

my tears; Thou hearest my sighs! Thou art everywhere present, even in this dark dungeon. My father and mother know nothing of my fate, and my husband is far away. No kind friend's hand can reach me here. But Thine arm is not shortened—Thou art able to open my dungeon doors. Oh, best of Fathers, have pity on me!"

Sometimes she gave way to bitter weeping until her eyes and even her cheeks became sore, and sometimes she could only sit stunned and motionless, staring into vacancy with fixed and tearless eyes.

"Ah!" cried she, "how happy are even the very poorest of men in comparison with me! They can at least see the bright blue sky and the lovely green fields. Would that, with all my rank, I could exchange with a

poor shepherdess or a daily labourer! How happy should I be! Alas! all has been taken from me! Nothing remains to me! The very sun itself, which shines on all men, shines upon me no more!

"But, no! not all is lost! I still possess Thee, my God! Oh, be Thou to me a Sun of Mercy! Yes, the very thought of Thee brings brightness to my soul."

As soon as the first shock of horror and grief was spent, she folded her arms with pious fervour, and, looking up to heaven, prayed with burning tears. Bishop Hildorf's words often returned to her mind. "Is this," she would cry, "the happiness you promised me? Was this dark dungeon concealed for me behind a portal of flowers?"

"And yet," she would add with resignation,

"it must be all for my good, since it was Thou, my God, who caused me to be here imprisoned. Yes, it is in Thy love that Thou sendest sorrows to us. Under the guise of affliction many a real blessing lies hidden, like a sweet fruit under a bitter rind. I will, therefore, cheerfully accept these sorrows from Thy paternal hand. I will look only to Thee, and will not even complain to Thee, for it is by Thy permission that I am here. Do with me as Thou wilt."

After this prayer she felt much comforted. A voice within her seemed to say, "Take courage, Genevieve! much suffering still awaits thee, but Thy Lord will deliver thee from all!" She then fell into a refreshing sleep.

(To be continued.)

## THE CINDERELLAS OF THE NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD.

### THE MATCH-MAKERS OF EAST LONDON. A VISIT TO BRYANT AND MAY'S.



HAD spent a busy morning going hither and thither about the hot city streets—too heated even for the London sparrow to display his wonted audacious energy—and was picturing an afternoon of leisured ease, when across my

memory flashed a telegraphic reminder which abruptly put to flight such vain dreams, and sent me off in a great hurry, regardless of sun, dust, or any such minor discomforts, to the East End of London, where so many, many thousands of factory workers dwell in as close vicinity as convenient to their respective places of employment. Along the great artery, planned by Roman engineers in those old-world days when the Imperial standards were planted on British soil, commencing from Aldgate and going in a continuous line to Stratford Church before the thoroughfare forks right and left into separate roads, can be seen almost every type and members of almost every class in the ranks of working women. It is indeed a wonderful motley crowd that throngs the ancient highway I traversed that July afternoon, noticing keenly the varied faces passing me in a continuous stream. There Jewesses, perhaps with the proud old blood of Judah's princes running in their veins, but earning a poor pittance as tailoresses, elbowed their way along laden with piles of unmade garments from the cheap clothing shops; there little stunted girls, tie makers' "runners," hurried along citywards with mysterious oilskin covered bundles; there the loafer and the out-of-work artisan strolled by, joking with merry careless English or Irish lassies wearing the orthodox white apron of the factory-girl, going back to the surrounding factories from their dinner—such a medley of eager toilers, each with a history, each with a care, and all needing love and sympathy.

The match-factory hands seem to have coloured with their personality the whole tone of East End women-workers as a body, occupying the same position in our idea of East End life as do the shawled hands and clogged feet of the mill-girls of Manchester, Oldham and other huge centres of special industries, in our mental pictures of those places. Of course, there are many other branches of work performed by girl-labour in East London; but the white-aproned, dauntless damsel, with her sweeping feathers, and "fringe," worn Skye terrier fashion, whose

nimble fingers manipulate matches with bewildering celerity of motion, certainly occupies the leading position in the very front rank of East End toilers.

Now from my childhood I had always been curious to know something about these useful matchmakers of whose lives and habits I heard so much that was strange and sad. I perfectly recollect the impression my youthful mind received when I heard my elders talking of the famous day when the match-girls marched up to the House of Parliament to tell Mr. Robert Lowe what they thought of his measure. I thought with awe of the stories I had read of those famous Tricoteuses of the French Revolution, and privately hoped the match-girls' action would not bring about an English Reign of Terror, while I thought they must be very horrid, rough girls indeed. That is all a matter of history now, together with more recent events, yet from that period dates my interest in factory-workers generally. It was, therefore, with a strange pleasure to which both past and present contributed that I paused in the blazing sunshine a few afternoons since, outside the great red wall which bounds the huge premises of Messrs. Bryant & May, Limited, the head-quarters of the British match-making industry. No sound could be heard, not a murmur of the great hive within. It might have been an enchanted palace so hushed was every sound. Only the rustling of some well-foliaged trees above the high wall, and the smoking chimney shafts rising stately-wise into the deep blue of the atmosphere, indicated any sign of life within. I rang, a cracked bell I think, for no one replied to its summons. After waiting some minutes I tried another postern with more success, for a neat bonny maid-servant appeared and directed me to "open the gate for myself if I pleased." Following her instructions I passed the gate-keeper and proceeded up a spacious tree-shaded courtyard to a wide entrance archway under what we may term the clock tower. Passing to the left I entered a large office tenanted by a busy staff of clerks, and asked to see the managing director. He happened to be in the factory on some pressing business matter, so I had to wait a little while. It was not long before the gentleman appeared, and greeted me in the kindly genial way which seems so natural to him.

"Now really, what do you actually want to know about our people?" was his direct query. "We are always pleased to show our girls to any one who takes a true interest in them, and if that is your reason for coming here I shall be glad to tell you all I can of their work and lives."

"I want to see your girls at work in order to describe to our girls something of the daily bread-winning their sisters' lot entails," I said earnestly.

"And who may your girls be?" inquired Mr. Bartholomew pleasantly.

"The readers of THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER," was my very proud answer, whereat he appeared duly impressed, and at once rose to conduct me over that part of his domain where women are employed, and the only portion that really would interest girls; although some of the places I saw incidentally, and descriptions given me by Mr. Bartholomew were fascinating enough for a fairy-tale; one of those magic stories which science and invention make possible. Just stop when you light a match and think of the enormous quantities of timber stacked by old Izaak Walton's river, brought thither from solemn primeval forests far away to be converted into wood matches, of which some thirty thousand millions are sent out on their light-giving service annually. Those girls who possess a mathematical mind may work out a nice little problem as to how many persons it would take to expend this quantity, working at the rate of nine hours per day and igniting thirty matches each minute.

Chatting pleasantly about the cordial understanding which exists between the company and its *employés*, we crossed a yard and ascended a flight of narrow steep steps. The hum of machinery grew louder as we approached the top and emerged into a spacious workshop containing a large number of "filling" machines, wherein the prepared splints of wood are placed and then gradually wound between long strips of leather into a round O about half-a-yard in diameter. This "filling" or feeding of the machine is performed by our factory-lassie, who is responsible for two machines, which she tends and watches alternately.

"You have many *employés* here," I remarked, looking round the extensive place and noting the numerous workers.

"Yes. Something like two hundred and fifty to three hundred. Here, at Fairfield, we employ an average of one thousand women and three hundred men and boys. At the Bow Common factory about three hundred men, boys, and girls, and at the tin box factory between three and four hundred, mostly girls. Altogether we calculate our workers to be two thousand."

As I listened, I watched interestedly the process going on before me. The bonnie, fresh-faced girl was putting in the splints of wood



in the receiver, and guiding the snaky-looking coils of leather as they slowly went round and round until the ring, for all the world like a very thin American cheese, was duly transferred to a waiting lad, and carried off to undergo another stage of preparation. I afterwards saw this, and must just tell my readers about it before I pass to one of the most picturesque scenes I ever gazed upon. When the coils, consisting of eight thousand or so splints, which afterwards are cut into two, making sixteen thousand matches, leave the winding machine, they are placed under a levelling beater as it is termed, and then passing first across hot iron plates, are subjected to immersion in a shallow tank of paraffin solution.

I was conducted to the "dipping" room—there are really several—and shown the process of covering the match tops with the phosphoric composition. Here no women are on any account employed, as it is considered by the firm scarcely fit for them, on account of the necessarily possible danger from breathing the fumes which arise from the phosphorus. But every care is taken to minimise this danger, and most successfully. Here, as in all other departments, every care is exercised to produce excellent ventilation by means of fan machinery, and hot summer afternoon though it was, the various work-rooms were delightfully cool and airy—even the "dipping" rooms themselves being fairly so considering the necessity for artificial heat being used to keep the composition, spread out on shallow iron boxes, in its proper liquidity. Into this variously coloured stuff the match coils are pressed, and then sent to be dried, only one end at a time being done. When duly finished, the coils are sent below to pass through the final stages of their preparation for their debut into society.

"Step this way, please. I want to give you a bird's-eye view before we go downstairs," observed my guide, and he led me to a gallery and bade me look down. I did so, and I wish I could reproduce for you the pretty scene, full of life and colour, that met my eyes. The afternoon sunlight came in from many a window, sending bright shafts upon the uncovered heads of the girl-workers, while great shadows, cast by huge beams, machinery, pillars, and so forth, lent the requisite darker shading and contrasting tints. This vast hall was the boxing-room, where millions of matches pass through those girlish hands—honest toiling hands which wage a brave warfare against poverty. Little jets of fire kept darting here and there, proceeding from unfortunate bundles of matches which not infrequently are "fired" by the quickness with which they are manipulated; busy fingers flow from box to box with lightning swiftness, girls ran to and fro, while the soft hum of voices rose above the other sounds, and the varied hues of the gay blouses so much affected by factory-girls, gave added colour to the animating scene.

"If you have quite taken in the view, we will go down," said Mr. Bartholomew, and in a few minutes we stood among the workers. No counting the matches there. A tall handsome girl, with a strange wistful face, who stood near us, caught up a handful, cut them in halves, and had the box filled and tossed aside with bewildering swiftness.

"They rarely make mistakes in the size of each bundle, and a smart worker can fill from thirty-five to forty gross of boxes daily."

The number almost seemed impossible, but as I lingered by the long, long rows of benches, heaped with orderly piles of splints, and watched the hundreds of girls intent upon their light—in more senses than one—employment, I realised its truth. And then thoughtfully regarding the workers themselves, the idea came to me that it is not the factory work

actually, but home influences, home surroundings which cause those wild, independent, alas! often reckless natures to develop such deplorable disregard of womanly characteristics. Love is the one thing to win them. Harshness, roughness, the factory-girl experiences from her cradle, and she is quite able to "hold her own" in a tussle whether of words or competitions. Yet to love she is a stranger oft-times. But of this side of my subject, more presently.

"Our chief difficulty with the girls is their 'don't care' attitude when time-keeping is in question. It is to their interest as well as the firm's, yet we cannot, do what we will, make them understand the importance of regularity in labour. Take, for instance, a girl—she is quick, and earns her two shillings by dinner-time. That is sufficient. Off she goes to enjoy herself without any thought of the loss to herself. Then, perhaps, when wages are paid, she has only seven or eight shillings instead of the twelve or fourteen she might have earned. I would give a great deal to get our people to see their folly, but it seems hopeless;" and the managing director looks as if the matter troubled him very much. "They are so uncontrolled," he continues; "there is an example. Last week—and I wish you had seen it—we had a great entertainment in connection with our Clifden Institute opposite. It was held in the dining-hall inside here. The girls were delighted, and did splendidly with their musical drill, etc.; but on the Saturday, dear me, the work we had to get them quiet again. Some of the decorations in the dining-room caught their attention and excited them to top pitch. Yes, it is quite true. The great need of our working-girls is self-control."

Passing the machine which unwinds the match-coils and leaves them ready for the boxers to come and take away, we went to the packing rooms where a rather steadier band of damsels were quietly packing and casing the boxes.

"We must have a little system of promotion," observed Mr. Bartholomew pleasantly, whereby I guessed rightly that these neat girls were slightly superior in the scale of workers. "The boxes themselves are largely made by outside hands, and I am assured that an unencumbered girl or older woman who will give her ten hours working day to the manufacture of these can earn from ten to fourteen shillings per week. Of course the poor women who try to eke out their husband's scanty wages by adding a little at match-box making, perhaps could not in addition to their domestic duties earn more than six or seven shillings, but this is unavoidable, and not owing to low prices.

"You would hardly think that fashion played as important a part in the colour of matches as it does in women's bonnets," remarked my guide as we walked towards another department.

"No, certainly not. How is that?"

"Different towns require different colours. Down among the miners in North England black is the favourite, while historic Preston demands blue-tipped matches. Lancashire is content with common-place pink. But the funniest preference is shown in the land of 'bills' and butter. For Limerick alone has true blue, and all other parts of Ireland require red. And by-the-bye, in the Victoria factory all our hands, men and women, hail from the Emerald Isle by birth or lineage. They are a credit to it."

I warmly agree, for certainly the girls in that department are the merriest, most sonnie lassies I have seen in the whole place. To hear them sing some of the glees they learn at the singing classes over the way is delightful, for their voices are rich, full and sweet, and they revel in singing and music. The presence of a visitor laid no check upon their good-humoured

volubility, and it speaks well for the firm when I can say that the master's appearance caused no cloud to shade the bright faces.

Across another yard and into another building. Here the first thing I was shown was a number of girls apparently engaged at weaving-machines, for to nothing else could I compare the long, long strands of creamy white material stretching across the place on what appear very like looms.

I went close to see what it was made of, the pretty dark-eyed girl in charge readily showing me.

The material was cotton. Oh, yes. Something like twenty-two threads go to each match, and sixty to one hundred tapers are at one time wound over huge drums and passed through the wax preparation or coating in a tank kept heated by steam, in the midst of which is a steel plate full of holes threaded through with a line of taper in each. Another whirling drum receives them at the other end, and thus they are passed through and through until the cotton is properly coated, and the finished taper sent to be dried. Miles after miles are worked up in a day, about eight or nine hundred I understood; and I leave you to guess how many of those pretty wax vestas are made from this quantity. Space fails me to describe all the interesting departments of work in this marvellous match factory. The tin boxes made at the Bow Bridge factory, albeit girls are partly employed in making them, I did not see, although I had a description of them and their work. Time was passing, and I yet had to visit Clifden House. Several departments were just looked at, and then Mr. Bartholomew said: "We are getting round now, but I want to show you a few empty boxes," conducting me into a vast warehouse as he spoke.

"If you style these a few, what do you call many," I rejoined, for pile after pile, stack after stack of empty boxes met my astonished eyes.

From floor to roof rose the apparently limitless range of these articles.

"Eight hundred thousand gross of these we keep in store continually, and please recollect that twelve dozen constitute one gross."

What a mighty trade the firm must have; and the varied designs and labels I inspected—some elegant and home-like, others foreign and strange—testify to its world-wide extension. It would be a terrible calamity to East End factory girls if this great establishment could no longer compete with the foreign manufacturers and was compelled to close its doors.

"You employ Swedish girls I suppose at your factory in Sweden?" I asked, for I certainly believed that Messrs. Bryant & May had such a factory. The managing director however laughed as he answered—

"Well, now, I am always hearing about that place, but I have not yet discovered its whereabouts. If such a thing exists it is invisible to mortal eyes."

A visit to the huge building, dining-hall on the ground floor, warehouse in basement and in floor above, completed my tour of Fairfield Works. As we stood in the doorway looking at the long array of benches and tables a characteristic bit of information came out.

"Each body of workers have their own table, nor will they allow any others there. Each know and maintain their place against all comers."

"Why, they are as clannish as Scotchmen."

"Indeed you are right. There is a wonderful clannish spirit amongst match-girls. They will not as a rule consort with others employed in the jam, pill or other branches by any means. This ought to be considered by people in dealing with, or writing about them."

A passing glance at the snug stables,



accommodating thirty horses, and I found myself once more crossing the courtyard.

"I hope Miss Nash is at home, for she will be able to give you a great deal of information about our girls out of the factory. We have a deep interest in and substantially help the most useful institute."

Thus chatting my kind guide conducted me across Fairfield Road to a block of small houses opposite. In a few minutes I was resting in the lady superintendent's cool tiny sitting-room, which in its peaceful tone was suggestive of some old-world "friend's" abode, and Miss Nash herself, with her sweet calm face and gentle dignity, looked a veritable Quakeress. Mr. Bartholomew had business to arrange with her respecting some entertainment.

The relations between masters and work-people are, as previously remarked, cordial enough, and the firm undoubtedly takes pains to deal kindly with its dependents. If the girls are steady and willing their actual working-day is not a tyranny, and moreover than this they have many privileges which unfortunate shop-girls and seamstresses do not get by any means.

"Tell you all about the institute's work," repeated Miss Nash, when the kindly managing director had gone back to his duties leaving us to chat over the information I was anxious to gain. "Where shall I begin, for there is so much to say."

"Begin at the beginning," I suggested, smiling.

"The beginning of all was soon after that very sad general strike, and came about in a very simple manner. Viscountess Clifden, reading and hearing the descriptions of a match-girl's life, its needs, sorrows, trials, hardships, was led to ask herself the question: 'What ought I to do? What is my responsibility with regard to these toiling sisters of mine?' Stirred by this thought, her ladyship came here into our East London life, studied it, consulted with the heads of the firm, and finally her resolve to help the factory girls took tangible form. This block of cottages was converted into an Institute and Refreshment Room, and duly opened by H.R.H. the Duchess of Teck. My first thought on coming here was how to begin the work for, of course, being a new untried field I had to study the girls first. So I went in and out amongst them and learnt to know their ways. Then I began operations by issuing tokens of admission to a certain number of girls inviting them to a gathering. They came and behaved well. Within two months we had seventy-nine regular members, and from ten to a dozen girls from the first came to be taught needle-work. Now we have provided something like fifty or sixty thousand meals within the year. Think what that means in the way of keeping the girls out of public-houses, and teaching them the advantage of nice, well-cooked food. Our dinners cost threepence, and for that sum we give them meat, two vegetables, and (I think Miss Nash said) pudding."

The girls may well patronise such a restaurant, and there is no doubt that many are first won from the rough life of their

class through its instrumentality. The classes and evening club-room where table games and healthy literature are provided, are a wonderful inspiration to the poor lassies, some of whose homes are unlovely enough. The active life inside the factory disposes them for restful recreations in their playtime; but the musical-drill practice is ever popular. Quite recently an exhibition of their skill in this department was given in aid of the Hospital Saturday Fund, for to the honour of factory girls be it said, they are a generous, warm-hearted set, always ready to help a needy cause or person. One of Miss Nash's helpers is continually occupied in visiting the girls' homes, except on Wednesday afternoons, when she conducts a mothers' meeting. This systematic visitation does much to keep the links of sympathy intact, and by its means much is learned of the far-reaching influence of the institute. Quietly and unostentatiously this noble effort has combated serious obstacles and difficulties and won the hardy support of its very independent *protégées*. Even Mrs. Besant's club, started about the same time in the Bow Road, with no higher aims than mere physical or perhaps mental good only, failed to win away the rough careless-hearted girls, and is now closed.

"I daren't go there, miss," said one to Miss Nash. "She don't believe in God, and though I'm not good, I likes to go where people love Him, I do; and I'm afraid of that place."

"Miss," said another lassie, struck by the love which is the only rule at Clifden House, "I think you are very like Jesus Christ."

Oh, I wish I had space to tell you all the sweet stories Miss Nash related as we sat together, until I felt ashamed to think how little such quiet, patient work, is regarded in our great world. Yet it is such devoted labours as this lady and many another of God's heroines are engaged in, that tell upon the general good of society, helping these dear working sisters of ours to higher ideals, and true gracious womanhood. Contrast the "play" of factory girls under such guidance, and the pleasures their untaught crude fancies seek when left alone. I could not write here of all the sad, sad ways in which those as yet unreached by refined womanly influence, spend their leisure hours; but I will just mention one or two. Imagine a row of flaring lights outside a shop front, temporarily converted within into a penny show. At the door stands a man shouting out the various attractions inside. A group of girls come along, stop, listen, shove each other, and finally, giggling and open-eyed, put down their pennies and enter to see a fat woman, or some monstrosity, or a row of ugly waxworks, very frequently effigies of notorious criminals, whose wicked deeds are rehearsed in lucid language by a cicerone. From a scene like this, loudly discussing the terrible deeds of the persons whom they have seen—in wax—our poor girls go perhaps to a public-house and drink until half-intoxicated; then home to their wretched dwellings to tumble into bed and sleep until the factory-bell calls them to turn out at six o'clock for the day's toil. Or a visit, if it is Saturday night, to a music-hall, where the artistes excite their admiration and envy, is

very popular, and I need hardly say, causes very lamentable mischief. But the spirit of such places as Clifden House is spreading more and more, and visible signs of the elevating forces at work, for years, are increasingly being multiplied.

"Do you think the factory girls as a class are really better than formerly?" I asked of Miss Nash.

"Yes. I have seen a great improvement here alone, and this is the third institution of the kind I have opened and worked. Quieter manners, keener readiness to perceive the true gifts and loveliness of a womanly character, are distinctly visible. There is more love for domestic virtues, and thrift in money matters. We do try to teach that, for it is one of the defects of working-class life. The girls, so many of them, are simply ignorant how to expend their income profitably."

"Ah," thought I, "that is not a failing exclusively confined to factory girls."

The savings' bank has about three hundred depositors, so it will be seen that its superintendent's efforts in this direction have borne good fruit.

"You ain't got no brass, miss, but your gentle ways hev done me a pile o' good," said a girl, earnestly, in spite of her odd mode of expression.

Before I said good-bye to my hostess, she offered to take me over the institute, and very soon I was duly initiated into the mysteries of the place. Ah! happy mysteries. At one end of the building stands a lodging-house, a veritable home of peace, where twelve young women live in true home fashion. Such dear little beds, each with its own tent above, and nice neat furnishing. These girls frequently will bring home some nice card, or little trifle, and stow it away on another girl's pillow for her to see. They are allowed to invite friends "home" to see them, and they are very punctilious about being "in" at a good time in the evenings.

An inspection of the roomy "restaurant," quiet and empty now, save for some roguish urchins who had stolen in to get some odd pieces of bread and jam, and the long club-room with its curtained windows and piano, finished my sight-seeing on this occasion. But one more question remained, and that concerned the spiritual side.

"Ah, that is our foundation," replied Miss Nash, the light of Christian joy over her beloved flock illumining her features. "We have no faith in any other, and therein lies the secret of our success. Beside the Bible-classes and religious services, I have pews in a church at Victoria Park, where any girls who choose can go. And I have to tell you that two years ago I had the happiness of seeing no less than seven—once careless, heedless girls as any around—take their confirmation vow, and nobly have they kept it. And only a factory girl knows what such a step means. But they are so thorough in their conversion."

We did not speak for a few minutes; then I bade this true-hearted woman farewell and came away, deeply impressed with my afternoon study of match-girls at work and "at play."

LLOYD LESTER.

