

FACTORY GIRLS AT WORK AND PLAY.

By LLOYD LESTER.

PART I.

THE FACTORY HANDS AT SILVERTOWN.

THE numberless articles of utility and luxury modern civilisation declares so indispensable to our comfort, we are compelled to appreciate because they minister so continually to our cultivated tastes and requirements. But the productions of inventive minds which thus minister to our personal convenience or enjoyment ought to strike a deeper chord than that of selfish satisfaction. To bring these articles to our hands how much labour has been expended by the great army of industrial workers, how vast the amount of thought, toil, weariness, necessary to the production of the most insignificant thing! What a debt of grateful interest society owes to the patient hands of industry! And this interest, to be really beneficial, must needs be intelligent. Our beneficent Creator has willed that each class of the human family should be interlinked with the others in order to evoke the sense of interdependence, and nourish that holy unselfish affection which is born of sympathy and realisation of fellowship, binding all mankind into union with one another and with God Himself.

These papers on a factory worker's life are written with the object of interesting and guiding our sweet girls into the exercise of that most exquisite grace of a noble womanhood, tender comprehending sympathy with and for their toiling sisters, the best part of whose youth is spent in dull factories helping to manufacture the thousand and one pretty trifles or useful indispensables which girls, in more favoured circumstances, only associate with amusement or pleasure. Helen's tennis ball and your elegant new tricycle, Lucy, are among the things which girls make or assist in making, and I hope to tell you before I end this sketch about some other articles prepared by the deft fingers of our hard-working lassies. It is not possible to describe all branches of factory girls' work. Did I attempt to do so, our genial editor's face would assume a look of dismay, and he would energetically protest against the whole magazine being devoted to one subject. In these circumstances we must therefore content ourselves with a few selected occupations, first premising, that in these, as in all other things, there exists a certain aristocracy, and democracy. The smart girls who prepare our waterproof coats, would be emphatically indignant did we class them with the matchmakers or jute workers, a fact amusingly hinted at by a partner in the firm of Messrs. Silver & Co., to whose graceful courtesy I owe the somewhat rarely granted favour of seeing the girls actually at work in their large factory at Silvertown, a remote, isolated corner of suburban London, situated on a marshy piece of ground between the Victoria and Albert Docks and the River Thames. It is a dull shut-in place, smoky and grimy enough by reason of the many factory chimneys which send their volumes of smoke out upon the air; but the people are glad to see the signs of activity thus evidenced, for busy factories mean more work, and work is hard to get in this eastern district. Social advantages scarcely exist, and the girls are perhaps worse off in this respect than the young men of the place. Canning Town and Woolwich seem to bound the horizon of their world. It is the rule, not the exception, to meet grown girls who have never in all their lives seen the metropolis. With such limitations we cannot expect to find very exalted

ideals of life amongst these bright-spirited young creatures to whom the beautiful possibilities and opportunities of a cultivated girl's life are absolutely unknown. They are, many of them, quite honest respectable lasses, but from their infancy no other prospect suggests itself but "going to the factory," when old enough to earn their livelihood. Domestic service, I regret to say, is not a popular institution with Silvertown girls. Here and there a wise mother may be found who prefers to send her daughters to situations of service in gentlemen's families, but it is quite exceptional.

"Bless you," said one woman to me. "I can't afford to let my Clara go away. I'm a widow, and her money does me more good because I put all the littles together and we can do. But if she wasn't at the factory I'd be hard pushed."

What could be said. Clara was a nice modest girl, very engaging, and we wished to put her into a more superior path of life than the factory associations could lead to. We saw that they were exercising an undesirable influence, but there appeared no help for it. The mother was too poor to sacrifice Clara's wages, so we had just to leave the matter. And this is the way with so many girls. Sometimes two, three, and even four sisters are employed, and receiving an average wage of ten shillings per week each. The wages scale range from nine to seventeen or eighteen shillings weekly, but taking slack times into account the average girl earns little more than ten, taking one week with another. A certain amount is given to the household expenses, and the remainder spent chiefly in dress. As a rule the girls are not thrifty, and seldom put anything by for a rainy day. Except amongst the best class of workers, they hardly can save much, for employment is very precarious, and it frequently happens that the girl's earnings constitute the sole support of her family for weeks, in some cases months at a stretch.

Janet Mills belongs to the well-to-do (in comparison) families. She is the fourth daughter in a family of ten, three of her sisters are employed in "Silvers'," and Janet wanted to make the fourth, but work was slack, and she engaged herself as "general" servant rather than be idle; such a pretty bright girl, with curly dark hair and winning manner, a little too defiant perhaps for a girl, but not really rude. The girls are so used to think and act pretty much as they please, that we must not mistake the very frank off-handedness with which they speak for disrespect, although this is very trying at times. Well, Janet, after a time got tired of service, and the old hankering for the factory life became evident. She went down one morning to the gates of Messrs. Silver's works and saw the foreman. He told her to come again, and for many mornings pretty delicate Janet trudged at the early hours of six and seven, to Winchester Street along with a crowd of other girls and older women to stand waiting at the office doors until the message came out for the day. Some lucky ones were perhaps taken on, but the majority retired, weary and disappointed. This is a daily routine. At an age when girls of a different rank are in the prime of their happy school-days, the daughters of the people have "passed their standards," and are starting out to earn for themselves; exposed to all kinds of weather, to many temptations, to rough experiences of coarse companions and other vicissitudes which girls in shielded homes cannot guess at.

Janet came home at last with a beaming face. "She was taken on," and the next week saw her duly installed in the "sundry shop," where all kinds of articles such as footballs, tennis-balls, hot-water bottles, etc., are made. A great many girls are employed in this department, and it is most interesting to watch them manipulating the prepared rubber which bears little resemblance to the ugly rough article lying in tanks of water down in a basement department. No women are employed there, and as it does not come within the scope of this article to describe the various processes by which the rubber is prepared, I pass over many interesting particulars of my visit to the factory, and sketch out Janet Mills' first day there, a typical one.

She was not quite unaccustomed to the work, as she had been to a small factory for a few weeks; and the girls were not strangers to her. It was hard to rise at five o'clock in the morning, and begin at six the day's labour. She took her place at a queer-looking frame something like the rough stand on which a street hawker displays his cured herrings. All along the strips of wood dangled balls which had been dipped in some red liquid and now required lightly touching with a fine brush or scraper in order to take off any superfluous moisture. This formed Janet's work. Farther down the shop sat or stood girls with nimble fingers putting footballs together, not sewing the pieces, remember, but closing the seams with a preparation of the rubber in a liquid state. Others were deftly dotting mysterious looking black cubes on small shapes of the rubber, while a third section were employed on those comfortable hot-water bottles which have taken the place of the old-fashioned warming-pan for warming our beds.

This room is fairly quiet, but all are not so fortunate. Perhaps the noisiest department is one top-storey room where bobbins are being wound. The whir of the machinery renders conversation impossible except at top shouting pitch. The girls' duty is to stand by and watch the bobbins, pulling up any one that gets out of place. Accidents sometimes happen, but the firm do their best to prevent injury to their employés by as much precaution as possible. They are in good repute with their work-people and take much interest in their welfare. Judging from the appearance of the various departments, Messrs. Silver's factory is not an undesirable place wherein to earn one's daily bread. I may mention in passing that a huge Christmas Tree, laden with its peculiar fruit, is provided every year for the poor children of Silvertown through the munificence of the firm.

To return to Janet. She worked conscientiously and made few blunders, but she was glad when the whistle sounded for dinner.

"Are you tired," said a pale shabby girl to her as they came out into the fresh air; "you will get used to standing, but it does make one's back ache at first."

"You look as if your back ached now," said Janet bluntly.

"It does, but I'm not strong. I wouldn't stop, only we are so badly off. Mother only get's a day's washing a fortnight, and there's eight of us; I'm the only one earning anything."*

Poor Hetty. Life was hard to her. Her home, so-called, was a bare mean place, with nothing of comfort about it. What wonder

* A fact; all these incidents are from life.

the girl got out of it as much as she could, and sought the vacant amusements of the streets. Janet belonged to better owners, but her home was a crowded one, and the girl had no chance to improve herself in any way.

At ten minutes to two o'clock, the hands trooped back to the factory, the girls laughing and jesting freely with the men, but many among them did not go beyond exchanging pleasant greetings. There are among "rubber girls," some decidedly grey sheep, but the majority are respectable, and respect themselves. Messrs. Silver are as particular as they can be, in choosing such for their employées.

Janet went back to her balls diligently, and when six o'clock came had the satisfaction of knowing she had passed her first day successfully. Her sister, who was employed in the coat shop, a department where the waterproof garments are made, one of the best—if not quite the best kinds of work—declared herself highly pleased with Janet, when she brought home at the week end eleven shillings as her earnings.

"Here's a ticket for the 'Tate,' Janet, if you like to go to-night," she said graciously.

Janet was only too willing. Alice, another sister, a vain dressy girl, accompanied her, but on reaching the institute, which is the only place where anything like decent recreation can be obtained in the place, this damsel of seventeen contrived to lose Janet in the crowd pouring through the gates. She was bound for a promenade in Woolwich, with a trio of wild reckless girls, and enjoyed "skylarking," as she called it, with them far more than listening to the excellent concert, provided by one of the Silvertown firms. Janet did not dare tell her father of Alice's escapade, so severe was he with his children, and the wayward girl knew it. Poor Alice Mills, she had learnt with too much ease to enjoy a surreptitious visit to a music-hall, where alas! so many of the factory girls may be found of an evening spending their scanty leisure, with no higher taste than listening to the vile trash of comic ditties which should never pollute a girl's ears. No matter how careful parents are with their children the factory life brings them into undesirable associations. Early independent of their parents, they soon lose the feeling of home restraint, and take their own way. No better ideal is presented before their minds to strive after, and the young girls only follow the example set in too many instances by their fathers and mothers. Get up, go to work, take their meals, after tea go strolling about the streets of Woolwich, or along the Barking Road, varying this round with a visit to a dancing-room, or the Albert music-hall. They absolutely have no recreations worthy of the name. The Tate Institute, it is true, provides entertainments constantly for the people, and a reading-room, etc., with classes for the men; but for the bright, bonnie, high-spirited free-spoken girls, nothing is provided in Silvertown excepting one promising work of love which I shall describe presently.

Janet Mills had been working brightly for

several weeks, when, to her dismay, she was one morning "stood off." Slack time had come, and she was not dismissed, but told to go home until work grew brisk again, when she would be sent for. Her second sister, Fanny, who was a quiet religious girl, and therefore a butt for ridicule amongst her thoughtless colleagues, received the same message. In some, nay, many cases, this "standing off" means weeks of idleness; thus, although the girls make good wages by piece-work (the firm are good paying, fair masters), when they average their actual amount, it is not so very large a sum.

Fortunately for the sisters they were soon sent for again, and Fanny Mills given better work in the telegraph shop, where cables and electrical wires receive their coating of rubber, etc., while Janet was sent to the tyre department.

The gentleman to whom I am indebted for many details introduced me to this shop with a slight jest.

"I do not know whether you are interested in bicycles, but this place, I confess, has an attraction for me, seeing it is here we make the pneumatic tyres for that particular variety which are so popular now."

I assured my conductor I was deeply interested, and in proof thereof inspected closely the manner in which the busy girls were cutting and uniting the long tubes of rubber. They seemed only too glad to show me the exact even joining required; and the composition which welded the edges together has to be applied with the utmost nicety, as too much would spoil the thing. How my soul yearned over these girl-workers as I passed from room to room watching their toil, and longing to give them a sweeter, richer life. I wished heartily that some of my readers could have gone with me and actually seen what I am trying to tell. Under all the daring, the sharp speech, the reckless exterior lies a wealth of affection, an amount of generous, if untrained, self-sacrifice, unsuspected even by the girls themselves. There are grand possibilities in these factory girls, if only skilful hands and loving Christ-like souls will do their part to elevate and refine their natures for higher things. To one another they are most good-natured in times of need. If a girl is sick, they will collect for her a generous sum. If she marries—well, Janet's sister decided to get settled at the mature age of twenty—and a nice present came to her from her comrades. Ah, those early marriages are the source of much poverty. As a rule the girls are absolutely ignorant of domestic duties and not fit for the responsibilities of wifehood, hence the home is not managed to the best advantage, and the bane of the place, drink, blights both husband and wife. There is also another temptation which I hear on good authority is assailing the girls. Betting is very popular among the men, and now the poor girls are becoming fascinated by the terrible mania. I hope the evil will be speedily checked.

For some time after Janet's work commenced at the factory, her old mistress feared lest the girl should drift away from the Christian

influence she had tried to exercise, and for a time it seemed only too probable, for it is no easy thing for a young person to be true to Christ when surrounded by worldly associates. Happily, however, better thoughts came to Janet; she became steadier, and when a confirmation season approached she was found among the candidates for that holy rite. Her class in the Sunday-school proved a strong link to religion, and the girl is now endeavouring, imperfectly it may be, but sincerely, to live according to her light. With kind sympathy and gentle leading, there are numbers in Silvertown who could be won to follow Our Master as true women should do. But alas! the place is indeed very desolate, spiritually and morally. Sorely does it need labourers.

One bright happy work going on among the girls I have promised to tell you about, for it is a real and successful effort to brighten their lives. Like most other things this had a small beginning. Some three or four years since, a devoted Christian woman, now labouring far away in Africa as a missionary, started a small class for the factory girls. It began as a sewing meeting, with five girls, over whom Miss J— exercised her womanly influence in quiet chat, hearing their difficulties and sympathising with their troubles, ever seeking to win them to higher things. It was very, very hard work at first, but she persevered. The tiny seed has now become if not a spreading tree, at least a vigorous sapling. Friends rallied round Miss J—, and the work grew in importance and usefulness. It was found necessary to open the schoolroom two nights in the week, and the girls came in increasing numbers. They learnt to love the bright gatherings for fun, instruction in cooking, needlework, musical drill, and singing, rather than the dull noisy streets. It became advisable to affiliate the society to the G. E. H.; and since that event the popularity has increased. If anyone liked to peep in on a Monday or Thursday night, they would see a room full of happy girls being led towards better ways of life than the street education. At the great public competition held last year at the Inner Temple, the Silvertown girls carried off a splendid array of prizes for efficiency in various branches of knowledge taught at the club. Mrs. Stables, a leading resident, has laboured most indefatigably and devotedly for the success of the home of which she is literally the mainspring. And the girls are not slow to appreciate her practical efforts for their good. When a much-talked-of institution Messrs. Silver purpose to erect for the benefit of their workpeople becomes an accomplished fact, this good work, so happily inaugurated amongst the girls, will advance to yet greater usefulness.

I have not written down all the interesting things my note-book contains relative to Silvertown: I have not told of the jam girls and their work among other things, but with the Editor's permission I will describe very shortly a visit I paid to Messrs. Keiller's jam factory, where not only preserves but delicious sweets are manufactured for our delectation.

HOUSEHOLD HINTS.

ALWAYS strip the green leaves off the stalks of cut flowers before you place them in water. They very soon spoil the water and smell disagreeably. This applies especially to juicy stems like hyacinths, daffodils, and tulips, and also to mignonette and wallflower.

TIGHT and high collars are injurious to health and affect the sight; wear them as close and as low as possible.

A VERY effective and agreeable disinfectant is a tablespoonful of ground coffee, put on a live cinder in a coal scoop or shovel without holes; the smell is very pleasant and it pervades the whole house.

WHEN opening a wooden box that has been nailed down, take all the nails carefully out with pincers before putting it away. Rusty nails have caused blood-poisoning and death in several cases.

A TEASPOONFUL of orange flower water in either hot or cold water, or warm milk, is a very cooling and tonic drink for a fever patient. It is also very nice for flavouring custards or blanc-manges, and is less common than other flavourings.

A FEW drops of tincture of calendula in water is a splendid remedy for cuts. It heals the flesh very quickly and staunches the bleeding.

designed by her brother-in-law as recreations: they did not re-create her. Had they been in the open air?—but George's only idea of the open air was the top of a 'bus to Hampstead, or the deck of a penny steamer to Kew. What Vera wanted, what her poor starved taste and imagination hungered for, was Nature pure and undefiled—Nature's sights unmarred by the touch of man, Nature's sounds unmingled with human echoes. She could not confide this to anyone beneath the roof which sheltered her. Minnie would have thought it "unsociable," George would have burst out a-laughing, and their friends would either have felt affronted by such implied indifference to their society, or have seen in the whole merely a subject for endless jest and ridicule.

So Vera had kept all the thick-coming dreams and imaginings of a genuinely poetic nature, to herself, until the present summer of her life, at which time she was twenty-three years of age, and had begun to make friends of her own. Among these had been the Misses Claybury, and from the date on which she had been casually named to them as a girl who was fond of the country, but who had never seen anything except the town, there began a new epoch in Vera Harwood's life. Some months of sympathetic intercourse had resulted in the suggestion that Vera should join the Clayburys in a trip to the Highlands of Scotland, traverse with them its glorious solitudes, and though necessarily limited by time and money, yet feast her eyes with such beautiful scenes, and feel the charm of such novelty, as could be brought within the compass of a few weeks' stay. It was enough; enough, at least, for the present.

We know the agony of disappointment which had first been undergone when circumstances threatened to interfere with the pros-

pect which for a whole month had lit up every spare moment for thought.

But even that bitterness seemed now turned to good account; and as the young traveller lay back with closed eyes in her corner seat, speeding northward through the summer night, she was almost ready to fancy that her present bliss would have been incomplete without the memory of that bygone torment.

"You have been smiling in your sleep, Vera," said Miss Esther Claybury, kindly, as the stoppage of the train caused a drowsy stir among its occupants. "I have been watching you. Pleasant dreams, I hope?"

But Vera did not tell her that the smile proceeded from a full sense of joyous consciousness. Later on, she did indeed sink now and again into a fevered doze, but long before any one else cared to move, she rose and stole into the outer passage, to mark the sun rise over the gleaming ocean, whose breakers thundered almost at their feet, among the rocky caverns and clefts of Berwickshire. She had barely refrained from exclaiming triumphantly when the Tweed was crossed, and they were really in Scotland, in Scotland at last! But having controlled herself at that supreme moment, it was easy, it was delightful to drink in the glories of the summer morning undisturbed by any other presence. Even the sympathetic admiration of her congenial fellow-travellers would have jarred upon her mood.

The party were to go on to Glasgow. Edinburgh, with all its historic sights and thrilling associations, could be visited another time; and although Vera would have been ready to find any route desirable that was recommended by those in whom she placed her faith, and would have been perfectly willing to make her first halt at the "Modern Athens" had it been so decided, she was now equally ready to press on, and believe that any delay

which would have hindered her from beholding the far-famed Loch Lomond on this her first day on Scottish soil, would have been vexatious.

They breakfasted in the station at Glasgow, made a hasty toilet, and entered the smaller, shabbier train which set off for Balloch Pier. The noontide sun was shining in his strength as they stepped out upon the latter, where a small steamboat was in waiting, and if our traveller had been jubilant before, content with expectation, what were her feelings now as the whole bewitching scene spread itself in reality before her dilated orbs.

"It's no use talking to you, I see," said Jane Claybury coming up behind, "you are gone 'clean demented,' as the people here say, and I don't wonder. I never saw Loch Lomond look more beautiful! All the reflections of those wooded islets in the water, and Ben Lomond basking in that blaze of sunshine, without so much as a cloudlet on the top! That is Ben Lomond, you know," pointing to a purple mountain-shoulder, with a dark peak sharply outlined against the sky.

"And if you think you are strong enough for the ascent, my dear," added her aunt, joining them, "Jane and you can go up together in a few days' time; you must be rested first, and walk about a little to find your walking legs."

"Oh, I am very strong," cried Vera, joyously. She felt strong enough for anything.

"Well, we shall see," Miss Claybury smiled. "We are within an hour of our journey's end now; and when we leave the boat, we have only a short drive over to the little inn at Arrochar, where we are to stop for the next three days. After that—"

"Oh, say nothing about 'after that,'" said Vera, laughing. "But one thing I know, I shall climb to the top of that rocky 'Ben,' or perish in the attempt!"

(To be continued.)

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PART II.

AMONG THE BRUSH-MAKERS.

"Oh, reader, have you in your mind
Such stores as silent thought can bring,
Oh, gentle reader, you would find,
A tale in everything."



BRUSH-MAKING is perhaps the last pursuit where one would think of finding a tale. Yet a little thought has brought to my memory a very interesting morning which

I spent some two years ago amongst some bright-eyed, quick-fingered, aye, and also quick-tongued, lassies at a brush factory in the suburbs of London, and although I have not a "tale" in the sense of a fictitious narrative to recount, what I have to

tell has the excellent quality of being "quite true."

Such a lovely May morning it was whereon

I took my somewhat loitering way through Victoria Park under the avenue of trees beside the lake. In the branches above me, clothed in their most delicate-hued spring dresses, the soft south-west wind was whispering gay little secrets as it roved amongst the foliage. The waters of the pretty lake sparkled, flashed, and danced beneath the crisping touch of that same flirting zephyr, turning to a dazzling glory in the golden sunbeams, and bringing to one's mind the thought of that other glorious vision of St. John the Divine, even the sea of glass mingled with fire, "where stand they who have gotten the victory." So fair and genial were the sweet influences of the spring-time beauty that one's heart pulsed with a sympathetic thrill of joy, also in unison with the soft bird-notes and loveliness of the world of nature, and sent up with the voices of God's wondrous creation a thanksgiving Psalm to Him who, beholding all things that He had made pronounced them "very good."

I was following out the train of thought thus evoked in a very luxury of peaceful surroundings, utterly oblivious of the workaday world, when the approach of a demure brisk little lady along the leafy vista put my musings to flight.

"You lazy mortal," was her greeting, "I have watched you loitering here for some time. What day-dreams are you weaving in this quiet nook."

"A good many. The lovely morning

tempted me to linger. Whither are you bound, Effie?"

"Why, you forgetful person, is not this Tuesday, and did you not faithfully promise to accompany me to the factory to-day," cried Miss R— in mock indignation at my apparent forgetfulness.

I meekly acknowledged my lapse of memory and declared perfect willingness to redeem my promise at once. We accordingly left the sunny park for the dusty noisy streets, strange to me, but familiar enough to my friend. She is one of those sweet Christian women who give up their lives to honour their Master by ministering to the neglected and neglectful denizens of our working centres of population. As I looked at her slender form and gentle face I marvelled at the courage with which this frail little creature would go into the roughest and most unpromising places to do good to her sisters, who, alas, are so hard to reach and lift up to better ways of life.

During our walk to the busy little factory where "her girls" worked, Miss R— related how she had first gone among them, and various items of the work, but as these will appear in due sequence, I will describe now the place itself.

"We are not too early," said my friend as we turned into the tolerably quiet decent street where the entrance to the factory is situated. "Ah, Sarah," to a tall strong girl passing us. "Can we go in? Has the whistle blown?"

"Yes, miss. I'm 'bliged to go home to-day."

"We shall miss your voice then. You won't forget Friday evening. Do come to the class," urged Miss R—.

The girl fidgeted, pushed her shabby dusty hat a little from her forehead, and finally said, "I'll try. But I'm so tired, miss. I likes to be out-door now the evenings are coming bright. We all want fresh air sometimes," with a trifle of defiant excusing of herself.

"Of course, if it really *is* fresh in the Bethnal Green Road, Sarah," observed my friend with a good-humoured smile. The girl coloured and turned to go her way. "I have such trouble with them. They are so wilful, so fond of the dreadful streets, to which they have been accustomed all their lives, that any restraint, however gentle, is almost unbearable to them. Here we are," added Miss R— as we turned into a covered entrance way which opened into the yard of Messrs. Kent's brush factory. Through one of the funniest little doors imaginable, I was conducted inside the building. "We must go upstairs first, as we can only chat with the girls while the machinery is quiet."

Upstairs we accordingly proceeded, meeting several young women hurrying down to the room where they can take their dinner if they choose. A small "brown Betty" teapot in the hand of one told that the "cup that cheers" would not be absent from the meal. In the large hot room—hot because so near the roof, but as airy as such a room could be expected to be—we found some girls who had not gone down with the others, busily crocheting. It is a very remarkable thing that nearly all factory girls are adepts at fancy-work of this type, however clumsy and ignorant in the art of plain needle-work. Perhaps the fine gay colours of the wools fascinate their eyes and fingers, affording a pretty relief to the monotony of daily labour at an uninteresting—when you do it perpetually—task, in the case before us that of manipulating wire and bristles into brushes of various kinds. When Amy brushes her dainty white teeth with that nice, new, ivory-backed brush of hers she ought to remember that a girl's busy fingers fixed in those little tufts of tiny bristles and twisted the wire deftly to hold them in their place with the aid of a little machine.

It was my friend's custom to have a short little service for the girls, but as they had not yet come up, while those few remaining were talking gaily amongst themselves, we just stood by and watched them. Even then, one could see real little acts of kindness performed, aye, and courteous consideration for one another shown. I noticed one pale tired girl, languidly resting, and paying little attention to anything. One of the others, a red-cheeked "don't care" kind of lassie came hurriedly to her with a cup of weak tea which she insisted on her drinking. The stuff looked uninviting enough, but the genuine sympathy on the face of the one who offered it was unmistakable. I need not say the tea was gratefully drunk by the delicate girl. Miss R—, who knows the life of factory girls thoroughly, told me afterwards that they are most kind to one another in many ways. Once—I believe in this very factory—a new "hand" came to work. She was as too many of her class are—wretchedly shod, so much so that she could hardly come to work. Her "mates" found out she was too poor to buy shoes, and what do you think those splendid girls did, actually clubbed together out of their own small earnings enough money to purchase strong boots with which they presented her in their off-hand generous style. The average factory girl abhors any display of sentiment in a spoken form. Her power of ridicule is strong, her wit, if unhappily broad, very keen edged. Woe betide the unlucky girl who shows any symptom of "gush," as they

term affectionate language. Perhaps for such a kind deed as that I have described, the words of thanks would be something in this form:—

"You're good old pals to think o' this, an' I'll not forget it in a hurry. Thank you all kindly."

Then there would be a general shake-hands and a little loud laughing with a few jokes, and the thing is over. But the kindness is unforgetten; and when her chance came, the recipient would be ardently ready to help some other ill-bested companion in like fashion.

The vocabulary of the lower classes is a limited one, nor do they know how properly to express their feelings of gratitude for kindness. But their actions are oft-times beautiful enough for the noblest and best. Some of these very girls on another occasion found out that a poor woman among them, who was married to a most dissolute husband, had a great difficulty in getting proper nourishment for her sick child, so they made every week a "whip round," as they call it, for her benefit. And many a nice delicacy was thus provided for ailing Willie by the girls' willingly offered pence. I am not sure if these dear ones had felt the constraining power of the Saviour's love, but surely He who said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these, ye have done it unto Me," will forget not to record such unselfish acts. Just a factory-girl, you say, and you pass the toiling sister with a careless glance at the rough attire with its seedy brilliance or dowdy, flaunting hat; but do you ever think, my dear girl-readers, of the loving heart—the immortal soul, as loving, as immortal as your own—hidden beneath the unattractive covering. Only a factory-girl! Wild, impudent, defiant, with little of the refined grace of her gently-nurtured sister to attract or reward one's efforts, but once she is reached, well, some of the brightest jewels in the king's crown will be taken—hardly-won gems—from among the factory girls.

While we waited for the absentees to return, I quietly went round the apartment. Down the centre are machines used in different parts of brush-making, but as I am not learned in mechanics, I cannot properly describe them. In this department, all the finer varieties of brushes, from a wicked-looking shaving brush to the very prettiest little tooth-brush I ever saw are "trifled" and finished off. Each girl has a little bundle of bristles—and these are most carefully counted—by her side, then with a deftness born of long practice, she picks up a certain number of them, dexterously twists the thin wire round the tiny bunch, then slips it into the shaped piece of bone, ivory, or wood, which is already perforated with the holes ready for the tufts, and presto, a swift turn of the hand, and the thing is accomplished. When the machines were set going again, the girls showed me very patiently how they did it, but I confessed myself a very dull pupil in this lesson at all events. Those of the workers who are "piece-workers," manage to make, in busy time, from twelve to fifteen shillings weekly, but the average earnings range from six to ten shillings. Their hours are the same as other factories, and those employed in the better class work are in many cases of the more respectable class of girls. But downstairs in the rougher varieties department the women are altogether of a lower type. Many are married or widowed, and in their worn, weather-beaten features we can trace the influences at work upon them more distinctly than the pretty lively girls who will, in their turn, succumb to the same inevitable result of rough lives, low associates and coarse habits of life, unless a holier influence saves them from such a lot ere it be too late. I could not help feeling sad as I passed amongst the girls

and noted various little things which showed me that upon some of them, at least the conditions of their environment were beginning to tell for the worse. One of the most sullen untidy girls in the upper department was reading greedily a small tattered paper, while her tea stood untouched by her side. Curious to know what it was she was so earnestly poring over, I quietly passed behind her. As I thought, the paper was one of the very worst type of periodicals, full of low, illustrated jokes and so forth. I was glad to see before we left this very girl shyly reading one of the tiny booklets distributed through the workshop.

But now the girls were gathering in their respective places, and one dark-eyed maid, neat as a new pin, came up to us.

"May we sing now, Miss R—."

"Certainly, Milly. What do the girls choose?"

A hubbub of voices suggesting this or that favourite tune was dominated directly by the rich sweet voice of Milly herself as she started one of Sankey's hymns. Others soon joined her, even the sulky ones, and at the second verse nearly all the girls in the room were singing away like young thrushes, and cannot factory girls sing! Many of them have glorious voices, and they love vocal melody. As I heard the "sweet songs of Zion" pouring forth from those girlish lips, I rejoiced to know that some among them sang with their hearts, notably Milly herself, whose voice, once heard only in music-hall ditties, was now turned to noble service for her King. Hymn after hymn was sung, and then a low peculiar whirring noise told us that time was up and work was beginning again. A few earnest words from Miss R—to the little band of girls, who were trying to lift the Master's standard amidst much trial in this place, some pleasant words to the visitor, and then by permission of the forewoman, a kindly practical young woman, who reminded me of the head governess of a school, perched up as she was at her desk at one end of the room, I went from one to another watching the girls, "at work" now, their attention bestowed on their respective tasks, some still singing to themselves as we quitted them to go downstairs. But my friend's work was not yet over. I can scarcely remember the way she led me, all I can now recall is that we went along a cool narrow corridor, odorous of cocoa-nut fibre with piles of rough brooms and brushes stored alongside, to a wide place, where several men were busily at work, who greeted us nicely as we passed through into a screened-off part where the women before alluded to were performing their harder task with those unmanageable bass-broom heads, coarse blacking-brushes, and kindred articles. This is the department most poorly paid. Seven or eight shillings per week is the average wages here. We could not give any address in this place because the women were working, but we set them singing; ah, with what a difference to the joyous young voices upstairs; their tones were harsh and cracked, nevertheless the poor toilers enjoyed the refreshment of such music as we could help them make, and when our own throats grew hoarse they begged still for "just another;" and the men in the shop beyond put in their entreaty for "one more afore you go, ladies." Anent the men's part, Miss R— told me a funny little tale. When she first went among them, people declared the rough women and rougher men, among whom were infidels and freethinkers, would never permit any work of a religious character to continue long. Miss R—, however, although of frail physique, has the courage of—I was going to write a lion, but more truly the bravery of a fearless servant of God. She determined to persevere. At first a great amount of annoyance

rewarded her efforts, some of the women and the men would strike up a noisy or ribald song to drown hers, but patience won its way until the most irreverent grew quiet. Now those very men almost always join in the singing, their voices forming a pleasant bass accompaniment to the women's shriller tones in any well-known hymn, and there is much jealousy shown if by any chance Miss R— has not time to stay in that department when she visits the factory.

Brushmakers, men and women, have not the very best of surroundings, nor home-comfort as we understand it. The girls, many of them, have no example of thrift and cleanliness set them at home, consequently when they marry, early as the general rule, they are not in the least competent to become homemakers. Hence the great necessity that the girls in our schools should be trained thoroughly in domestic duties. School-time is the only time, and affords the sole chance for working-girls to learn how to cook, and wash, and clean properly. After they go to work there is little leisure and scant interest for house-keeping lessons.

"You have shown me your girls at work, Effie, now let me see their homes and their pleasures," I said as we left the close, noisy factory for the afternoon sunshine.

Miss R— smiled, a little thoughtfully, and sadly. "I can show you their homes, M—, this will help you to understand the kind of pleasures they seek."

Talking earnestly of the ignorance and needs of our girl-population, my friend conducted me to one of the very dirtiest places I ever imagined to exist; the pavement round the door was so covered with the nastiest filth that we had a difficulty to step with any degree of comfort. Close to the house, sending up its fever-breeding stench in the hot summer air, was a large puddle into which all kinds of refuse was thrown. A pig, in Miss R—'s words "the dirtiest of his race," grubbed in the delectable receptacle, while two thin pallid mites of children played hop-scotch at the edge. The dirty deplorable condition of these unfortunate youngsters is simply indescribable. Poor bairnies. Miss R— had a call to make here, so we entered the cottage. Such a place, whose walls, once white perhaps, were now a dingy mud colour variegated with grease-marks.

The floor was bare and crusted with dirt. In a cradle at one side of the room was a baby asleep, with a shaggy dog at its feet keeping

guard, the whole array looking as if they had just come back from a visit to the chimney-sweep. In another corner of the room stood a rabbit-hutch; over the floor hopped some pigeons, pecking at a bundle of dirty linen lying beside a tub of soap-suds. The father of the family sat smoking a foul pipe, while his wife, unkempt and dirty like her surroundings, stood frying herrings for a meal. At this moment two girls, employed at a factory near, came in. They were dressed in light frocks, flounced and showy, but sorely dragged and spotted. With a careless nod to Miss R— they flung their once smart but now faded head-gear to the floor, displaying mops of dusty hair partly in curl papers. Without any ceremony of "laying the cloth," the family assembled round the table, the saucepan of potatoes was placed upon it, the plates picked up from the floor, and a child sent out for a loaf and jug of beer.

While the meal was taken Miss R— went upstairs to see another girl who was very ill. Poor suffering Louie, there was not much comfort for her in that wretched chamber, wherein stood two beds beside her own, all unmade, while the disorder of the place was unbearable. Miss R— made Louie more comfortable, let some fresh air into the stifling room, and having fed her with a little dainty she had brought, proceeded to talk in her gentle way to the sick girl of "the city that hath no need of the sun," whither Louie was evidently going, for in that neglected factory-girl's heart the seed of the heavenly sower had fallen on good ground and was now bearing fruit to eternal life. With unselfish desire to benefit her family Louie refused to go to the hospital where she would have received skilled nursing, saying—

"I would rather stay at home. Perhaps it may help them to think of better things if I am here and you come, Miss R—."

Her death was a deep grief to her parents, who loved their children dearly despite their rough ignorant ways, but habit was so strong that Miss R— never found that they broke away from them actually. I have given this picture from life with some detail because I want to make clear how very little hold the magic word "home" has upon working girls of this class, which accounts for that love of the street life that characterises the majority.

"If you want to see the girls 'at play,' M—, you must go with me for a walk through Mile End, Whitechapel, or Bethnal

Green Road at any hour between six and eleven o'clock at night. We should have to visit the Paragon and other music-halls, or linger outside the gin-palaces to watch them dancing to the street piano, or alas, push open those easily swung doors and enter the gaily decked bars where crowds of the girls drink and sing with the rest of the *habitués*. But the best time to see them enjoy themselves, according to their ideas, is upon a Bank Holiday."

Some time later I witnessed a scene of this description for myself, but will defer it to a future paper, and close the present one with some words of my friend.

"No one can guess the worth of these girls when once they are reached. But their daily surroundings are so utterly alien to those conditions which stimulate the growth of a pure, self-respecting womanhood that the wonder is not at their rough hard ways, so much as at the real honesty, devotion and unselfishness of those ill-taught, stunted lives, towards each other. But the only way to permanently raise factory girls as a class is to reach them when children. Until, as children, they have a happy home-life, and are taught to love and obey by parents whom they honour, the poor lasses will always develop that impatience of control and defiance of gentler influences which are among their worst failings. Much good, however, is being done by the splendid devoted work of cultivated women, whose sympathetic kindness is keenly appreciated by the girls themselves.

"I dare say you would think their way of expressing thanks curious enough, but it is simply owing to their limited power of expression. The giggling glances at each other and scarcely suppressed titters which you noticed in the factory was really the outcome of nervousness hiding itself under this queer guise of apparent ridicule.

"Oh yes, the work is hard I know, but they are such dear warm-hearted girls when once you know them."

My friend's enthusiasm is irresistible, and she evidently is quite prepared to defend "her girls" against any and all comers. Whatever may have been in the past, factory girls of the present cannot complain that nobody cares for them, for wherever factories are built there you will find agencies at work to counteract and minimise as much as possible the trials and temptations peculiar to the feminine factory-hand.

USEFUL HINTS.

ARECA NUT TOOTH PASTE.

Four ounces of powdered precipitated chalk, two ounces of powdered orris root, one ounce of powdered areca nut, half an ounce of powdered cinnamon, half an ounce of powdered myrrh, two drams of powdered pumice stone, eight drams of powdered cochineal, three ounces of oil of bergamotte, three ounces of oil of cloves aug., two ounces of oil of lavender, sufficient parts of glycerine to make a paste. Set aside a few days, then pot for use.

CHERRY LIP SALVE.

Four ounces of oil of sweet almonds, half an ounce of best white wax, half an ounce of best spermaceti, half an ounce of best alkanet root. Keep these melted and in a warm place for six or eight hours, then strain and stir well. When nearly cold add twenty drops of oil of rose geranium, five drops of oil of cloves opt., five drops of oil of santal opt.; stir well.

GLYCERINE JELLY.

Half an ounce of Nelson's gelatine, five ounces of distilled water, five ounces of triple rose-water; soak all night, heat gently to dissolve, add twenty grains of boric acid, and ten ounces of pure glycerine. Strain while warm, and add three drops or so of otto of roses.

TONIC HAIR WASH.

Four ounces of Eau de Cologne, half an ounce of spirits of rosemary, half an ounce of tincture of cantharides, one ounce of wood violet perfume; mix. Apply to the roots of the hair with a sponge.

EUCALYPTUS TOILET CREAM.

Five ounces of white vaseline, one ounce of spermaceti, two ounces of honey (English), melt and stir in four drams of oil of eucalyptus, two drams of oil of rose geranium. Pour into opal pots just before setting.

QUININE DENTIFRICE.

Four ounces and a half of powdered precipitated chalk, one ounce and a half of powdered orris root, half a dram of sulphate of quinine, one dram of oil of rose geranium. Sift.

BORAX DENTIFRICE.

Four ounces of powdered precipitated chalk, two ounces of powdered borax, one ounce of powdered myrrh, one ounce of powdered orris root, one ounce of powdered cinnamon. Mix and sift.

CEMENT FOR CHINA, ETC.

One ounce of best isinglass, eighty grains of powdered mastic, two ounces of distilled water, four ounces of glacial acetic acid. Soak the isinglass in the water, and when all has been absorbed add the acid previously mixed with the mastic. Heat gently until a clear solution is formed, and bottle for use.