with the light punnets, the wood of which they are made, and the chips left after their completion.

Every available out-house is crowded with baskets tied together in rings of twelve, and the rings piled again in dozens to form a gross.

One often meets a queer little figure in the lanes, a head and a pair of boots, with a body made of dozens of rings of punnets, so carried that they seem to form an enormous wicker-work barrel.

The wood of which these baskets are made is deal, bought in sheets of two thicknesses.

It costs twenty-six shillings for nine bundles. Eight of these contain each seventy-eight sheets, and are of the thicker quality; the remaining bundle consists of ninety-six sheets of the very thin wood.



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The sheets are soaked in water until thoroughly saturated, after which they are placed five or six deep on a large board, and with a strong knife (Fig. 1) are cut in strips, some of them being over an inch in thickness, and some not half that width.

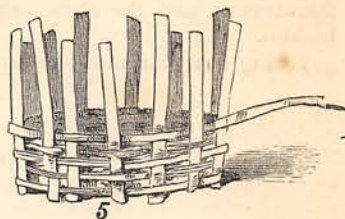
The wide ones are used for the framework of the punnet, and the others for filling it in. The thin sheets are cut into tiny strips for binding the tops and fastening together the ribs for the bottoms of the baskets. To make these, six strips of wood are taken, one of which is forked in the middle (Fig. 2). These are laid one over the other and bound together (Fig. 3) to make the thirteen spikes needed for the ribs of the punnet. On them is placed an iron disk (Fig. 4), round which the pieces are bent up to form the framework, and in and out of these are twisted the narrower strips for filling up (Fig. 5). The basket, which has taken very few minutes to make, as three pairs of hands have a share in the process, is then thrown into the corner, to await its finishing, which consists of bending down the tops of the ribs, and pushing them under the first row of the filling-in, or else of binding the edge with a shaving like those used at the bottom, and knotting it together to keep all tidy.

The hardest part of the work is that of cutting up the strips; it looks very easy as the knife slips along the edge of the flat iron bar used ruler-fashion, but a trial soon proves that both strength and dexterity are needed for the task, which is generally given to the big boy of the family, or else the

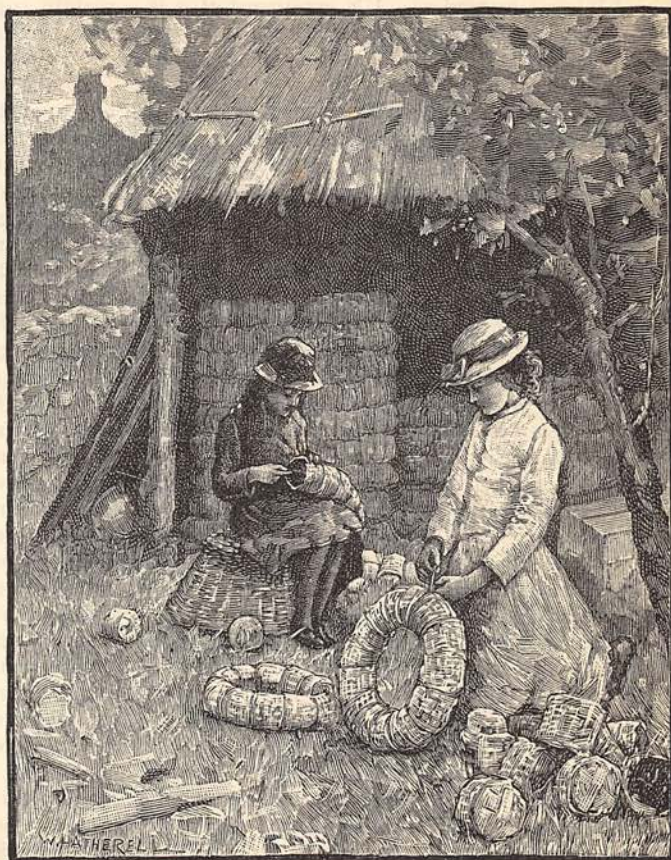
father is coaxed to cut enough for a gross of punnets in the intervals of his out-of-door work. Forming the bottom and bending up the ribs are undertaken by the mother and the elder girls; the little ones can put in the light basket-work, and do the finishing. The wood being wet is pliable and easily manipulated.

In this manner a great quantity of work is accomplished, a family of six or seven can make two gross of baskets in a day, and as the pay for these varies from four and sixpence to six shillings a gross, it is an industry by no means to be despised.

Even old women can make the punnets in large numbers if they can get the wood cut, and one elderly dame of our acquaintance engages a grandson to prepare strips enough for perhaps three gross a week, presenting him with a pair of boots by way of payment; she and a young grand-daughter can then easily make up the punnets. The materials for a winter's work



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cost from about thirty shillings to four pounds, and this is quickly recouped at the rate of nine shillings per day, the smallest sum given for two gross.

The chief difficulty with which the punnet-makers have to contend is the uncertainty as to the crop of strawberries, and the consequent demand for their baskets.

Taking one year with another, however, the earn-

ings of a family are considerable, and if they could only be induced to become thrifty there should never be a needy person in all the fruit districts; but here, as elsewhere, the money easily earned disappears as quickly, and the fleeting pleasure of a day's holiday, or the glory of brilliant clothing, scarcely seems an adequate return for the many hours spent in winter over the work of punnet-making.



### TEACHING BY CORRESPONDENCE.



THE system of instruction by correspondence has been attracting a good deal of attention lately, and its usefulness is becoming year by year more generally understood and acknowledged.

A few notices of the system have appeared from time to time in various periodicals, but these have chiefly dealt with it from the promoters' and observers' points of view; and it occurs to the present writer that a few observations on it from the parents' point of view might not be without interest to readers. His experience of it in his own family enables him to offer these with confidence, for five of his children—four boys and a girl—have been educated under it, so far as English subjects are concerned, whilst attending schools taught in French on the Continent, or moving about from place to place.

The correspondence classes they joined were those of the late Association for the Higher Education of Women in Glasgow, now affiliated to Queen Margaret College at that place, and of which Miss Jane S. Macarthur (of 4, Buckingham Street, Hillhead, Glasgow) is the honorary secretary. These classes, although primarily intended for girls, are open to boys, and also to women and men of any age. Instruction is given not only in all the subjects prescribed for the Glasgow University Local Examinations, but also in a number of subjects outside the University programme.

The subjects taken by the writer's children were English grammar, arithmetic, history, English composition, and literature. Once, when no other teaching was available, they included French and German. One of the boys also took logic when preparing for a public examination.

The charges were moderate, and did not in the case of any one subject exceed £1 11s. 6d. for the annual six months' course, which lasted from November to May.

The system, as is now pretty generally known, consists in sending out beforehand a "plan of study" for the course in each subject, showing the heads of reading for each fortnight, on which the fortnightly examination paper, to be forwarded to each student by post, will be set. Three days are allowed for answering the papers, which are to be returned by post to the

tutor. It is obvious that the success of this system of instruction, like any other, depends mainly on the efficiency of the instructors, and this fact has been fully recognised in selecting the tutors for the Glasgow classes. As far as the writer can venture to express an opinion, the selections have been good. He has always been much struck by the pains taken by the tutors to encourage the efforts of the pupils, and not only to guide them in the acquirement of knowledge, but to educate their minds. Much skill, too, has generally been shown in arousing the pupils' interest in their work, and the return of the corrected fortnightly papers with the tutorial remarks on their margins has always been an event of considerable excitement in the family.

On the whole, it may fairly be said of this system of education, that where very good *visû voce* instruction is not available, it forms a thoroughly good and economical substitute. Its disinterested and enthusiastic promoters do not claim more for it than this, for they do not pretend to compete with satisfactory oral teaching, and they may well be content with the usefulness of their work even when so limited.

To illustrate its usefulness, it is only necessary to suggest a few cases of common occurrence in which classes taught in the ordinary way cannot be resorted to. A pupil may be in a foreign country, or in a colony, or in some out-of-the-way place where there are no classes at hand of any sort, or he may be delicate and unable either to attend public classes or to pay for private lessons, or he may have some exacting employment which hampers him in regard to time, or he may be of too advanced an age (many of the Glasgow pupils are of this kind) to attend boys' or girls' classes with comfort or propriety. In all these and similar cases, the correspondence classes supply a want that can be met in no other way.

The writer is deeply sensible of the benefit he has himself derived from these classes in having the education of his children made possible when ill health, foreign residence, and sometimes frequent movement, presented difficulties that without them would have been insurmountable. He sincerely hopes that this briefest of records, giving the result of his own experience, may be of service to others in like circumstances.