

## LADY LAUNDRESSES.

By JOSEPHA CRANE.



QUESTION, "What can I do?" is asked daily by hundreds of women who, gentle by birth, are by choice or necessity obliged to seek remunerative employment. As one half of the world is supposed not to know how the other half

lives, so many people, in replying to the query, advise posts of governesses, companions, etc., without ever entering into the matter regarding the fitness of the applicant for such situations, or contemplating the stern fact that the latter market is overcrowded with seekers for work who are armed to the teeth with certificates and diplomas guaranteeing capability in more than one way; and these, in the very nature of things, have chances which the average girl of average ability and mediocre education is utterly without.

However, as the latter has to live, and is perhaps in sore need of the wherewithal to do so, it is just as well to indicate any new line of work where there is likelihood of obtaining it; and that ladies have embarked on the profession of a laundress is as true as it is that, when trained and taught, they have every reasonable certainty of obtaining a post in one or other departments of that profession. There are certain matters, however, which it is well to bear in mind, alike for those who shrink back from the work, and think it menial and very great drudgery, as for those who are all too eager to enter into it.

To the prejudiced—first. A gentlewoman, in the true sense of the fine old word, will never lose one iota of her claim to that name because of any labour, manual or other, which she undertakes, provided that she can therein live, move, and have her inner being governed by the laws of Divine grace, and where she can keep the commandments of Almighty God. A great deal of the old-fashioned horror of a lady doing work of this kind has been somewhat effaced by the spirit of the age, which, as a matter of fact, induces a woman to seek independence rather than be a burden on others, and which gives honour to her who declines to remain idle because of aptitude only for what some foolish people may think is *infra dig.* To these, too, I would say this word of comfort: In the profession of lady laundress, whether you are packer, sorter, assistant, or head of the whole concern, you need come very little—in some cases not at all—into contact with the outer world. To put it more plainly, the people who send their linen to be washed would be, in nearly all cases, never encountered by you, all communication respecting the work being done as a rule by letter. If you rise to the post of lady manager, an irate housekeeper may come and scold you for some oversight, or a housemaid may not be content unless she sees you to explain that her caps have not enough starch in them, or your grocer's wife may come to drive a bargain over your bills. But what if they do? If you are able to manage a laundry full of girls and women, and keep the men on the premises alive to their work, you surely can tackle these and not lose your dignity. In many depart-

ments of work for women, ladies of gentle birth have to battle continually with all sorts and conditions of men and women, often to endure rudeness and roughness, and a variety of unpleasant things, which, if they are foolish, they cry over, and if they are wise, think nothing more of than that it comes "all in the day's work."

Having, then, dismissed these bugbears, I must confess that if some shrink from this employment because it involves hard work, that it certainly does mean that. Of course the very term "hard work" is relative; and what a spiritless, delicate young damsel, who has no energy and is easily tired, would be terrified at, would be nothing at all to a girl in good health of mind and body. The latter would be tired, and find a good deal of drudgery, a great deal of standing—that must be faced—but nothing at all extraordinary in the way of labour.

Now, to those who have none of the aforementioned fears, and who would be glad to take the work up as a profession, I may say that it is one which has in it a very great amount of interest.

All work can be interesting; as Elizabeth Barrett Browning says—

"Get leave to work  
In this world—'tis the best you get at all;  
For God in cursing gives us better gifts  
Than men in benediction. God says, 'Sweat  
For foreheads'; men say, 'crowns,' and so  
we are crowned—  
Ay, gashed by some tormenting circle of steel  
Which snaps with a secret spring. Get work  
—get work;  
Be sure 'tis better than what you work to get."

Now, in this work, looking at it simply as employment and nothing more, there are many charms. It is definite work, and a girl who trains for it learns every department, so that she shall, if she advances to a post of manager, know thoroughly herself all she is expected to superintend.

There is room in the profession for ambition. Although at first a girl may only get employment as packer and sorter, she may, if she have energy, a power of work, and the sense to direct that power well, rise to a situation as manager or superintendent, and even to having a laundry one day of her own. I saw all over the Sweet Lavender Laundry, 34, Osborne Road, Acton, lately, and the manager, Mrs. Montrose, herself a gentlewoman, goes on the lines of employing such in the work. At present the ironing is all done by ordinary laundresses, the heavy machinery worked by men; but as the idea develops, ladies might well be employed in ironing as well as they are now in sorting and packing. This lady takes pupils at a premium of three guineas for three months' training, and answers for obtaining them situations, the salaries being from £30 a year upwards, including board and lodging, granting, of course, that they prove apt and capable. A good memory is essential, and this can be cultivated, and improves by practice. Letter-writing and book-keeping all form parts of the work, and accuracy is obviously a most important feature. The demand for ladies who, themselves trained, can undertake posts more or less important in homes, hospitals, and large laundries, is on the increase, from town and province alike, which is proof positive that the plan answers admirably. The reason why a gentlewoman fills a post in this profession better than an uneducated person is very obvious.

The latter, where book-keeping and accounts

generally are concerned, is usually liable to make mistakes. The washing bill is a household grievance in many homes, and the inaccuracies it continually contains are the result of carelessness, and still oftener by the lack of learning that prevents a woman from being able to make out a bill as well as be watchful and conscientious concerning the linen, and the exact return of it to its rightful owner.

Then, too, the general influence of a refined woman must tell for good, whether the people under her are of the ordinary laundry-girl class, or whether some or many may be in her own. Here, too, comes in the second aspect of the work itself, namely, that of being one where a good woman may exercise almost untold influence for good. Listen to what someone said: "Pray learn to understand how all work has in it a spiritual element; how the meanest thing on earth has a divine side; how all temporary forms include essences that are to be eternal. Whatever be the meanness of a man's occupation, he may discharge and prosecute it on principles common to him with Michael or Gabriel, or any of the highest spirits of heaven!"

Why may not a lady laundress labour in that way, doing the work of angels among the class of laundry-women and girls, which is a class, as all know who have mixed in it, one of the most difficult to reach. I do not write from mere hearsay, as from circumstances needless to enter into; I have been in laundries for days and months, and have the intimate acquaintance with the work, the usual run of workers, their trials, their temptations, etc. You may reach them in a measure, you who desire to raise their lives, to humanise them, to lead them to God by missions and classes and organisations of the kind, to all of which we wish God-speed; but you can influence them in another and often better way if you live with them, as, if you are a lady laundress, you must to a certain extent do.

You may not preach very much to them—perhaps not at all in words—but, if you will, you can help them to purify their lives from all stains of sin. You can find your parable in the very surroundings, and your illustrations in the linen soiled and darkened, which by their work they whiten. By discouraging all quarrelling, by fostering a spirit of charity, by gentle words and a governed temper setting them a good example, by aiming high in every detail, and bringing principle into your every action, by sympathising with the workers, by perhaps being their friend in time of need, may you not be helping them in a way no outsider can do as well?

We all know what the influence of a holy life is—how certainly it tells on all around; and as these girls leave the laundry and go into their homes, becoming wives and mothers, how far may not the influence of a good womanly presence go! Far indeed beyond where she on earth can trace it; but where one day she will know when it returns to her as an integral part of the "Well done!" spoken by the voice of Him who has stayed her in all the difficulties of the task.

Therefore, quite apart from a new employment for women of the more educated—in the widest acceptance of that much misused word education!—classes, I look upon it as a means of working for and touching a hitherto much-neglected section of the people. Until good and refined women went themselves and laboured with their hands as well as heart and soul in the work, what was the nursing profession in and out of hospitals? What were infirmaries, refuges, workhouses? No need



for me to answer, and weary you with a description of the altered state of things, which all have read about, for they themselves may be too young to recollect the dark past. These changes were not effected by large bands of labourers, but by one woman here, another there, going boldly into the various fields and uprooting evil, so that good might be sown in such ways, and by her own well-directed enthusiasm to work with and after her.

But as I write I feel all too strongly that human nature is such that to many any work which has in it a spice of romance, and, if we may use the word, picturesqueness, has a

charm which carries them over many a hill of difficulty, out of many a Slough of Despond, formed by apparently overwhelming obstacles. And this is not to be deprecated, only let us face the fact. A girl has the vision of bending over sick beds, of smoothing dying pillows, of excelling in the art of nursing—for art it is; and this attracts many an one. Another pictures the joy of rescuing the fallen, and helping the Magdalens of the world to the feet of their Lord, as well as seeking first those who are apparently hardened, and so on. But about washerwomen and laundry-girls there is nothing enchanting to the superficial observer.

There is no romance in a washhouse filled with steam, in an ironing-room where the workers are, as a rule, rough, independent, and careless, the girls, alas! often drifting into lives where drink and impurity do their deadly work.

But to those who look below the surface of things there is much that may attract. Spiritually, many a wound may be healed, many a disease checked or prevented, many a weak one made strong, by the influence, the prayers, the work of those who in their midst are themselves seeking to give out and share the good they possess from the Most High.

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

## ART.

CHLOE.—Remember that the reds you employ in painting on china burn in differently from what you represented them before burning. Another point which you should bear in mind is, that the medium used to make them adhere, if applied too freely, produces bubbles on the fired surface; and that if applied too sparingly, the colours come away. To prevent disappointment, paint two tiles with exactly the same colours, making a note of the combinations employed; send one to be fired, and compare it with its unfired fellow, and so determine the amount of colour required to preserve the original hues.

FLORENCE.—In reply to your query as to who built the Duomo at Florence, it was not Giotto. The latter built the Campanile in 1334, and at the age of fifty-eight, having relinquished his art as a painter and taken up that of sculpture and architecture. It was Arnolfo (di Cambio), the first of the cathedral builders in Florence, who founded the Duomo, having designed it, as he did the Santa Croce and the Palazzo of the Signoria. He died just as the apse of the Duomo approached completion, about 1300, the year Cimabue likewise died; and at the time when Dante was in full power. It was Arnolfo who built the Palazzo Vicino and the great tower of the Vacca; but it does not seem to be known who those *maestri* were who completed the Campanile of the Palazzo. At least, he lived to finish the three principal tribunes under the cupola of the Duomo. *The Makers of Florence*, by Mrs. Oliphant, would give you all such information.

RHODA.—It is not an indisputable fact that the article of porcelain of which you speak is Dresden ware because it has the "cross swords" (represented obliquely), because it is often found on Bristol china—blue under the glaze. A little manual of pottery and porcelain would be of use to you.

## WORK.

WINKLE, MELINDA, MAC, and KATHLEEN would be likely to meet with a sale for their plain needlework and knitted articles at a shop where baby-linen is sold. Or they might make arrangements for their sale at such a place. Their own personal exertions are needful in the matter.

HARD UP.—1. You had better read the recent articles on "New Employments for Women," in the "G. O. P.," by Miss Caulfield.—2. The articles on "Silkworm Culture," by Dora de Blaquiere, were in vol. x. You had better read them, and think them over. You will find the addresses in them. All these things are matters for personal exertion and work.

A. P. R.—1. The address of the London branch of the A. F. D. Society for supplying the families of poor clergy with clothing is—Miss McCreery, 40, Delancy Street, Regent's Park, N.W.—2. We have not found the author of the quotation, "Man is immortal till his work be done."

MAMIE.—It is well to avoid making knots in knitting. Lay the two ends of the wool along each other, and knit them into the work. This will keep them firmly together. We think you and "Cree" would do well to procure a little handbook on knitting, which would not cost more than sixpence, or a large one a shilling, and you would then have a set of patterns from which you could make a selection. A very useful gift to a poor person—so many of whom suffer from rheumatism—would be a pair of long knitted woollen sleeves. Take No. 17 needles, cast on forty-two stitches very loosely, knit and purl three stitches (alternately) for twelve turns; knit ten turns plainly; knit thirty-five turns plainly, increasing by one stitch at the beginning and end of each turn; knit twenty turns plainly, increasing by one stitch every other turn; and repeat the twelve turns, as at the commencement. These sleeves, night socks, and comforters are easy of manufacture in odd minutes of leisure.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

W. OWEN.—We could not tell you how many sheep you could feed on one acre of land without knowing something of the nature of the soil and the quality of the pasturage. And besides this, the system of farming carried out, either high or low, must be taken into consideration. But we understand that two sheep to every acre would be a fair average calculation.

MEGGIE.—Yes, there is such a complaint of the eyes as "day-blindness," and it results from too great exposure to light, and renders the retina torpid. In fact, the eyes, when employed at any sort of work, should never face the light without a screen to protect them. The complaint is common in Brazil and the West Indies, and likewise in Russia. On the contrary, too, we find that prisoners, long confined in dark cells, are thus affected; too little, as well as too great, light being equally injurious.

ANNIE OF THE VALE had far better turn her thoughts to some more worthy subject. Her former lover does not seem to be at all a desirable person. She has had a happy escape.

PRIMROSE.—The 30th of January, 1874, was a Friday; the 9th of April in the same year was a Thursday.

OLIVIA, A BEGINNER IN COMPOSITION, ESPERANCE, ALBERTA, and E. M. A., all send us their poetical compositions. Some of them are meritorious, some very mildly Tennysonian, and beginning with the everlasting, "O! swallow"; and some owing their inspiration to the common hymn-books, and full of the anguish, regret, and pain in which all young souls revel and delight, and of which they are really quite ignorant, in their true meaning. But there is thought and good aspirations in all, and these are good and necessary in both prose and poetry.

LITTLE FAITH.—1. Leave the pictures you have painted alone; washing will do them no good.—2. No one can write a good hand by intuition; practice is needed; and so you had better go back to copy-books, or take some handwriting which you admire, and study that. If you persevere you can change your writing very easily.

MIRIAM MARILLER, if dropsical, should be under medical treatment, and might be recommended to some mineral water bathing establishment. If only fat, and in good health, she should be very thankful for the body God has given her. Few sights could be more sad to see than a thin girl; and we often wonder that such can make an exposure of their thinness, as they so often do, in wearing low dresses and short sleeves. On the other hand, if unusually stout, it is easy to make use of a little extra tulle or lace over the neck and shoulders of an evening dress. It is in exceedingly bad taste, as well as unkind, to make disparaging personal remarks on anyone. Do not mind them, and beware of ever doing the same.

L. M. E.—We have given a list of remunerative work for women in a series of articles which have just been completed.

FLORENCE.—1. You do not say where you thought of residing in Germany. If going to Berlin, you will find a Students' Home in Victoria Stiff, Königgratzer Strasse. You had better write to the Matron, at the Young Women's Christian Association office in Mortimer Street, W. You might get advice, perhaps, on the subject in the Foreign Department.—2. Madame Schumann has recently retired from professional work.

A HAPPY GIRL is, perhaps, over-tired, and, it may be, hungry for her next meal, when she gazes so much in chapel. She had better go to bed early on Saturday nights, and eat a good breakfast; and should the fit of gaping come on, have a cayenne pepper lozenge in her pocket ready to take to stop it. It might succeed.

SUBSCRIBER.—Oil your head and hair thickly until entirely free. We are surprised that you should ask so disgusting a question to be answered in print in a refined paper! Go to some nurse, and do not write to us again until thoroughly clean.

J. L.—In the time of the Romans, London was quite a small city, not much larger in extent than Hyde Park. It was surrounded with high and well-fortified walls, the circuit of which, according to Stowe, measured only two miles and a furlong. A large fort stood on the site of the Tower, and another on the bank of the Thames near Fleet brook. There were three entrances on the land side, *i.e.*, Aldgate, Aldersgate, and Ludgate; and to these original gateways several were added, as Bishops-gate, Cripplegate, Moorgate, Newgate, that on Tower Hill, and others. Now there are sixty approaches to it. Mr. Roach Smith says the City was about a mile in length from the Tower to Ludgate, running east and west; and from London Wall to the Thames, about half a mile—that is, from north to south. But London, under a different name, is said to have existed 1107 years B.C., and 354 years before the foundation of Rome, and that it was the capital of the Trinobantes 54 years before Christ. The name "London" is derived from *Llyn-Din*, or "the town on the lake."

M. T. A.—We can only give you the advice so often before repeated—that you must show your articles for sale at the shops where such things are sold, dispose of what you have done, and obtain trade orders. We are gratified by your kind words of appreciation of our paper.

MARY.—There are convalescent homes for ladies needing care as well as a change to a warm climate in three places on the Riviera—at Cannes (£2 4s. per week); address, Miss Hankey, Balcombe Place, Hayward's Heath. At Mentone, Helvetia Convalescent Home; address, Miss Dudgeon, Les Grottes, Mentone. This home is for those whose means are small—ladies. There is a home here for clergy also. At San Remo there is another home for invalid ladies of straitened circumstances, at the weekly charge of £1 5s.; address, Miss Macdonald Lockhart, The Lee, Lanark, N.B.

BOTANY.—There are two ways of skeletonising leaves. One method was described in vol. ii., p. 64. In case you have not got it, we repeat it. Put the leaves into an earthenware vessel containing rain-water and place it in the sunshine, where it must remain for days, or it may be, weeks, if the leaves be thick. When pulpy, remove them to clean water and shake the vessel to and fro, or use a soft brush to remove the outer covering.

BUZZING asks for a book published by other firms than ours, which it is contrary to our rules to answer. Such a she requires is to be seen at most booksellers' shops.

VIVA.—H.R.H. the Princess Mary of England, Duchess of Teck, is first cousin to the Queen; thus, her daughter and those of the Prince of Wales are second cousins.—2. It is quite optional whether the bride-elect give her intended husband a ring or not in this country. In other countries men wear marriage-rings as well as their wives.

MAY (Queensland).—We thank you for your nice little grateful letter, and we think that your sketch gives promise of your drawing well some day. You ought to have lessons. Accept our best wishes. It is well that you tell us you are not represented in your sketch, or we should have supposed you to be the fat little dark woman with the bushy hair.

M. A. C. S. does not repeat her question, or we would answer it now with pleasure. New subscribers are replied to just as soon as old ones. It is quite possible that she has been answered, but the correspondence sheets are not all in print. We quite well remember having noticed the address, which was familiar to us in the past.

KATHLEEN.—When the Lord Jesus Christ spoke of the "needle's eye," He meant the small door which was employed by people who required a passage through the great gates opened only for camels and their high loads, and for horses and vehicles. You may often see these small doors in this country, although we do not give them the same Oriental name and description. The name "postern" is often used to denote a little entrance door.