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LONDON'S FUTURE HOUSEWIVES AND THEIR TEACHERS.

IF one stands at the entrance of a large Board school either at dinner or tea-time and watches the pupils trooping out, one often wonders what will become of all these lively children in a few years' time, what they will make of their lives, and how enough work is to be found for them all. Has it ever struck any of my readers that, whatever the boys may do in the way of work, sooner or later that of the girls is certain? They are going to be the wives or housekeepers of these or other boys. They will be dressmakers, tailoresses, servants, factory girls or what not for a time, but their final business will be housekeeping, and housekeeping too on small means, so that a great deal of skill, care and knowledge will be needed if they are to do it well.

How are the girls to be trained for this very important work of theirs? Their school life

is very short; the time they will have to spare after leaving school will be very little, their leisure hours in the evening being wanted for rest and recreation as well as for learning; it will be small wonder if many of them marry without any knowledge of household management and if the comfort and happiness of their home is ruined in consequence.

The question is so serious that people interested in education have given it a great deal of thought. There is little doubt that, if it were possible, the best plan would be to give a year's training in housekeeping to every girl when she leaves school; but alas! since most girls from elementary schools are obliged to earn money as early as possible, this plan cannot be carried out. The only thing that can be done by the managers of elementary schools is to proceed on the principle that "half a loaf

is better than no bread," to give the girls, while still at school, weekly lessons for a certain number of weeks each year, in cookery and laundry-work, and sometimes in housewifery generally, and to encourage them to attend evening classes after they have left school. A great deal of good has been done in this way, but the children are so young and the lessons necessarily so few, so far between and so fragmentary, that the result is very far from being all that could be wished.

Seeing this, the Technical Education Board of the London County Council five years ago began to establish, one after another, Schools of Domestic Economy to which girls should go for five months at a time after leaving the ordinary schools, and where they should be occupied for the whole school hours five days a week in household work, thus giving them



A HOUSEWIFERY CLASS AT BATTERSEA POLYTECHNIC.

an opportunity of really understanding their future duties as housewives. The question of enabling poor people to afford this five months' extra teaching for their girls was a difficult one to meet, but as far as it could be done it has been done by giving free scholarships at these schools and by providing the scholars with their dinner and tea free of cost, and providing also the material required by each girl for making herself a dress, an apron and some under-garment during her time at the school. With only two exceptions, these schools, which are nine in number, are held in the polytechnics or in technical institutes, a capital arrangement whereby the rooms needed for evening classes for adults are used also during the daytime.

Let us look in at one of the schools and see of what a day's work consists. We will choose the school at the Battersea Polytechnic, because a Training School for Teachers is held there as well as a school for girls, and we shall have a double interest in the work. The Polytechnic is a great building standing back from Battersea Park Road, and at about nine o'clock in the morning we shall find a stream of teachers and pupils hurrying into it, masters and mistresses of the Science School, the Domestic Economy School, and the Training School for Teachers of Domestic Economy; boys and girls of the Science School; girls and women students of the two Domestic Economy Schools; and a few minutes later we shall find these all gathered in a large hall for "call over" and prayers, and then filing off to their separate departments.

Let us ask Miss Mitchell, the head of the Domestic Economy Schools, to spare us a little of her time and explain the work to us. We follow the women and girls to a separate wing of the building, and as they divide off into the different class-rooms we enter the large cookery school and watch the students in training settling down to their morning's work, fetching their pots and pans from cupboards and shelves, looking up the list of their work on the blackboard, weighing out ingredients, and so on. We look round the room, a little confused at first with all the movement, and see that it is large and well lighted with coal-stoves at one end and gas-stoves fixed into two large tables in the centre, with a lift, up which provisions for the day are still being sent, and down which, as we find later, the dinner is to go to the dining-room punctually at one o'clock: large sinks and plate-racks are fitted in one corner, low cupboards with shelves over them run far along the walls, and at the end of the room opposite the stoves is a stepped gallery, where forty or fifty pupils can sit for demonstration lessons. The head cookery teacher is busily engaged inspecting the food materials bought in by the student-housekeeper, criticising the quality and hearing the prices given, and Miss Mitchell explains to us that the students take it in turns to be housekeepers, and have to buy in materials for dinners for some sixty people every day; they are given lists of what will be wanted by the teachers, but the whole responsibility of choosing and buying the food rests with them, and so out they go every day into the neighbouring streets, taking with them two or three girls from the Domestic Economy School, to choose fish, meat and vegetables from the shops and stalls of the neighbourhood, for they are to learn how to choose and make the best of such provisions as the working people of the neighbourhood are accustomed to buy, and capital training this is for them.

"Do the students here cook dinners for sixty people?" we ask in wonder; and in answer, Miss Mitchell takes us next door into a smaller cookery room, where fifteen girls are at work under the charge of a teacher and a student, also busy on dishes which are to be ready by dinner-time. Everything left from one day's dinner, we are told, is brought up to the cookery schools again by the "house-keeper" to be re-cooked and made into dainty dishes—no waste of any kind is allowed.

Crossing the corridor we find two rooms given up to dressmaking and needlework; here again both students-in-training and girls are working in separate classes. One of the students, who has nearly completed her course of training, is helping a teacher with a class of girls (fifteen in number again we notice), and the other students, under the head dress-making teacher, are busy on their own work—this morning they are drafting bodice patterns for various types of figures, but that their work is not confined to pattern-making is evident when the cupboards are opened and dresses taken out for our inspection—dresses made by each student to fit herself, funds being provided as in the case of the girls by the Technical Education Board. Very neatly made the dresses are, and proud the students seem to be of them, though their pride is tempered by anxiety as to what the examiner's opinion of them may be when the time of examination for their diplomas comes. Each student has to make two dresses, that is, sample garments to show her plain needlework, and to learn to patch and mend old dresses and under-garments, her pride culminating in a sampler of patches, darns, and drawthread work, such as that hanging in a show cupboard on the wall. The girls, we are told, in their shorter course make themselves one dress, one apron, and an under-garment each, and spend one lesson of two hours each week in practical mending of worn garments.

We ask why it is that every class we have seen consists of fifteen pupils only, and are told that in all classes for practical work for which funds are supplied by the Technical Education Board the number of pupils is limited to fifteen, so that the teacher may be able to attend thoroughly to the practical work of each pupil, instead of having to teach her class somewhat in the manner of a drill sergeant, as must inevitably be the case when dealing with large numbers.

But the morning is getting on, and we hurry downstairs to the laundry, perhaps the most striking of all the class-rooms, a glass partition shutting off the washing-room, with its large teak troughs where a busy set of girls are at work, from the ironing-room, fitted with long solid tables on which blouses of many shapes and colours are being ironed into crisp freshness. A special feature of the room is the white-tiled screen keeping the heat of the ironing stove, with its dozens of irons, from the rest of the room, while the height and good ventilation keep the room fresh and pleasant even in hot weather. We turn away from this vision of dainty whiteness to be in time to see the last class we are to visit this morning, the "housewifery" class, which is conducting a "spring-cleaning" in one of the social rooms of the polytechnic, which lends itself admirably for the purpose of teaching the girls how to turn out a well-furnished sitting-room. The housewifery lessons are a great feature of the Domestic Economy Schools,

we hear, and include the whole routine of household work apart from actual cooking, washing, and dressmaking, these being, as we have seen, taught separately, so that girls who have gone through the course ought not to find themselves at a loss in any department of housekeeping, the whole series of lessons in each department being made to dovetail one into the other.

It is nearly one o'clock now, and Miss Mitchell asks us to come into the dining-room, where the tables are just laid for dinner, and we find the housekeeping-student in charge, lifting dishes on to "hot-plates" as they come down from the cookery schools, with the group of girls who are told off to help her giving final touches to the tables, these being laid with pretty blue and white crockery, and with here and there bunches of flowers which have been brought by one or other of the pupils. The teachers aim at having the tables laid as nicely as possible and at giving the girls a high standard of neatness and daintiness to take back with them to their own homes.

Presently a bell rings and the girls file in and take their places at three long tables, with a teacher and a student at the head and foot of each, the other students-in-training having a table to themselves. We feel rather intrusive as we watch them take their places, and, turning out of the room, ask Miss Mitchell to spare us yet a few minutes to answer some of the questions that are in our minds.

"How many of such schools are there? Where are the others, and how do the girls get their scholarships? Can we help girls we know to get such a chance, and specially how are the scholarships for training teachers to be obtained, and what chance is there for these teachers at the end of their two years' training?" Miss Mitchell tells us laughingly that to answer all this fully would take much more than a few minutes, but this much she can say: that at present, though the number of schools is far from enough to give as many scholarships as are needed for all London, they are steadily increasing in number; there are such schools at the Borough, Chelsea, Woolwich, Clerkenwell, St. John's Wood, Bloomsbury, Wandsworth and Norwood, while others will be opened in Holloway, at Globe Road, Bow, and at Deptford next term: that the girls' scholarships are given on their being nominated by their school mistresses for the approval of the Technical Education Board, and that therefore anyone interested in getting such a scholarship for a working girl should write to the offices of the Technical Education Board of the London County Council for information, and then get the girl to apply to her mistress for a nomination for next term. As regards the training scholarships, they have to be won by passing an examination, not in itself very stiff, but sufficient to ensure that the teachers of domestic economy trained in the school shall possess a fairly good general education. All particulars can be obtained from the offices of the Technical Education Board. As to the chance of employment, the experience of teachers holding good diplomas from the Battersea Training School has been very happy, few of them having had to wait long for work. And so she wishes us good-bye, and we leave the building feeling that we have had a glance into a new world, one full of energy and hopefulness, and giving promise of happier conditions of life for future generations of citizens in our great city.





A NEEDLEWORK CLASS, BATTERSEA POLYTECHNIC.

THE HOUSE WITH THE VERANDAH.

By ISABELLA FYVIE MAYO, Author of "Other People's Stairs," "Her Object in Life," etc.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE TELEGRAM FROM THE NORTH.

THE days went on: the mysterious "knocks" did not recur, and as the police inspector made no more inquiries, and the Marvels attempted no further intercourse with the little house with the verandah, the very memory of them readily faded from the minds of the little household there, and especially from that of its mistress, ever becoming more pre-occupied with the prolonged delay of letters from Charlie, or indeed of any news from the *Slains Castle*.

Lucy's brother-in-law, Mr. Brand, went down to Bath to attend Mr. Bray's funeral, and his wife Florence accompanied him "to be with the dear old lady in her sorrow." Indeed, Mr. Brand left his wife with the widow while he went to and fro between Bath and London, looking after his own business and winding up Mr. Bray's affairs. Lucy would have liked to visit the old lady in the early days of bereavement, but, of course, in her circumstances any such expression of sympathy was out of the question. Still, every evening, no matter how tired and despondent she felt she wrote a loving little note to her mother's old friend, so that every morning she might find it on her breakfast-table. Also, Lucy copied a little picture of the Surrey village where she knew Mrs. Bray had first met her dead husband, and she

sent it to the widow as a tender sign of sympathy. Lucy did not wonder that Mrs. Bray herself never acknowledged these tokens of love, for she knew the lady was old and feeble, and that deep grief is sometimes very silent. She knew that Mrs. Bray received all her remembrances, for Florence wrote delivering the old lady's "thanks for all kindnesses," and adding how grateful she also was for Florence's companionship, and for all the arrangements "Jem" was making for her welfare.

"There is not so much property left as one might have supposed, considering that Mr. Bray has earned such a large income for so many years," wrote Florence. "But then the Brays have always lived among people of rank and wealth, and naturally they got into the habit of spending as their friends did."

"Ah," said Miss Latimer, as Lucy read the letter to her. "In that way, earned incomes, however big, soon break up and vanish, as did the clay jar in the fable, when it raced with the iron pot!"

Lucy resumed her reading. "Florence goes on: 'Never mind; they have both enjoyed the best of everything, and have had many advantages which they might not have had, if people had not believed them to be rich. Jem is always saying that there's nothing so expensive as poverty. Therefore, though there is not much property left, it won't matter

much, for in many ways Mrs. Bray's spending days are necessarily over. Jem is managing so cleverly that she will scarcely know she is poorer than she used to be. She will even be able to afford to go on living in the same house, when she returns to London. It would be a great trial to her if she could not hope to do that—and it can be managed, for, you see, she is old and can't live long. She trusts Jem implicitly and leaves everything to him. She always says, 'I don't want to know anything about money matters; I never have known and I don't wish to begin now. I ask for nothing but my little comforts and Rachel to look after me.' And then Jem assures her that is quite easy, and so she is satisfied. I can't think what Mrs. Bray would do without Rachel. She is more devoted to her mistress than ninety-nine daughters out of a hundred are to their mothers. I don't anticipate that my girls will be half so kind to me when my dismal days come—and of course, I hope they'll be married and gone off long before I'm an old woman. I should not like to be the mother of ungathered wall-flowers! But where am I likely to find a Rachel? I'll just have to go and stay at an "hydropathic" when I'm an old woman. But old age is a long way off yet—and I devoutly trust that I'll be dead before it comes.'"

Those last words struck Lucy. She



THE LAUNDRY, BATTERSEA POLYTECHNIC.



THE COOKERY SCHOOL, POLYTECHNIC. STUDENTS AT WORK.