

HOW GIRLS CAN HELP WORKHOUSE INMATES.

BASKET-WEAVING.

PART IV.

OF all the industries that are recommended for the help desired, that of basket-making is one of the most profitable and most agreeable to the workers. It is in itself an art that can be easily acquired, while the plaiting together of rushes to form one description of web is an employment that any bedridden person can do with ease, the material not being heavy to hold, and being both clean and small. Then it possesses the further advantage of the materials and tools being cheap, and the articles made being in general demand and in daily use. Hardly a house-keeper but will not buy a basket of some shape or other, and there are very few people who do not prize a new basket, no matter how many others they already possess.

The art is but a very old English industry revived, as even in the days of Juvenal the work of the ancient Britons was so celebrated that baskets made by them found their way to Rome, and are mentioned in his writings. From his time for several centuries it afforded employment in many agricultural districts, and it is still carried on in Sussex in a modified form. The decay of the British industry was caused by the superiority of the osiers grown abroad and the large importation of foreign

cutting the cane or osier, bodkins of a large size to help fasten off rushes and fine work, drills for boring holes, lead-weights for keeping the work steady while weaving, and a heavy piece of iron, known as "a beater" and used to hammer the plaits together and keep them closer than they would be without pressure.

The osiers used are a species of the *Salix*, but the grey or brindled kind, with its bark streaked with red, is the kind employed amongst the varieties of willows; that kind known as the Welsh is both tough and durable, while the French is the best for all small articles, and for fine basket-work.

Osier or willow before using are soaked in water, and their bark stripped off. They are then cleaned with a sharp knife, and left to dry in the sun and air. After being divided as to size into bundles and kept in a dry place, they are ready for use. The large-sized rods are used for making the uprights that support the work, the finer for the interlacing twigs. These are not generally used without being again divided, and they are given distinctive

names when they are thus reduced. Those known as "splits" are the twigs divided equally into four parts, by means of an instrument that divides the rod longitudinally down the pith. To make these "splits" into what are known as "skains" another implement is used that makes the twig smaller and more regular in shape, but this latter kind is not much used in the basket-making of the infirm.

Canes when required are bought ready prepared, and of two different kinds, the round and the flat. There are sixteen to eighteen sizes of the round cane, and twelve of the flat; the finer round canes cost from 2s. to 1s. 2d. the lb., the coarser 1s. the lb. In the flat, what are known as "chair-canes" cost from 2s. 2d. to 1s. 8d. the bundle, and the rest from 1s. 3d. to 1s. 6d. the lb. Rushes can be bought ready plaited for 1s. 3d. the fifty yards, but they should be plaited by the inmates, and when the leaves of the long reeds can be bought these should be dried, remoistened, and used for most kinds of coarse plaiting.

All basket-work is of the nature of weaving, and if this fact is borne in mind its simplicity is soon apparent. The supporting-rods that are necessary for any of the strong makes, represent the "wool," while the rush, or "split" or fine cane used for the interlacing, is the web or warp. The various movements to be remembered in the work are better understood from drawings than from a written explanation only, therefore we have illustrated



FIG. 1.

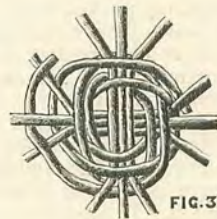


FIG. 3.

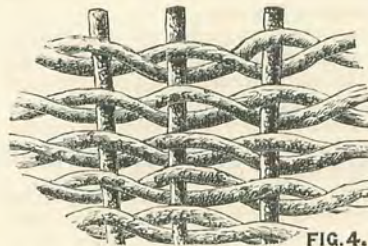


FIG. 4.

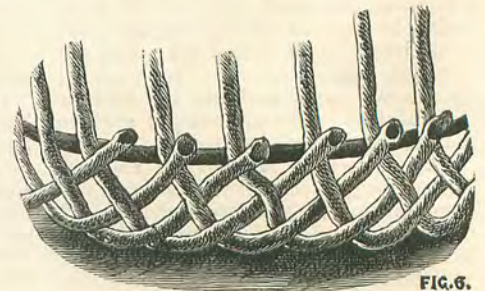


FIG. 6.

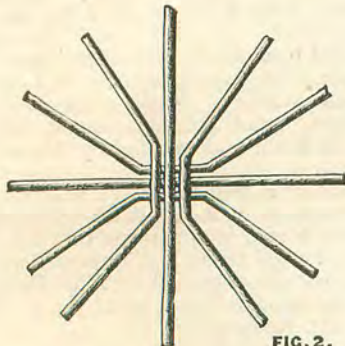


FIG. 2.

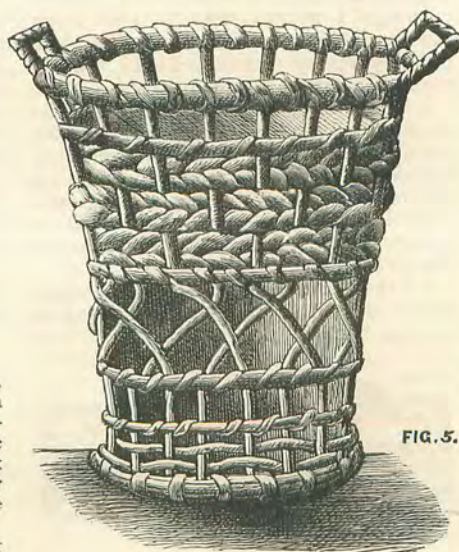


FIG. 5.

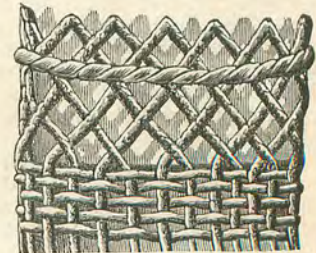


FIG. 7.

work in England, but during the great war, when English ports were closed to foreign manufacturers, some good and successful plantings of willow-beds were made in Lincolnshire and other marshy localities, and the work now could form a means of livelihood to many poor people if they could be taught, and some supervision of the labour organised.

The tools used consist of a strong knife for

some of the work actually made by the inmates of the Winchester Workhouse, and easy enough to be copied by the poor in other places.

Fig. 1 illustrates a hamper-basket, and can be made in almost any size; that given is only small, and is used to hold a jam- or soup-jar for taking jelly or soup to the poor. The supporting-ribs are made of fine but unsplit osiers or willows, the interlacing with splits. The bottom and the lid of the basket are made in the same way, the position of their

ribs being shown in Fig. 2; the first interlacing in Fig. 3. This basket measures four inches high, sixteen inches round at the top, and fourteen and a half at the base, while the diameter of the bottom of the basket is five inches. The bottom of the basket is first made, pieces of willow six inches long are damped and laid, as shown, the side pieces being bent. These are held down with a weight, and rather fine whole rods wetted and used instead of splits. They are woven in and out, over three and under three to commence with, as shown, and then over one and under one, until a round measuring the right size is manufactured. Fresh supports are now inserted as uprights; of these twenty-three will be required. They are run a little way through the weaving, and are fixed on each side of the bottom supports, which are cut down to the size of the bottom of the basket. The supporting-rods are wetted and made supple before use, and should be about thirteen inches in length. They will easily turn upwards and be bent a little outwards. The "splits" are now woven in and out, as shown in Fig. 4, and pushed together constantly with the beater. Fresh splits are easily inserted, and their ends hidden, as is also the little ring made of twisted rush. When the basket is five inches in height, the twenty-three supporting-rods are bent and interwoven with each other to form the raised twist that finishes off the top of the basket, while a few fine rods are damped and twisted round the bottom as a border, to hide the cut-off ends of the supports used in making the bottom. The lid is made like the bottom, but the rods are bent upwards in the centre, and it will be rather larger, as it has to cover a wider space.

The handle is made by bending a few fine supports into a half circle and covering them with a "split," and binding the ends one to the lid and one to the body of the basket very firmly, and covering the places over with the split. The loop that is used to shut over the ring in the body of the basket is made of fine twisted rushes.

When this make is used for hampers the work is the same, but much coarser materials are used.

Fig. 5 and Fig. 6 are illustrations of waste-paper baskets. Both of them have a round piece of wood inserted into them to make a bottom, and therefore do not require a woven one. The lower part of Fig. 6 only is given, in order to illustrate the fancy edging that can be made by the supporting-rods, before they are required for the closer part of the basket. The height of this basket is nine inches, but the supports (which are of split cane) are much longer. They are damped and interlaced, as shown, then the round wooden bottom is inserted (it is five inches in diameter), and each cane is nailed with a very fine nail to it. The supports are bent outward, and are cut nine inches high (from the nail). The first part of the basket is made with a wide rush plait, which is interlaced for a height of six inches, and fastened off. The upper part is finished with a weaving, as in Fig. 4, but whole willow or osier rods are used instead of splits. For the very top a double interlacing of rather finer willows serves to conceal the edges of the uprights, while the nails at the bottom of the basket are hidden with a rush plait laid over the outside, and just thrust inside at its ends.

In Fig. 5 the wooden bottom is used to nail the supports to, but it is placed two and a half inches above the edging, which is made of rounds of whole willows bound firmly together with fine "skains." The diameter of the wooden bottom is seven inches, the height of the basket thirteen inches, the number of supports forty-five, circumference of basket at the bottom twenty-four inches, at the top thirty-six.

The only split osiers used are the ones interwoven at the bottom edging; more are used than shown, but the working out of the design from an illustration made it necessary, for fear of confusion, to only draw a few splits. Strong whole willows make all the rounds that are detached, or finish off the rush plaits. The supports are twisted, as shown, where no

weaving is introduced, and the handles are made of short strong pieces of willow thrust into the rounds and secured with fine skains, the same kind of skains binding the rounds to the supports.

Fig. 7 shows the manner of finishing off a basket used for holding plants in pots. The supports are of fine round cane, the weaving either of flat cane or osier "splits," the bottom is of wood, the little ornamental band of rushes, a similar band finishing the bottom. For this shape use long but pliable pieces of cane, bend them in the centre, as shown; interlace one within the other, straighten the two ends for a depth of four inches, and secure by nailing firmly to the wooden bottom. There will be eight supporting canes between the interlacing and coming back again of each cane, therefore the number of canes used and their distance apart will require to be carefully measured over and marked on the bottom piece of wood before the work is commenced. The rest of the work is but a repetition of work already described.

There are many other articles that can be made besides the ones described, but the principle of all work is the same, namely, to damp the materials before using to render them pliable; to always use a good support to all articles that must stand alone, to work with uneven supports when close weaving is required, and always to go over one support and under another when not directed otherwise.

Among the articles that can be made are work-baskets, lamp- and table-mats, card-baskets, chair-back fire-screens, sponge-baskets, racks for holding newspapers, small racks for holding letters, and workmen's baskets for carrying tools, or provisions. The simplest way to make these flat baskets is to sew together in their shape a plait of rushes, this plait to be made wide and thin, but close, using from five to seven strands in the plait. Work as for a round, and damp and shape over a block of wood.

B. C. SAWARD.

A WILFUL WARD.

By RUTH LAMB, Author of "Work, Wait, Win," "Sackcloth and Ashes," etc.

CHAPTER VI.



In a few seconds after Mr. Jem Capes had called attention to his presence by means of the knocker, a neat kitchen-maid opened

the door of the servants' entrance to the hall. The sight of a trim, female figure pleased Captain Torrance's messenger. He was young, and according to his own notions, good-looking,

and with plenty to say for himself, therefore well calculated to make a favourable impression. He glanced admiringly at the girl, and with a full consciousness of the absurdity of the remark said,

"You are the lady's-maid here, I believe, miss?"

"You are mistaken," was the quiet reply. "I am a kitchen-maid, but if you want to see Cameron, who is Miss Mountford's own maid, I will let her know."

"I have no desire to see any face but yours, and I'm sure I couldn't find a prettier, if I had my pick of all in the house. I mean of course, amongst them that are in service here. It isn't for such as me to pass an opinion about the ladies."

The girl heard this flattering speech with an unmoved countenance, and, much to Mr. Jem Capes' surprise, ignored it entirely when next addressing him.

"Please to tell me what you want, or whether you wish to see any of the men-servants. There are none of them in the house just now," she said.

The groom's face fell at the ill-success of his insinuating looks and compliments, and he answered, rather sharply,

"I want nothing with servants—men or girls. I have had enough of one outside, the coachman, I think, who is about as sweet as a sloe or a crab-apple."

"You are speaking about my father. What is your message, please?"

Probably Jem Capes never felt so angry and humiliated as he did at this moment, when, for the second time, Patty Mountain, ignoring alike his compliments to herself and his impertinent allusion to her father, asked his business.

"My message is for your mistress, young woman," he replied in a sullen tone. "The gentleman who sent this note and something along with it, said I must give it into her own hand. What I have to ask you is, can I see the lady?"

"I cannot tell, but I will find out," then after civilly requesting the groom to take a seat, Patty disappeared, in order that the inquiry might be made through the waitress.

Capes was not sorry when he saw