

are some things which you can do better in your inexperience and ignorance than any other people. How is this? Tell me why it would be more comfort, and do more good sometimes to a poor sick woman to bring her a few primroses or daffodils than to give her any substantial relief? The reason is the same. The very freshness and innocence of young faces, that sympathise without having the faintest suspicion of the sin and misery of the world, is more refreshing and helpful than the stronger sympathy of one who really knows all the evil. You can be primroses and daffodils, and give glimpses into a purer world of love and gentleness and peace.

And if a prolonged training is impossible to you, it is often possible for you to assist in some humble capacity some lady who is so engaged in work on a scale which you could not yourself touch. Be her handmaid and fag and slave, and so gradually train yourself to become capable of independent action.

But to sum up all I am saying it amounts to this—Where there's a will there's a way, and I want you to have the will.

Did you ever think for what reason you should have had such a splendid time of it in your lives? Not two girls in a thousand are getting such an education as you are, such varied studies, such vigorous public school life, such historic associations. And why? Because you are better than others? I think not. It is that you play your part in the great social organism—our national life; hundreds are toiling for us, digging, spinning, weaving, mining, build-

ing, navigating, that we may have leisure for the thought, the love, the wisdom that shall lighten and direct their lives. You cannot dissociate yourselves from the labouring masses, and in particular from the women and girls of England. They are your sisters; and a blight and a curse rests on you if you ignore them, and grasp at all the pleasures and sweetness and cultivation of your life, with no thought or toil for them. Their lives are the foundations on which ours rest. It is horrible in one class to live without this consciousness of a mutual obligation, and mutual responsibility. All that we get, we get on trust, as trustee for them. I remember that Thring says somewhere, that "no beggar who creeps through the street living on alms and wasting them is baser than those who idly squander at school and afterwards the gifts received on trust."

I know that our class education isolates us and separates us from the uneducated and common people as we call them, makes us perhaps regard them as uninteresting, even repellent. Part of what we hope from the girls who come from great schools is, that they shall have a larger sympathy, a truer heart. Remember all your life long a saying of Abraham Lincoln's, when he was President of the United States. Someone remarked in his hearing that he was quite a common-looking man. "Friend," he replied gently, "the Lord loves common-looking people best; that is why He has made so many of them."

You can all make a few friends out of the lower class; you cannot do much; but learn to

know and love a few, and then you will do wider good than you suspect.

But you are beginning to ask—Is all this religion? You expected something else. Let me remind you of the man who came to Jesus Christ, and asked Him what he should do to obtain eternal life. And this question, I may explain, means—What shall I do that I may enter on that divine and higher life now while I live; how can I most fully develop my spiritual nature? And the answer was—Love God; and love your neighbour as yourself. Go outside yourself in love to all that is divine and ideal in thought and duty; go outside yourself in love to your neighbour—and your neighbour is everyone with whom you have any relation; and then, and then alone, does your own nature grow to its highest and best. This is the open secret of true religion.

Religion glorifies, because it idealises, that very life we are each called on to lead. Look, therefore, round in your various lives and homes, and ask yourselves—What is the ideal life for me here, in this position, as school-girl, daughter, sister, friend, mistress, or in any other capacity. Education ought to enable you to frame an ideal; it ought to give you imagination, and sympathy, and intelligence, and resource; and religion ought to give you the strong motive, the endurance, the width of view, the nobleness of purpose, to make your life a light and a blessing wherever you are.\*

\* From *Three Addresses to Girls at School.*—Percival & Co.

## THE FLOWER-GIRLS OF LONDON.

By EMMA BREWER.



### CHAPTER I.

"Flowers are, in the volume of Nature, what the expression, 'God is Love,' is in the volume of Revelation."—*Chapter on "Flowers."*

MANY and varied are the servants that wait upon our great city, supplying its needs day by day. Merchant princes and humble traders vie with each other in satisfying the needs of body and mind; and so efficiently is this done, that we take to it all quite naturally—as if, in fact, all things grew to our hand.

Rich and poor alike are born with a love of the poetic and the beautiful, and it is well for their happiness if this can be satisfied. To the rich of course this is easy, for money will buy all things, whether for mind or body; but the majority of the five millions of inhabi-

tants of London are not rich, and yet are filled with a yearning for the bright and the graceful; and so, if it were not for the existence of the more humble street-traders, many of them would never have a chance of indulging it.

Owing to the splendid arrangements of London in the matter of supply and demand, all classes may, according to their means, provide themselves with things of beauty to cheer and refine their daily life.

The most poetic and exquisite among things graceful in Nature are flowers, and in a city like London, where the struggle for daily bread is all-absorbing, they are of infinite value in keeping alive within us the desire for things lovely, and the longing to grow nearer and nearer to the good and loving Father who made them all.

This love of flowers is a naturally implanted passion in rich and poor alike, and is without any alloy or debasing object as a motive.

Yet it is not so long ago that the sale of these in our streets was of rare occurrence, and never at a price which brought them within reach of our poor. Now, on the contrary, every corner of our thronged thoroughfares is graced by their presence, taking away from us the reproach that we only worship capital, and that there is no particle of poetry in dear old London.

The trade in cut flowers is quite of recent growth, and is still rapidly increasing. It has sprung from a single grain into a mighty tree sufficient for everybody's needs. The origin of it was that some thirty years ago the farmers brought to the market a few old-fashioned flowers, such as the stock, sweet william, polyanthus, cowslip, and cabbage rose, mixed in with the various vegetables; and seeing that these always found ready purchasers, they gradually increased the number, setting aside in their country homes a little

more land than formerly for the growth of flowers.

These were sold, as a rule, in front of the railings round St. Paul's Church, Covent Garden, but without stalls on which to display them. One of the flower-sellers of twenty-five years ago is still remembered and spoken of; his name was Smith, and he was known to the flower world as "Napoleon." He was always to be seen on market days at the corner of King Street with arms folded, his basket of flowers at his feet, looking for all the world like the general after whom he was called. He was quite a character, and it would not have been market day without his familiar figure. Mr. Barr says he remembers him well. As time went on it was necessary to put up some benches for the flowers which came in in such abundance. It was about this time that Mr. Dorrien Smith persuaded the farmers of Scilly to cultivate flowers for Covent Garden. They, as a rule, were disinclined to follow his advice; but one man thought well of the plan, and collected some then growing in his garden and sent them, and for the little lot cleared two-and-sixpence. This was the commencement in those islands of the flower trade, which sends out in a season as many as two hundred tons of cut flowers—the expense of conveying them to the market being seven-and-sixpence a ton. At length the benches gave place to the new flower market, which, within the last few years, has been enlarged to its present magnificent proportions, and where one can see and purchase all the choice flowers which England, Scilly, the Channel Islands, France, and other places supply.

The capital locked up in the culture of flowers round about London is enormous, and it is every year increasing. One man whom I could name started twenty years ago with a five-pound note, and now has so much glass that no insurance company could pay for it; and his success is that of many another.

The flowers themselves would be a delightful subject on which to write, but it is of the girls who sell them in our London streets, and who have become a familiar feature there, that I have been asked to tell what I know.

Every new advantage or privilege we enjoy brings with it its corresponding duty. Without the abundance of flowers for the millions we should not require flower-girls in our streets; and being there, it is our bounden duty to learn what their condition is, and if peculiar trials and temptations beset them in their calling, to find out what is being done to help them to resist.

We wish we could present them to your notice in a more picturesque garb, such, for example, as that adopted by many of their sisters on the Continent. We hope the time may not be far distant when the dirty woollen shawl, which covers, I fear, a multitude of shortcomings, and the hat with its coarse prominent feathers, may be discarded for a dress more in harmony with the lovely flowers in their baskets. Efforts have been made in this direction, but without success. Mr. Groom some time ago tried to reform their dress. He clothed ten women and fifty girls among the flower-sellers in print dresses, black jackets, and straw hats. They were placed under the protection of the police, who did their best for them; but they had to stand where they did not interfere with the traffic—they therefore could sell nothing. He supplied them with penny, twopenny, and threepenny "button-holes"; but the gentlemen gave them frequently threepence for a penny one, and sixpence for a threepenny one, and this led to dishonesty; and still further, the other flower-sellers frightened them, and took their good flowers from them and gave them bad and faded ones instead. Altogether the attempt was a failure.

Neither will the flower-girls wear the special dress provided for them at Bayswater, and for which they pay a shilling a week, unless it pays them to do so.

If only a pretty costume could be secured, our streets would look as cheery again; but we must not forget while condemning the dress—and I am afraid the manners as well—that some of the flower-girls in their incongruous robes are veritable heroines; and if we knew them intimately, we should be amazed at their power of endurance and self-sacrifice.

Mr. Groom, who has devoted the last twenty-five years of his life to these small street-traders, has given me some very touching instances of this. One especially interested me. It was of a flower-girl named Mary, fifteen years of age, and the eldest of five children. The father had just died, and the mother was very ill, and not expected to recover. He tried to persuade this girl to go to service; but in vain. Her answer to him was, "What will the children do if mother dies? No, sir; I'm goin' to keep 'em," and this he assures me she does. She buys and sells her flowers and keeps the home together; she sends the children to school and waits upon the mother, and effects this almost entirely by her own exertions.

And there are scores of them who are keeping widowed mothers and younger children, and nobly fighting against the sins and temptations which beset them in their daily work, and who, by their quiet and good behaviour, secure police protection and create a regular custom among residents and passers-by.

You have only to watch the flower-girls to perceive that they include many classes and many phases of life; their calling is one of

extreme hardship and temptation, and the long hours of work would never be tolerated if they were not self-imposed. At four o'clock in the summer and at six in the winter mornings they must be in the market, and from that time till ten or eleven at night their work is incessant. The hard part of it is that so much time is of necessity wasted before the majority of them can make their purchases; they have only a small capital, and must look about and watch for the opportunity of laying it out well. Great caution is needed in buying—prices may rise or fall, the prospect of the day, wet or fine, has to be considered, for these girls are as much dependent upon the sun for success as is the butterfly for life.

Their ambition is to secure the best flowers which are left when the West-End dealers have had their pick of the market. As soon as these have gone, the flower-girls step in and select with the utmost care those which are most likely to please their customers.

The routine of market life is a little interfered with at the season for red roses, which are such universal favourites and are so plentiful. They are grown principally in and about Enfield and Edmonton, and being somewhat fragile, they will not bear cutting overnight; so at the first appearance of dawn the growers and their workpeople are in the fields, where there are thousands of rose trees. Here they cut and tie the best roses in bunches, while those of second quality are put loose into paper bags. All this is done as rapidly as possible, and with fast horses and ponies the growers race to market, which place, however, many of the roses never reach.

The flower-girls know the route, so they tramp five or six miles from London on the road to meet them, thinking nothing of the extra fatigue so that they get the flowers; and in this way they buy up nearly all the stock. With the few remaining the growers appear in the market a little after five in the morning, to find hundreds of women and girls awaiting their arrival with anxiety; and great is the pushing and struggling for the little stock left, for the red rose in all its freshness never fails to attract customers.

As I have said there are many classes among the street flower-sellers; formerly they used to be poor but respectable middle-aged women; but now, during the season, every girl who will not brook service, and who for many reasons is out of work, and who will suffer anything to enjoy liberty, rushes into the flower-selling trade, thereby damaging it for the regular flower-girls who pursue it all the year round, and who are very superior to these intruders.

There are the more respectable women, who, with all kinds of cut flowers, sit in the West-End thoroughfares to sell to ladies requiring them for drawing and dining-rooms. These are the cream, so to say, of the flower-girls, and as such enjoy all the advantages.

With the more fortunate must be classed those who are permitted to sit round the statue at the Royal Exchange and such favoured spots—a privilege jealously guarded, and considered as an heirloom.

Then there is the simple button-hole seller—the girl who stands at railway stations, music-halls, and busy corners from morning until far into the night.

And again, there are the little children sent forth by brutal guardians to beg or sell flowers, in fact, to do anything so that they bring back to them money.

The streets are places of great temptation to

girls, especially the pretty ones, and result either in very early marriages, or in dispensing with that ceremony altogether.

The remark has been made that the class of flower-girls in our streets never seems to improve, and that it remains at one dead level. This is accounted for by the fact that a respectable girl never stays in the streets when by steady perseverance she has saved enough to open a little shop. We could give several instances of girls who have got on and opened shops, and are now not only subscribers to the mission that helped them in their early days of struggle, but supply the Homes in connection with the mission with fruits, vegetables, and flowers at cost price. Some of these girls who commenced trade in our streets as flower-sellers have now a good banking account, the result of their industry and respectability; but I am bound to say that the majority of those who have thus succeeded are teetotallers.

The opinion of those well acquainted with them is, that one of the flower-girls is worth any six men in the market, both in the matter of selling and in setting out her stall or basket. "Why," said one of the growers to me, "if these girls had to set out a stall of common and ungraceful whelks, they would arrange it prettily, and decorate it with parsley so that one must pause to admire it."

While many of the flower-girls are repaying a hundredfold the interest taken in them, the character of the majority is deteriorating. Drink, miserable homes, associating with women who are not good, are all doing their work of stamping out God's image in their hearts. Certain of these women employ children and young girls who have lost their own little capital, to sell for them on commission, paying them a penny, twopenny, or threepence on the shilling, as the case may be.

The little ones thus employed are for the most part ragged, neglected, helpless little figures, and are as a consequence the most successful sellers; for who can withstand the pathetic contrast they present to the beautiful works of nature in their hands?

The result of this is that these children become the slaves of their inhuman task-masters, and they learn to trade on their own account, thereby losing the chance of respectable service.

The streets are hard teachers for little ones; they become old very early in life, and the cold of winter, added to the drink which, alas! finds its way to their lips, brings on sickness and starvation, and they find their way into the poor-house when Death delays its claim.

Many of these have been rescued, and are being well cared for by the mission of which the Earl of Aberdeen is the president, and Mr. Groom the hon. superintendent. I hope to give some interesting stories of the little ones thus rescued in another chapter.

All is not so dark as this in the lives of the flower-girls, neither are all the homes wretched, as I hope to show. Most of them are very poor, but many are scrupulously clean. The respectable among the flower-sellers set aside Monday as a rule for scrubbing and cleaning up their homes and doing the washing and mending for themselves and their little ones.

The next chapter will be an account of an early morning spent by us with the flower-girls in Covent Garden market, and a late evening with them as they sold their flowers outside the Angel at Islington.

(To be continued.)



required that this ceremony be gone through on the day of marriage—any time during the first three months of marriage is sufficient: therefore anyone possessing such a cup will be able to collect all the signatures of her friends who have lately married. Some of the old cups made for these bridal cups were shaped like a woman holding above her head a small bowl on a movable hinge. This shape of cup was made that the bride and bridegroom should drink at the same moment out of it—the bridegroom from a hole made in the head of the figure, or from the cup made by the skirts of the woman—which was reversed and carefully filled with wine—and the bride from the bowl with the movable hinge.

To make a suitable case for a bridal cup, it is necessary to shape the size of it in strong cardboard or millboard, and sew a circle of cardboard into this as a bottom, and make the lid of a circle of cardboard and a narrow strip of cardboard. The lid overlaps the lower part to the depth of two inches, and should be made large enough to do so when lined, and deep enough to hold the book without its interfering with the cup. Having made the foundation, cover it on the inside with a lining of satin mervilleux, and on the outside carefully glue on the leather. Let it fully dry before ornamenting it with painting. For the background use silver and gold paints, running the two together, but not covering the whole surface. Buy a little pure parchment size and mix it with the silver and gold powders, and paint it carefully on to the leather.

If you have by you any of the little ornamental punches used in repoussé brass-work, a few impressions of stars, *fleurs de lis*, etc., look well punched in by their aid over the gold and silver surface. Having finished the background, paint in the design with water-colours, mixed largely with Chinese white to render them opaque, and with aquarelle as a medium to strengthen and harden the colours. The background of gold should be under the coloured design, but it should be left plain, not stamped, the stamping being used here and there about the plainer parts in small wedges of ornamentation, not in solitary stamps. The lid

of the box is gilded and silvered, and ornamented with a motto or quaint saying, such as, "Good luck to the bride," "Peace and plenty to all," "God grant all who drink health and happiness." These letters are painted in black and red, and should be made distinct, although the lettering should be quaint. The stamping down of the background looks well upon the top of the lid, where should also appear the monogram of the owner. When the work is complete and well dried, preserve the colouring by passing a very thin coating of leather varnish over the outside. This varnish looks quite brown, but if thinly applied, does not dim the colouring.

Large chamois-leather skins, and sometimes several skins neatly joined together by a saddler, are required for such articles as tablecloths, splashboards, and panels. Tablecloths are embroidered and the others painted. The splashboard shown in Fig. 9 requires two large skins to make it, with an edging of dark leather or of furniture plush. The background is painted in tints of blue, shading down into rose-red and yellow (the colours of a sunset), the bamboo tree entirely in grey tones with some of the prominent leaves black; the pepper-tree with its berries in natural tints, the peppers red and pink, the leaves dark green. The little birds upon its branches are coloured black and white. The painting is the better for a wash of varnish if it is used as a splashboard, but not if it is intended for a

panel that will not suffer from damp, as varnish, however carefully applied, always gives a shiny look to the articles it preserves.

Besides painting and embroidery, chamois leather lends itself as a background to scorched or burnt-wood engraving. The modern revival of the old Dutch poker-work, with improved instruments and patterns, has opened out a new and distinct class of decoration, but this decoration, from its nature, has been almost exclusively confined to various kinds of wood. The hot needle that is the operator's tool needs a hard resisting substance to work upon; and no highly-finished design, with deeply-burnt down background or outline lines, can be successfully produced without such a background. But outline subjects of no great depth are perfectly easily executed upon chamois leather, and are well worth the trouble, as they are more suitable for the decoration of music portfolios, book covers, blotting pads, and letter cases, than either embroidery or water-colour painting.

The designs are not far to seek; every child's magazine is replete with outline sketches of animal and bird life; every artistic paper, and even the advertisements used by such art shops as Liberty's, are full of quaint sketches of Chinese life, or sprays of delicate flowers, branches of pine trees adorned with their cones, chestnuts peeping from their well-defined leaves, groups of Japanese maidens at play, monkeys hanging by their tails from tree branches, or owls and bats flying across their

only friend, the moon. Given but the "seeing eye," and there is no difficulty in obtaining patterns; while for the more gifted workers, an original design will always be well shown off upon this background. When using burnt-wood implements upon the leather, it is necessary to keep the needle fairly cool (this is done by not working the air-pump quickly). The lines that are required are even and thin, not deeply scored in, and not showing rough edges. The whole pattern is done in outline, and for shading or background nothing more is desired but a little cross-hatching worked in very lightly.

B. C. SAWARD.

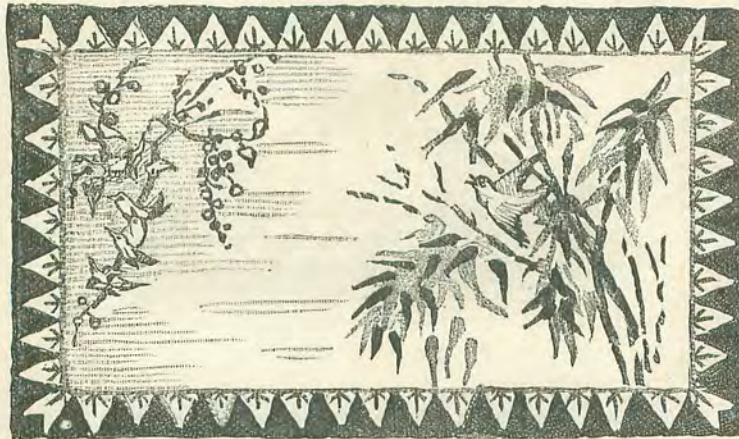


FIG. 9.—SPASHBOARD.

## THE FLOWER-GIRLS OF LONDON.

By EMMA BREWER.

### CHAPTER II.

EARLY MORNING AT COVENT GARDEN AND LATE EVENING AT ISLINGTON WITH THE FLOWER-GIRLS.

"Many a little maid to be seen in the flower-market in the early hours of morning would, on enquiry, turn out to be a genuine heroine, and the mainstay of her family."

"If you want really to know anything about the flower-girls, you must be in Covent Garden soon after sunrise," said one of the growers to us; "but it will be rough work pushing in and out of the crowds, and I dare say it would answer quite as well if we wholesale people were to tell you what we know about them."

This, however, did not suit our purpose; we were, of course, very glad to obtain reliable information, but it must be in addition to, and not instead of, our personal experience.

We wanted to learn the habits and manners of these girls, and make their acquaintance in the early morning, as they came to market with their little capital to lay it out to the best possible advantage.

The next day being Saturday, the very busiest market morning of the week, we resolved to take the grower's advice, and join the assemblage of men, women, and children whose battle for life begins before London proper opens its eyes.

It seemed like getting up in the middle of the night, all was so still within and without. The sun alone appeared to have begun its daily work, and as it poured in at our window,

served to remind us that we must at once bestir ourselves if we meant to carry out our plan.

So without loss of time we were up and dressed, and after drinking a cup of hot coffee, were in the street making our way to Covent Garden.

How quiet and fresh London was at that early hour! No one astir, no danger in crossing the roads except for one or two persons with the passion of tricycling upon them, who might have run us down perhaps; for they, like Jehu, were driving furiously.

Our thoughts as we walked along were much occupied with the flower-girls, whose search for food and independence entailed so much hardship and self-denial, and who yet pursued their course with steady purpose and unflinching courage.

We wondered if these girls were aware of how much they contributed to the general good of the metropolis, and that while scarcely earning bread for themselves, they yet added greatly to the comfort and convenience of the better-off class.

And then, as thoughts will, they carried us back nearly seven hundred years, when Covent Garden belonged to the monks of Westminster, who probably grew flowers within it to adorn their images, as well as salads for their tables.

We were roused from our reverie by the gradual disappearance of quiet and repose, and in their place the busy hum of life and activity made itself felt.

Strings of carts, barrows, donkeys, and baskets began to fill the streets, and men, women, and girls, all intent on business, were making their way to the market; and so great was the crowd, that it was with difficulty we reached the spot where our guide was waiting for us.

Some very sad sights met us on the way. One was that of two children, the elder about eight, the other three or four years of age, looking so tired and sleepy, so forlorn, hungry, and wretched! They had evidently been routed out of some corner or doorway, and, scarcely awake, were moving mechanically on hand-in-hand without noticing any of the passers-by.

Poor little things! How one's heart went out to them! What did they know of the happy spring-time of life, which braces and strengthens for summer and autumn. And without this how useless to expect anything but weeds at harvest-time!

This was no solitary case. One little girl of five years old, on being questioned, said, "I sleeps anywhere, ye know, wherever I sees a door open. In the mornin' I gits a swill at the fountains; and the bakers is kind, they is, an' I asks 'em for a bit o' bread."

These sights are of daily occurrence in our London streets at early morning.

Punctually at the time appointed we were at the market; and certainly it was a sight we on no account would have missed. It seemed as though Nature had poured forth in that one spot of her abundance everything that was pleasant to the eyes and good for food.

A writer,\* now passed away, described Covent Garden market as "the metropolitan congress of the vegetable kingdom, where every department of the growing and the blowing world has its representatives—the useful and the ornamental, the needful and the superfluous, the esculent and the medicinal."

To an outsider the scene in and around the flower-market was one of wild confusion; but with a few explanations from our guide we were able to see the undercurrent of order and business, and that each person in the crowd seemed to know exactly what he or she wanted, and where to get it when the proper moment came for purchasing. There were wholesale growers presiding over their departments within the market, while the higglers, or middlemen, had their stalls without, and the costers and flower-girls were everywhere. There was also a sprinkling of visitors; not many, however, for it requires some effort and a good deal of self-denial to be there for the grand sight in early morning.

It was evident to us that the majority of people in the market were there for business and not pleasure.

About ten thousand people on an average attend Covent Garden on a busy day, and of these some two or three thousand are flower-girls. The number of flower-sellers varies, of course, with the season—and the state of the market.

Mr. Groom has on his books the names and

addresses of eight hundred *bonâ-fide* flower-sellers, but at Christmas-time there will not be more than two or three hundred in all London. Then in the spring and summer the number will rise to some three thousand, while on days like April 19th the sellers are not to be counted.

As we looked round the market there was no mistaking one class at least of the flower-girls—the well-known feathered Gainsboro' hat, coarse apron, and woollen shawl were conspicuous everywhere, both at the stalls of the wholesale dealers and those of the middlemen.

Some of the girls and elderly women among the flower-sellers were quietly dressed, and it was interesting to follow them as they moved about, leaving no stall unexamined. Their searching eyes seemed to take in every characteristic of the day's supplies; and a question is asked here and there—"How much?" "Three" would be the answer: this meant three shillings a dozen bunches. Few words was the feature of all the transactions, I found. The retort would be hurled back, "Chaff, Mr. —. How can a girl make anything out of that?"

Again, we came upon another with business-like aspect, bargaining for a large supply of China asters; another, pointing to some exquisite Gloire de Dijon roses, asked, "How much these Glories?" and hearing the price, said with a sigh, "Well, you are hard!" But for the first hour or so we saw very few purchases made. Still there were some who could not afford the time to wait for the lowering of the prices, and I watched them walk away to Beckwith's, to Werner's, and to others, and was astonished to see how much money they laid out. These were what were called the tip-top of the flower-girls, to whom time meant everything. They must be in their places with baskets dressed and "button-holes" made up in time to catch gentlemen coming in by the early trains and girls going to houses of business, whose little extravagance is a bright flower in the body of their dress. These flower-girls will spend as much as seven pounds in one morning, and having made their purchases, move rapidly out of the market, for they must walk every step of the journey home, be it near or distant—it is much too early for any conveyance.

We made special acquaintance with two of the respectable elderly class, one of whom had attended the market for more than thirty-five years, and the other had scarcely ever been absent since she was fourteen. The former, a teetotaler, told us she had been a widow for twelve years, had brought up eight children, was always in the market at four o'clock, never had breakfast till half-past eight, and was out selling until after ten at night! What a life!

This morning she was in a very happy frame of mind—the grower had asked three shillings for a dozen bunches of sweet peas, and she had succeeded in getting them for one shilling and sixpence.

I asked her what she expected to make on this quantity.

"Well, ma'am, I'll tell you. If I sell them all at fourpence a bunch, I'll make two and sixpence on the lot; but p'raps people won't be in a buying humour to-day—it's all a chance."

Moving on, I observed a girl buying a large quantity of flowers, so I asked her if she had been in luck lately, that she had so much money to spend. "No, lady," she answered, "I am buying for three other girls as well as for myself, to save them from coming to the market, for they have a deal to do at home, and I can't wait to buy cheap, because I've a good way to go; and then we have to share before we can make up." "How are you going to get home," I asked, "with that heavy basket?" "Get two penn'orth of Underground, and walk the rest," was her answer.

We made a point of asking every girl with

whom we spoke where the flowers unsold during the day were kept at night, for it had come to our knowledge that many would-be purchasers were deterred by the thought that flowers were kept under the beds or in dirty rooms, and were consequently propagators of disease.

So to each one we said, "If you only buy flowers three times a week, what do you do with those remaining? Do you keep them in your rooms or under your beds?"

"Lor, ma'am," was the answer, "that's just nonsense. Why, they'd die in an hour if we did that; our rooms ain't fit for things like them. We can do with a deal less air than they can. You are wrong, too, lady, in another way. We buy flowers every day. When it is not market morning, we buy at the auctions or of the higglers, and we have only money enough to look after one day at the time."

"Yes," we persisted; "but if you have any left, what do you do with them?"

"Why, we put them in a cool wash-house and cover them with a damp apron, if you must know."

It was drawing near to eight o'clock, and several of the girls were leaving their baskets in care of a woman, to whom each gave a penny, and made their way to the flower-girls' early breakfast and club room at Lockhart's, close by.

Through the kindness of this firm a large, light, well-ventilated room is placed at the disposal of the Mission at a small cost from five o'clock till nine on market mornings. We followed, of course, and found about a hundred and twenty girls of all ages resting quietly, while they partook of a good breakfast of coffee, cocoa, and bread and butter; and best of all, there was a kind friend (Mr. Sullivan) present, who knew most of them, and was no stranger to their troubles and difficulties, for he was the missionary, and he lost no opportunity of speaking good and kind words to them. For those who were very poor he paid the twopenny\* for breakfast on behalf of the Flower-girl Mission. Formerly, there was but the public-house for them to rest in, and a little gin sufficed for their breakfast. This room was a blessed change indeed.

Soon a general move was made, for it wanted but half an hour to the closing of the flower-market, and it was this they had been waiting for—it was their opportunity of buying cheap.

Before following these girls back to the market, we spoke to Mr. Sullivan, who promised to meet us outside the Angel at Islington that same night, between eight and nine, to see how the flowers were selling, and who were the purchasers in that neighbourhood.

What an interesting study it was to watch these girls while they made their purchases. Their capital was very limited, and their anxiety and eagerness to do the best they could with it was intense. Some had only a few pence, others a few shillings; but it was their all, and on it depended their livelihood. In many cases we learned that the girl was the sole bread-winner of the family; in others, we saw a deserted wife, or one with a drunken husband—many of them had what is called a history.

Having exchanged their capital for a few fading flowers, they hurried away to their various posts, east, west, north, and south of London, with the full burden of life pressing heavily upon them; for all are aware of the uncertainty of the day's prospects—a rainy day, a fog, or biting wind, may mean the absolute loss of capital and stock-in-trade. The life of the honest, struggling flower-girl is one of constant care and anxiety, and demands our fullest sympathy.

\* Last year the Flower-Girl Mission spent £170 on breakfasts.

\* Charles Lamb Kenney.

As the clock struck nine the market closed, and very little was left on the stalls; the flower-girls and the costers had pretty well cleared them.

From the highest authorities we learn that on an average £5,000 is spent daily in London for flowers during the season, and of this about one-tenth, or £500, is sold by the flower-girls in the streets.

The growers being a little less busy now, we were able to have a talk with them. They gave it as their opinion, that the flower-girls on the whole were well-behaved, but that the young ones had not the good manners of the older ones; they were fond of dress, drink, and music-halls, and spent recklessly what they gained with so much difficulty.

"Are they good customers of yours?" we asked.

"Well, yes, about the best, take them all round; their need of flowers is regular, and they clear our stalls."

"Lord Shaftesbury was right," said one of them, "when, at a public meeting at St. James's Hall, he declared that the best thanks of Londoners were due to the flower-girls and costers," though the pride of the former would be hurt if they were linked with the latter, for notwithstanding that they accost in the street and sell perishable goods, they refuse to be classed with costers.

The evening came, and with the missioner as our guide, we made the personal acquaintance of the many flower-girls who occupy spots within a quarter of a mile of the Angel at Islington.

Most of them had still a good many flowers on hand, but the pavements were crowded, and the majority of the passers-by cast a long-ing look at the prettily made-up bunches. As we approached a girl of about eighteen, she said, "Please, lady, buy some flowers! I have been more than an hour trying to sell this two-penny bunch," and then, as she saw our companion, her face brightened, and she addressed him with, "Hallo! Mr. Sullivan."

"How have you been getting on?" was his question.

"I have been out all day, and only sold a shilling's worth. See what a lot I've got in my

basket. But I do hope I'll sell them before I go home."

She told me that some days she made as much as two or three shillings; but then on others she did not nearly get back what she had laid out in the morning.

A little further on sat three or four women making up tempting little bunches and button-holes; the youngest of them had two little children near her playing about under her eye. "Are you their mother?" I asked. "Yes, lady; and I have a baby two months old at home," she answered cheerfully. "What do you do with them on market mornings?" I enquired. "Leave 'em sound asleep mostly," was her reply.

"Who are your best customers on a Saturday night?" was my next question. "The poor man's wife, who always manages a penny or two for flowers of a Sunday." One of the other women broke in, "Sunday is visiting day at the hospitals, and everybody that can takes their relations a flower." "But who are the buttonholes for?" was my next. "Oh, you wait and see. They are bought by young men who want to look smart when they walk out with their young women on Sunday."

"When do you find time to look after your homes?" "Most of us who can, stay at home of a Monday and clean up and do our bit of washing. We can't do much of a Sunday—we are so tired." Of course these answers were jerked out in between the cries of "A penny a bunch!—penny a bunch!" or "See these lovely flowers—only threepence a market bunch!"

A little further on we came upon a very respectable woman sitting before a large stall, one half being filled with buttonholes, the other with good-sized bunches. She was assisted by a meek-looking man—her husband. She evidently had a belief in her calling, and had prospered. She had occupied the same place for many years, and had regular customers among the ladies of the neighbourhood. Several working-men who had just received their wages, we noticed, stopped at her stall to buy six pennyworth of flowers. "Would it be rude," I asked, "if I were to enquire about how much you can make in a week by selling flowers?"

"Well, no," she answered. "When I earn—that is clear—twenty-five shillings a week, I think I have done well. On an average I make about fifteen."

"Do you sell all through the year?" "Yes, it is my business, and I love flowers. I should not be good for anything else."

"Have you any children?" "No, ma'am; and I'm glad, for they'd interfere with the flowers dreadfully. If you want to know anything about the flower-girls you should go to the tip-tops, and not come here."

"But are not you one of the tip-tops?" I asked. "Well, no, I shouldn't say that. I've got a good character, and I never cheat; but I shouldn't put myself alongside with the swells that sit round the Exchange, or that sell in Regent Street and Brompton."

"I think you mistake. The girls that sell in Regent Street are not straightforward in their selling; they ask a penny, and get abusive if you do not hand them sixpence." "Well," was her answer, "I'm astonished. I shouldn't have thought you would have had 'catch-pennies' there. I'd like them all to be driven out of the flower trade, for they disgrace it."

While we were speaking with her we noticed, standing a few yards off, a quiet nice-looking girl selling buttonholes, and some young men, not of the most refined class, stood staring and smiling at her in a very rude way. This roused the ire of my nice woman, who called out, "Now what may you be wanting? Flowers? If not, just you move on and make room for them that do." The girl looked gratefully at her. "Who is she?" I enquired. "Well, she isn't used to it, you see; but she's a good girl, and taking her mother's place to-night." And so from one to another we went, hearing and seeing many pathetic things both among sellers and purchasers.

As we walked along I told Mr. Sullivan that we should like to see the homes of the flower girls; some of the best and some of the worst; and this we have since done; and in the next chapter, which will be the last, I hope to tell you something of the homes, and what is being done to raise the flower-girl.

(To be concluded.)

## GRANNIE'S GINGHAM;

OR,

## MAKING THE BEST OF IT.

By Mrs. G. LINNÆUS BANKS, Author of "God's Providence House," "The Manchester Man," "Miss Pringle's Pearls," etc.

### CHAPTER II.

FORTUNATELY for the village, which possessed no fire engine, Martin's house stood aloof from others, a space being left for building a corresponding house and shop against it, otherwise the whole of the street might have been down.

As it was, though the blacksmith broke in the shop-door with his sledge-hammer, the blazing roof fell in so speedily little was rescued from the pitiless destroyer beyond the poor man's working bench and tools, the skins by his cutting board, a small pile of wooden lasts, and as many pairs of new boots as could be hastily swept together before the raging furnace in the back room burst with a roar through the glass door upon the friendly salvors.

House, home, stock, furniture, all were gone, or lying half consumed in one indiscriminate wreck of blackened brick and incinerated timber.

And he, the owner, the husband, the prop and support of all, he was pretty nearly gone too.

Catherine Colbeck had ample reason now for wringing her hands and lamentation.

Had the village doctor not been called up that night, or had he been detained half-an-hour longer with his patient, he would not have beheld from the bend of the road Mike's figure, framed as it were by the window against a fiery background, or have been on the spot when Martin leapt and fell.

A prompt man, though brusque, he ordered, and was obeyed.

"Some of you women take the man's wretched wife away," he cried hastily, and was down on his knees in an instant, setting the fractured limb with an impromptu splint and his own handkerchief, by the glare of his unfortunate patient's burning home, and at the same time making the sad discovery that the poor fellow's burns were more serious than the breakage.

"He must be removed at once to Moor-cross Hospital. Who has a long sofa-cushion handy? He cannot lie here. The walls may fall."

Every door was open, every hand ready and willing to help. There was no delay in improvising a stretcher, or to find wadding to cover the burned man from the air, or in raising volunteers to carry him the five long miles round the shoulder of the moor when Mr. Forster gave the word.

"Stay!" said he, as they were raising Martin's softened litter from the ground; "where is the lad I beheld at the back window?"

"Hegh, doctor, th' lad's deead! Brunt to a cinder ere this," was answered with a sorrowful shake of the head.

"Nay, nay. The lad escaped. I saw him."

"You saw him?" was echoed in amaze. There was a general rush; the boy was found moaning and writhing under a tottering wall. Hands were prompt and feet quick to bear him away. But the bearers held their breath, and whispered, "It was a close shave." For where he had lain, barely a minute before, the space was piled with red-hot bricks and smoking rafters.

## THE FLOWER-GIRLS OF LONDON.

BY EMMA BREWER.

## CHAPTER III.

## THEIR HOMES AND THEIR FRIENDS.

"Our firesides must be our sanctuaries, our refuge from misfortunes."—*Goldsmith.*

"On errands full of love."—*K. Phillips.*



THE flower-girls of London are not particularly clan- nish, and do not congregate in any special district. Their homes are in all quarters of our great city; and there is no doubt that their personal character is affected and influenced by the district in which they work, and in which their home is

situate. For example, those who sit in front of the Exchange, and those who sell in Brompton, are regarded as the aristocracy of flower-sellers, because in their speech and manner they reflect those of the people among whom they work, and are self-respecting. On the other hand, the sellers in Tottenham Court Road and Drury Lane are extremely rough. They are called "Catch-pennies"—a term of contempt for those who are not fair and upright in their dealings, and the flower-girls, as a class, avoid them.

Respectable neighbourhoods will not have them, and the consequence is, they are driven to herd with the worst characters, dwelling in the lowest of our courts and alleys.

Here they feel it is quite unnecessary to pull themselves together; there is no high standard to work up to; in fact, they seem to take delight in crushing out any self-respect or good left in them.

It may be a matter of surprise that there is a yet poorer and lower class of flower-girls, who look up to these "Catch-pennies" as great "swells." They live for the most part in the worst sheds and courts of Spitalfields, and it would be difficult to find anywhere poverty so grinding, home-life so degrading, as among these.

In a girl's bringing up, the home is always a very important influence for good or for evil, and if some of those we have visited—pictures of wretchedness, want, and depravity—could be laid open to public gaze, there would scarcely be a dry eye among the beholders, that any of England's women and girls should be so lodged, or know so little of the meaning of the word *comfort*—it might as well not be in our language, for anything they know of its reality.

A well-regulated home is a blessing few of the flower-girls have experienced; from the time of their birth their lives have been marked by an utter absence of sunshine, hope, and happiness. There has been nothing to teach them thrift, and as to providing for what is called a "rainy day" it seems never to have entered into their minds. Their homes, instead of being refuges from misfortunes, are in many cases the cause of them.

Going about among the flower-girls confirms our early impression that they include many classes and many phases of life; therefore, one sweeping description, either of them or of their homes, would be unfair. It is better to give our experience of individual cases.

Those whose occupations have taken them daily to the City from their youth until now

must have noticed a neat, respectable little woman at the corner of Cheapside and St. Paul's. She took her stand there in the early days of womanhood, some forty years ago, and, except in times of sickness, was never absent. She commenced by selling fruit only, and continued to do so for fifteen years. But fashions change, and people began to care more to please the eye than to gratify the appetite. She, being a clever little woman, and alive to the requirements of the public, offered flowers instead of fruit, and many a City merchant paused before her prettily arranged basket to get a fresh rose or carnation in exchange for a sixpence. She was one of the earliest and most respectable of our flower-girls, and brought up quite a little army of street-sellers. Three of her daughters sold flowers round Queen Anne's statue for ten years and then married; but the fourth girl always stood by her mother.

The question has often been asked, "What has become of our Cheapside flower-girl?" We will tell you. She is stone-blind, the result of an accident while rescuing a child from danger, and is kept in comfort by the fourth girl, who is the breadwinner and caretaker of the home. There is a father, but he is prevented from earning money by rheumatism.

She is one of the good flower-girls, who raises the standard of her associates, and is looked up to by them with respect.

We went to see her home, situate in one of the courts of the west centre of London. It was scrupulously clean, and not without ornament; the walls were adorned with good engravings, and the shelves on each side of the fireplace filled with crockery, and the teapot on the hob, ready for tea, gave the finishing touch to the room.

The chief ornament, though, to my mind, was the girl in her perfectly-fitting black dress, without ornament, looking so calm, self-possessed, and restful. We wondered how she could consent to disguise herself in the very ugly flower-girl costume.

Seeing her at home, we enquired why she was not at her post in the City. She explained that where she stands she can only sell the best roses, and as these were scarce and dear at the morning's market, she saw that no profit could be made, and was glad of the time at home to clean up. Pointing to the bed in the room we said, "Do you ever keep your flowers under it at night?"

"No, I could not afford to do so," was her answer, "for they would die before morning. I generally sell what I have left at the end of the afternoon, at cost price, to those girls who do the night-work outside the theatres and music-halls."

One of the physicians of Westminster Hospital, a short time since, was asked as a favour to go and see a flower-girl living in the neighbourhood who was very ill, and in whom many of the residents in Westminster took a deep interest.

He was not unacquainted with the flower-girls, for some half-dozen of them regularly frequent the steps of the hospital, and make a very good thing of it on visiting days, when visitors like to have flowers to give to their sick friends and relations, and he thought probably it was one of these he was asked to see.

Going to the address which had been put into his hand, he found the room in which the sick woman lay, very clean and not devoid of comfort. The woman herself was evidently much respected, for she lacked neither kind

friends to look after her, nor the little delicacies so necessary to sick people.

She was a stranger to him, about thirty-five years of age, and had sold flowers in the streets ever since she could remember, and for many years past had had regular customers among the residents of Westminster. By her modest manner and upright dealing she had won her way into the hearts of the kind people whom she served, and they had presented her with a donkey and truck. She was steadily making her way to a position of comfort and independence when she was struck down by sickness and death.

Instead of dying in squalor and loneliness, as many a flower-girl does, she was surrounded by friends who really cared for her, and who really sorrowed at the thought of losing her.

But all the homes we visited were not models of cleanliness and comfort. Let us take you to one in Long Acre, occupied by a mother and daughter, who are very poor but clean. They are out all day selling flowers, and when they come home they never omit to clean their room. True, there is very little in it to clean, for their worldly goods consist of two old chairs and a broken table. There is neither bed nor bedstead—their food is rarely anything but tea and bread. If they happen to have a few extra halfpence, after paying the three shillings and sixpence rent, they go into Lockhart's or some such place for a meal.

There are some very dirty wretched homes about Gray's Inn Road inhabited by flower-girls. Look at this one room; it belongs to a cripple who has six children, and a husband worse than useless, for he is a drunkard. She struggles on, selling flowers in the streets, and almost dying as she stands. Her room is dirty and slovenly, as if she had lost all hope. Is it wonderful that in such a place the children are always ill?

We would mention one in Bermondsey, very poor and utterly devoid of comfort, occupied by a woman who has sold flowers on London Bridge for thirty-three years, eighteen of which she has been a widow. She keeps her mother, who is over eighty, and, to use her own quaint expression, "has lingered" up seven children. She said that try as she might they were often without a proper meal for days together. Is it strange that there is no money to buy soap, brush, and pail?

Then there is another flower-girl in St. Luke's—a hard-struggling, persevering, little body, who never, as she expresses it, lifts herself out of the gutter. She gave birth, a few days since, to a baby, and there was neither food, raiment, nor covering for either mother or baby in the room until the mission woman went to them, summoned thither by her husband.

And now for some of the flower-girls' homes in the East-end of London. We must apologise for them. They are not fit for you to put your heads into, neither is the neighbourhood safe for you to walk in unattended. They are situate in some of the worst parts of Spitalfields. Young men and maidens, old men and children, herd together in one room without self-respect or decency, and the hardships which these flower-girls undergo is beyond our power to tell.

We have just witnessed the leave-taking of over a hundred missionaries, who are starting to distant parts of the earth to carry the message of salvation to the heathen. Will they find anywhere on the face of the earth vice more hideous, lives more miserable and wretched, than we can show them here?

Let the missionaries go by all means, and our prayers shall be theirs; but do not leave unattended the cry which goes up from our own people, and from our very midst, as if it did not matter what became of them.

We have just met a number of the Spitalfields flower-girls at tea: they came in one by one as they finished selling, till they numbered eighteen. They were of ages varying from fourteen to sixteen, and many of them would have been good-looking but for the deep lines of care about their faces. They had been invited specially to meet us; and as they gradually became rested and chatty, we had the opportunity of hearing what they thought of themselves and of the public in general.

If society holds a bad opinion of the flower-girls, it is nothing compared to what they think of society.

"Why," said one, "the swells ain't got a bit o' heart. They pushes us out of the way as if we was pizen if we ask 'em to buy a flower. They're a bad lot!"

When we suggested that they were troublesome sometimes in the way they pressed their flowers upon people, she said, "Pr'aps we are, but we must get enough to pay the lodging-house, and to get a bit o' bread. It ain't nice, lady, to sleep out o' nights, and that we often have to do."

Turning to another—"What time were you out this morning?" "At five o'clock." "Where do you buy the flowers?" "Most days at Edmonton." "But that is a long way!" "Yes, but I gets 'em cheaper and fresher." "What have you earned to-day?" "Sixpence"—taking out the pence and showing me. "But you have only fivepence halfpenny." "I was so awful hungry I wouldn't stop till to-night, and I bought a ha'p'orth o' cake." "Who's that nice-looking girl over there?" "She's my sister. I don't let her go out of a mornin'; I start her when I get home." "Where does she sell?" "In Leman Street, Whitechapel." "But surely that's a bad street for her to stand in?" "Why, lady, I chooses that street 'cause its a deal more safe for a girl than the West-end." "How so?" "Why, all the people take care of her, and won't let nobody do her harm as she stands selling. But if I took her to the West-end, the club gents would be offerin' her drink. Oh, she's a deal safer our way."

To another—"Can you read and write?" "No," she said fiercely; "I can't do neither one nor t'other." "Do you live at home with your mother?" "I dunno my mother, and I ain't got no 'ome." "Where do you sleep?" "At the common lodgin'-house when I scrapes fourpence for a bed." "And when you have no money, what then?" "I sleeps where I can."

While speaking to this girl, who was like an untamed savage, the other girls were evidently on the alert, and as I asked my next question—"How, then, do you get your clothes?" there was a dead silence, as if one and all felt ashamed of what the answer might be, and they were evidently relieved when she said, "I ain't a-go'in' to say."

Turning to two girls, I asked if they had a home and parents. "Yes," was the answer; "but t'ain't much of a home neither, 'cause its small, and there's father and mother, us two, and a little 'un, and two men lodgers! When we come to see Sister Bessie of an evenin', she lets us sleep sometimes, we are that tired!"

The flower-girls, one and all, are fond of singing hymns, and before we wished them good-night they sang us some of their favourites, one being, "God be with you till we meet again."

A lady, paying a visit to these very girls a short time since, thought to give them pleasure by sitting down to the piano and playing some dance music, and one or two

popular songs. The girls bore it for a little time, and then called out peremptorily, "Shut up! We don't want that stuff. Play us some hymns." "Oh," said the lady, crestfallen, "I thought you liked variety."

They, misunderstanding her, said, "No, we don't go in for the 'V'riety" (Variety Music-hall); "it costs twopence."

We had a long talk with Sister Bessie, who loves these poor Spitalfields flower-girls, and we asked if it were true that the West-end presented so many more temptations and dangers to the girls than the East. Think of our surprise when she said, "After the questions you put to me the other day, I resolved to see for myself what the life of the flower-girl is in the streets at night; so I dressed myself in the usual costume, the girls bought me a shilling's worth of flowers, wired them, and arranged them prettily for me, and at nine o'clock I started for Charing Cross. My girls were full of anxiety for me, and gave me full directions. And think of the pathos of it—the little ones wanted to go with me to protect me, a woman twice their age and size. But although this was out of the question, I could not prevent their waiting about in the streets of Spitalfields to see that I reached home all right. I was out three hours, and cleared fourpence; but I know of nothing in the world that would tempt me to repeat the experiment."

Some day we may give that three hours' experience, but it would not do to give it here.

We have lifted the curtain and exposed to view one or two of the best and a few of the most wretched of the flower-girls' homes. Is it any wonder that they lack grace in dress and manner, and is it surprising that the street, with God's fresh air blowing through it, is more to them a home than the four walls within which they hide themselves at night? It seems to us wonderful that so many girls are willing to endure such a life of self-denial, hardship, and poverty when respectable service is open to them. But if they are to be helped, and their condition improved, it will not be by forcing them from the life they have chosen into one which is hateful to them: they must be aided in their own way and by one which does not clash with their wild idea of liberty.

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Directly we begin to look into the condition of any class of our London breadwinners, no matter how obscure, we find that someone has been working and caring for them, and standing their friend—unostentatiously it may be but none the less surely, though known only to God and those befriended. It has been thus with the flower-girls. Their condition is, as you see, not enviable, but what it would have been without the friend God sent them some twenty-five years ago, it is impossible to say.

He began by urging the more respectable and good-looking flower-girls to adopt some way of earning a living less exposed to temptation than selling in the streets. He told them of ladies who were willing to receive and teach them to be good servants. The answer hurled back was, "Why, we'd a deal sooner go to prison. No, thankee, sir."

This feeling was and is shared even by the little girls sent out at night to sell or beg, and who are often brutally treated. "Would you learn a trade if by it you could earn a living for yourself and belongings?" was his next question, at which they laughed, and asked in a mocking tone, "Have you any trade to put us to?" Truth to say, he had not at the moment; but after a good deal of anxious thought he decided that as they had nimble fingers, an artistic eye, and a knowledge of the art of grouping colours, artificial flower-making would be the very thing for them. But what of the teacher? Where could one be found

with a thorough knowledge of the trade, and at the same time possessed with a desire of helping these girls? He settled this difficulty by learning the flower-making himself, so that he could supervise the work; and he was fortunate in finding a good and capable woman to place at the head of the workroom. If you want to see a sight that will gladden your hearts, go with us to 12, Clerkenwell Close. In a large airy room—well warmed in winter—are seated some forty or fifty girls round long tables with heaps of delicate pink, white, and yellow petals before them. Earnest, nice-looking girls they are, who seem instinctively to take to the art of forming the leaves and petals of the most delicate flowers.

These were all formerly London flower-girls. The young ones can earn six or seven shillings a week in "the busy," as the mistress briefly put it, and the older ones from thirteen to twenty-five shillings a week; but to gain this every one must work with a will from nine to six o'clock every day. In the first month of their coming to work they are restless, and want to go to the streets again. Not so later on—they are glad to stay, and they do not lose five per cent. of the girls.

Many of the workers are glad to get situations as flower-makers in good shops; and this is easy, as the room has a good reputation. If it were not for letting the good workers go elsewhere, and in their places taking new ones, the business would be self-supporting, and leave a large margin for profit. But Mr. Groom's object is to make the girls self-supporting, and not the business. They supply all London houses, and ship a good many flowers to Australia and America. It was not only a pretty sight, but a very hopeful one. If any would like to go and see it for themselves, Mr. Groom would, I know, gladly welcome them.

One thing we noticed which we have often looked for in vain in philanthropic ventures, and that was, a large book containing every farthing spent and earned, and stated in such a clear manner that it is quite easy for all to understand.

When the time comes for the girls to go into one of the London houses of business, each is provided with a suitable outfit, and she knows that she is expected to do credit to herself and to the friends who have taught her. She begins life afresh, no longer with disadvantages dead against her, but with hope leading her on.

It may interest some to know that the sale of the girls' work during the last year brought in £1,471, against loss of material, wages, management, and teaching, £1,657.

Altogether eight hundred girls have been rendered self-supporting, and who, in this age of competition, are holding their own in the wholesale artificial flower trade and in the open market. Surely this speaks well for their skill and industry. About forty or fifty a year are under training.

So much for the girls between thirteen and seventeen. But what has Mr. Groom, the friend of the flower-girls, done for the poor little children whose lives have been one long misery from their births, and who are sent out at a late hour of the night to beg and to sell in order to satisfy the craving for drink in the parents, to whom they dare not return empty-handed, and who may be seen huddled up on doorsteps and in corners in all weathers? We had heard that some sixty of these were being cared for in the country; but as we never take anything for granted, we took the train to Clacton-on-Sea. We found three pretty cottages side by side but detached, with gardens behind and a meadow in front, and known by the names of flowers. For example, the orphanage is "Primrose," the hospital is "Daisy," the convalescent home is "Buttercup," while the dwelling of the odd man is "Violet."

Each cost £1,000. The sixty-six children lodged and cared for in these cottages are in nearly every case those of flower-girls, and range from the age of eight months to fourteen years. They are not dressed alike, but each in pretty neat suitable clothing. How much we should like you, who have seen them in the streets of London, to look at them now, bearing, we allow, the marks of their early sufferings in their faces, but oh! so very happy. Everything about them is clean, healthy, and pleasant; and over them all the kindest little matron. Let us introduce you to little Sukie, a bright sturdy little child *now* with *grey hair*, who in the first five years of her existence endured such suffering as it is quite impossible to contemplate. Mr. Groom first made her acquaintance in the middle of the night in Oxford Street. She was in the grip of a powerful ferocious-looking man, and her cry of "I ain't got no more" showed him the state

of things. When at length the man flung her off with a kick from his heavy boot, her little basket of flowers had been trampled in the mud. She had literally no home; you have seen her father, and her mother was in prison. This little child had never lain in a bed, and she seemed half frightened when she saw where she was expected to sleep. She curled herself up, pulling the clothes over her head as she used to do with the mother's shawl on the doorstep, and it was months before she could be taught to lie down properly in bed. And when she was dressed in her new clothes, she walked up and down in the utmost wonder and delight. This is only one of the sixty-six, nearly every one of whom has an equally pitiful story. Those old enough go to school, and are taught all the useful things expected of respectable children. We should like to go into the details of these cottage homes if space permitted, but we will only say another cot-

tage is wanted as a crèche for the babies, and this is the same as if we said another £1,000 is required.

This is not by any means all that is being done for the flower-girls. Go down to Covent Garden on any market morning, and see the missioners looking after their bodily and spiritual needs. Go to No. 12, Clerkenwell Close, on Monday afternoons, and see the flower-girls from sixteen to sixty years of age working at garments, paying in their little savings, telling their sorrows to sympathetic ears, and being helped on their way. Mr. Groom and his body of workers—what have they not done for the flower-girls? and how much more would they do if outsiders would help them with their means?

The little branch worked by the good Rector of Spitalfields and Sister Bessie must not be overlooked. God grant them all success in their work among the flower-girls!

## INTELLECTUAL PARTNERSHIPS;

OR,

### HOW MEN MAY STIMULATE THE MENTAL LIFE OF WOMEN.



**T**RULY, we are living in an age of educational progress, and nothing more strikingly illustrates the march of our nineteenth century civilisation than the largely-increasing numbers of high schools and colleges for the better education of

women. Our grandmothers had no such opportunities of improving their minds, and they would probably open their eyes with astonishment could they but see the immense educational advantages of our times. Public libraries and courses of lectures are available in most towns; every branch of science, of art, and of literature is open to us; scholarships are founded for our exclusive benefit, and we are invited to take active interest in the social and political problems of the day. It is at last more fully recognised that true civilisation is impossible, unless the education of women be as thorough and as progressive as that of men.

But in spite of these advantages, it must be admitted that women, as a rule, are not intellectually as vigorous as might be desired. Generally speaking, they have not that thirst after knowledge which eagerly grasps at opportunities. Defective training in past generations is doubtless one of the causes of this mental torpor; but amongst the more immediate causes are—the lack of stimulus, the want of incentive, and the pressure of household cares. When one thinks of the cramped, home-bound life of many women, one is not surprised at the early stagnation of their minds, at their narrow views, poverty of ideas, and lack of interest in all things not purely domestic. With men it is different. They must perforce go into the world; their business relations bring them into contact with "all sorts and conditions of men;" the daily intercourse and friction with other minds keep their own fresh and alert; their public duties stimulate and develop their faculties, and their powers of observation are inevitably quickened by travel.

Undoubtedly, many women pursue the higher walks of literature with enthusiasm and success, but they are chiefly those who use their brains to obtain a livelihood. Here and there a girl may be found who, when her

school days are over, will follow up some particular study in music, or art, or languages; but unless she have some incentive or outward encouragement, her efforts are likely to prove spasmodic and unfruitful. Should she get married, her studies will gradually cease; or if she have much leisure time, she will probably degenerate into a devourer of third-rate fiction. It is a significant and not very creditable fact, that women are chiefly responsible for the mawkish and sensational novels which form the bulk of our circulating libraries. Women are the subscribers, women are the readers; and were it not for their demands, the supply of this literary rubbish would be greatly diminished.

There may be many ways of quickening a woman's mind, but the greatest and most abiding stimulus comes from her father, husband, or brother, and this is the point I wish to emphasise in this paper. The influence of one sex over the other is indisputable, and a man who possesses the affection of a woman has a more powerful leverage over her mind than any public teacher or female friend can possibly have. Women are swayed through their affections; they find their chief happiness in serving and pleasing those whom they love; and it is because of the unrivalled influence men can exert over the women nearest to them, and because of the exceptional opportunities the home-life affords of using such influences, that I urge them to take a more active interest in exciting healthy mental activity in their womenkind.

There are some men who regard us as the merely ornamental sex. Women to them are idols or playthings, creatures to be caressed and petted, and surrounded by luxuries. Now, I have nothing to say against the petting—as a rule we women get too little of it—but the woman is to be pitied who is nothing but a beautiful doll; and those whose flatteries have made her such ought to be blamed. Nor would I discourage the man who takes a thoughtful interest in the physical comforts of a woman; but he should be equally thoughtful for her mental food and equipment, or he will be allowing the body to banquet while the mind starves. Many a man, who would be angrily critical if his wife or sister violated the canons of good taste in regard to dress and deportment, will view with indifference the bad taste she may show in her choice of literature. She is left free to rove, unproved and unwarned,

through the garbage of "shilling shockers," "penny dreadfuls," and even the chronicles of our police and divorce courts. Considering the demoralising effects of this kind of reading—which is not mental food, but rather mental poison—such indifference is deeply to be deplored.

On the other hand, some men regard women as mere domestic machines; as creatures whose destiny is to cook (they always put the cooking first), mend clothes, nurse children, and look after the comfort of mankind generally. Far be it from me to depreciate the incessant, unselfish labours of the woman who "looketh well to the ways of her household," who is indeed an angel on the hearth, and who has helped to make the word "home" revered wherever the English language is spoken. But I must dissent from the theory that woman's chief work is—

"To sit and darn,  
And fatten household sinners."

Her true destiny is not fulfilled if any of her powers remain undeveloped. Why was she endowed with mental faculties, if they were not to be used? The mind, like the body, will dwindle and die, if deprived of appropriate food and exercise, and the result will be a stunted character and a one-sided life. Moreover, God made woman to be, not the plaything nor the slave, but the companion and helpmate of man. True companionship implies a certain degree of equality, and a similarity or sympathy in tastes and pursuits. How, then, can a woman be a true helpmate or companion to a man, if her mind be sluggish while his is active; if she have no sympathy with his literary tastes, and cannot converse with him intelligently upon his favourite topics? Can a girl, indifferent or ignorant concerning the studies and hobbies of her brother, be all a true sister ought to be? Can a mother train and develop the minds of her children, if her own faculties have been neglected?

There are still a few people, even in these enlightened times, who think that a highly educated woman loses interest in her more prosaic home duties, and makes a bad house-keeper. And, possibly, they mentally picture a big-boned creature, with inky fingers, a pen behind her ear, and slippers down at the heel—one who has a sublime contempt for dinners and dress, and who is so absorbed in her