

tiptoe, flap his arms, and make efforts to fly, enamoured of the easy fashion of travel employed by birds. In his garden he would rarely consent to plant seeds of a lowly habit. Whenever I produced a packet of seeds—sleeping princesses whom the two sweethearts, soil and sun, were to kiss awake in right season—the child invariably asked, "Will they grow as tall as giants?" If I described them as future dwarfs, his eager eyes lost a shade from their brilliant colour, dulled because there was no promise of towering height in the brown specks. Ah, little boy, little son, I used to reflect, do you search for ladders whereby to escape from this prison of lawn and lilac and nursery and human regulations? Must your heart be ever pressing against the invisible bars of this visible cage? Do the ascending flowers act only as signals for your direction? Never mind the lean poplar that pierces the heaven's blue cloth with a green needle; and never mind the ambitious lark that serves as a link between the music of earth and the melodies of paradise. Cease to imagine the stars are always beckoning to you with beamy fingers.

I am here reminded to mention Barty's uncanny powers of vision. On nights of extraordinary beauty, when the eternal diamonds in the firmament were displaying the chief of their lustre, the child was usually restive. Often he used to creep from his bed, run to the window, pop his head under the blind, and gaze at the glory above him with glories to us so precious that we would not have exchanged them for all the glittering couriers of space. I think God must have loved to watch him then—so fair, so fragile, so spotless an innocent holding converse with the heavens in the dead of night. I very well remember one particular

occasion when I found Barty thus enraptured. Drawing up the blind, I revealed his startled head, and asked him at what he was looking so steadfastly.

"That star between the trees."

"Between what trees?"

"That and that." He pointed a tiny forefinger at each of the boundaries.

My unassisted eyes failing to discover a star between the two elms which rose up just across the lawn, I put on my glasses. What was my astonishment to scan a piece of space about the size of a large blanket and the colour of indigo, which was utterly without stars able to be glimpsed by grown-up vision? Barty—he was at this time not much more than three years old—insisted upon the presence of the luminary.

"Point, dear," I said.

I knelt down and glanced along the slender index raised for the purpose of helping me. He was aggrieved when I again told him there was no star in the patch of heaven between the elms. Tears came into his eyes.

"I am telling the troof," he said, mistaking my emphasis for an accusation of falsehood.

Instead of answering, I began to wonder. Can children see their home in the last system from which they came? How soon, how gradually do they lose this from the firmament as all the mundane controls pull them away from their bright penetration and leave them with a lessened galaxy? As the last abode fades from sight, remembrance of its intimate beauties, its fragrances, its thorns, also fades, I suppose. Sad, is it not?

(To be continued.)

MY LAUNDRY.

BY A LAUNDRESS.

PART I.

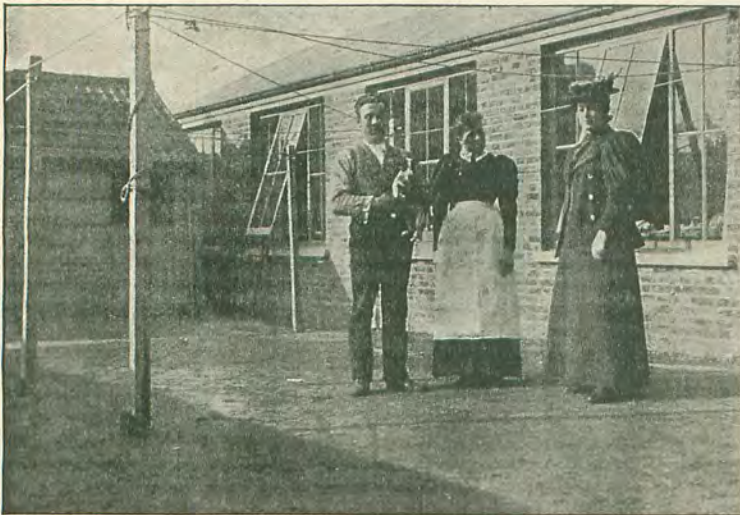
A SOLDIER, far-famed for his courage on many a field of battle, said to me the other day, "I have retired from the army, but you cannot think how sad it makes life to wake up morning after morning and feel that I have no definite work to do." And yet is not this same sorrow—this sad unrest at the aimlessness of their lives—at the bottom of the discontent of so many well-to-do women when they first pass from girlhood into womanhood?

It is the higher education of women which has driven this fact of the miserable sadness of a life without an

occupation more deeply home to us. Perhaps you will answer me, "But what about our grandmothers? There was no talk of work for women then; they happily and gladly frittered away their time." Yes, quite so, but consider how different education was in their day. Spinning, writing letters with rather bad spelling, a little reading, a good deal of embroidery, a little music, and a smattering of French probably completed their educational life; and they passed quite easily from the light school work to the conventional life of their homes. Nowadays a girl goes through a severe course of education at a high school or college; lectures, classes, examinations and real hard work,

which utterly unfit her to commence at eighteen or nineteen years old an aimless existence. The sudden change from this hard work to a life in which she wakes up morning after morning with nothing to do, except arrange the flowers, or write an invitation, or pay a call, turns many a healthy young girl into a complete nervous invalid. What has she got to do except enjoy herself and think of her own ailments, taking notice of every tiny ache or pain and making the most of it? The greatest Teacher the world has ever known said these words, "He that loseth his life shall find it," and in the hidden meaning of that inspired word is the secret of strong robust health; it is those who lose themselves in work and in the lives of others who find their own true life.

It is, then, to meet a most pressing and vital need that so many different kinds of occupation have recently opened and are still opening their doors to women. Not so very long ago if a lady lost her money or wished to work, there was but one opening for her—that of the poor despised governess. Then after the Crimean War, and the noble example set by Florence Nightingale, followed the craze for hospital nursing. By



THE MANAGERESS AND HER HUSBAND.

degrees every hospital was inundated with applicants, and thence arose—owing to the supply being so much beyond the demand—the very bad position in which nurses found themselves. Some time ago a daily paper opened its columns to the ventilation of their woes; much harder work than a domestic servant's, wretched pay, bad food; these refined ladies having to wait like servants upon the visiting medical staff and answer their questions with a "Yes, sir" or "No, sir." What caused a self-sacrificing nurse to find herself in this position? Simply a glut in the market. If a nurse objected, or found the terribly hard work too much for her strength, the door was open, she might go, there were hundreds of others waiting only too eagerly to take her place. But this has all changed now, and lady nurses are not so easily obtained.

By degrees other occupations have opened their doors to ladies. Ladies have bought places of business and started shops for selling bonnets, hats, blouses, dresses, flowers, for providing lunch and afternoon teas. We find a countess's name in large letters on a brass plate over one shop, and a lord's daughter-in-law is not ashamed to advertise her name over another! Then we have our lady book-binders, our lady doctors, lady typists, lady lecturers, lady journalists, lady clerks, and in America lady lawyers, ladies on the Stock Exchange, lady brewers, ladies everywhere and in everything!

Personally I do not belong to any of the trades I have mentioned. I am a laundress, that poor despised woman for whom no abuse seems strong enough when a handkerchief is lost, or a shirt-front not glazed to a man's idea of the pink of perfection! Whoever heard of anyone taking an interest in their laundress forsooth! When or how your clothes are washed, I suppose you have not a notion, nor do you care so long as they are well done. I think a great deal of good would be done in the world if girls who are going to marry and have houses of their own would make up their minds never to employ any laundry without taking the trouble first to go and look at it. I should like to take you round some of the wretched laundries in Notting Hill and Shepherd's Bush. I should like you to feel the heat of the ironing-rooms, and to see the dirt and squalor of many of the places. I should like you to see for yourselves the hard driven look of the women, the bad conditions under which the work is done, the long hours, which even the Factory Act has failed to abolish. And then I should like to take you to my own little laundry only seven miles from the Marble Arch and yet close to orchards and green trees, with fresh air blowing all around and about it.

What made me become a laundress? I cannot tell you; somehow I slipped into it, and very interesting I find it. If you girls find yourselves at a loose end without any occupation, come and learn my trade, and then you can go and

start a like business for yourself. There are plenty of openings; people are only too glad to hear of a *laundry* where the work is well done, and where chemicals are not employed. We are over-run with customers and have had to buy the garden next to us and to double our buildings to try to keep pace with our work. But remember, when I recommend you to start a business for yourself, I only recommend it after you yourself have been thoroughly trained, and I only advocate the starting of laundries on sound commercial principles. We work for the ordinary amount of time, we give fair wages, and we only employ skilled labour.

Come and see my laundry with me. We will take an omnibus from the Marble Arch, and then we will get, at Uxbridge Road Station, on to the top of an electric tram. They may not be nice when you are on a bicycle or in any other conveyance along the road, but when you are on one of them, I think an electric tram perfection! So smoothly we glide along, we are so high up, we get such fresh air above the fields and gardens of Acton and Ealing. The seats are so comfortable, I lean back in a corner as I whiz through the air and dream! At last we reach our turning. We dismount and walk down the road past lots of small houses, each with its tiny gay garden, until we reach our laundry. We knock, and a nice little maid opens the door. The first room to inspect is our office upstairs. Everything is neat and in its place, a large desk occupies the middle of the room, a writing-pad and several ink-pots are arranged on it, also a basket in which the letters are placed as they arrive. On the wall are two cases, one labelled "paid," and the other "unpaid" bills, it is always a satisfaction to see how much larger proportion the former takes than the latter!

Sit down for a moment, and we will show you our office tomes. Here is the wage-book with all the names of those we employ neatly entered, and their daily or weekly takings against their name. First of all come the washers, then the girls who run the calender, the driers, the preparers, the ironers, and then the weekly hands; the head packer and sorter, the engineer, the book-keeper. A woman who receives a daily wage is always one low down in the wage-earning scale. It means such a hand-to-mouth existence. We are always so glad to encourage our workers to take their earnings at the week-end instead of at the day-end. Our manageress does not appear in this wage-book. She is at the tip-top of all, and receives her cheque every fortnight. Ironing is very well paid work, and a good ironer—a best body-linen or shirt ironer is reckoned as the highest—can earn £1 and more for four and a half days' work—say, from Tuesday morning until mid-day on Saturday.

(To be concluded.)



THE DRYING-GROUND.

and when you get bad news you cry, and are excused your work, but we must go on the same as before; and if it is difficult to learn your lessons, it is also difficult to teach! Well, now you may go! You will remember not to be rude to Mademoiselle again, eh?"

She held out her hand, smiling more brightly this time, and Pixie seized it eagerly.

"I will! And I hope your father will get well soon. You will see him at Christmas, and that isn't very long now; only forty-eight days to-morrow. I mark them off on my calendar."

"No, that is so sad, I shall not see him until summer! He is going to my brother in Italy, where it is warm and sunny, and it is too far for me to go there with him. It costs too much money, and the little house in Paris will be shut up till he returns, so I must stay in England all through the dark, long winter, when the sun never shines, and I shiver, shiver, shiver all day and all night! I shall forget what it is like to be warm before the spring arrives!"

Pixie rubbed the cold hands with a sympathetic touch, but she made no remark, and presently went from the school-room to rejoin her companions and make the most of the hours which still remained, while Mademoiselle went wearily on with the task of correction. She forgot all about her own complaints of cold, but when she retired to bed that night a delightful surprise was in store, for the sheets were warm instead of cold, and her chilled feet came in contact with something soft and hot, which proved upon examination to be an india-rubber water-bottle incased in a flannel bag. Mademoiselle drew a long gasp of rapture, and nestled down again with a feeling of comfort to which she had long been a stranger. A day or two earlier, Miss Phipps had spoken of the necessity of putting more coverings on the beds as the frost had set in unusually early, and Mademoiselle sleepily attributed this new comfort as another instance of the Principal's consideration for her assistants. She felt certain that it must be so, as night after night the welcome warmth was in waiting, and more than once determined to express her appreciation, but life was busy, and there was such an accumulation of work as the period of examination approached, that there seemed no time to speak of anything but school affairs.

(To be continued.)

MY LAUNDRY.

BY A LAUNDRESS.

PART II.

THE next book we look at is a very ponderous one—the customers' large account-book. As soon as the customers' private account-books are made up, the amount is entered in this book; then in the next column if it is paid, or, if not, it is carried on into a further column as still due, and then the next week's work added to it. In our laundry we are extremely fortunate in hardly ever having a bad debt. But most tradespeople suffer a great deal from the dishonesty of their customers. Here is another book in which all the petty cash entries are made. And here is our cash-book in which all our big accounts are kept. But we have spent long enough over the books, let us come down and



OUTSIDE THE IRONING ROOM.

inspect the actual work. We pass our manageress's cosy little sitting-room, and through the room where the soap is piled up in high stacks, and where there are great bags of starch and soda, then through the little house-kitchen with its gas-stove, out into the yard. Here to our left is the wash-house. The work is sorted first in the room down there, which is surrounded with bins. Each article is put with its own kind—sheets with sheets, best body-linen with best body-linen, and each piece is carefully inspected to see that it bears the laundry mark, unless the owner's initials or name in full are clearly marked on it. The laundry mark is a number carefully put in with coloured cotton. When a pile of one article is ready, it is placed on the trolley and wheeled into the wash-house. The great washing machine is half full of water, in which has been placed soap and soda. The clothes are put in, and the machine is set going; the water is kept running in and out through the holes in the machine, and the clothes clean themselves by knocking against each other and by the action of the water. In about twenty minutes the machine is stopped, the clothes are taken out, placed on a tray, and carefully examined. If anything is not



OUTSIDE VIEW OF THE WASH-HOUSE AND BACK OF THE MANAGERESS'S HOUSE.

quite clean, it is handed to a woman, and is finished by hand. The clothes are rinsed in several waters and boiled while still in the machine; they then have the water squeezed out of them by being put through two india-rubber rollers, then through the blueing-tub, and then into the hydro-extractor. Now, a hydro is a wonderful piece of machinery; it is like a round tub standing on a stem of iron, and the clothes are carefully packed into it, and the water is extracted by the rate at which it whizzes round. The clothes are removed nearly dry; if the weather is fine, they are then hung up on lines on the drying green; if wet, they are placed in the hot-air closet. When almost dry they are taken down, damped by the preparer, and rolled down ready for the ironers. The body-linen is mangled, and, if the customers like it, the frills are starched. Shirt-fronts are very carefully starched—collars, cuffs, table-linen, dresses; but some of the things, such as handkerchiefs, are given straight into the hands of the girls at the calender. The calender is a great round cylinder, which is heated by steam. It is first covered with a blanket, then a linen sheet, and it irons all the flat articles which come into the laundry. Two girls stand as feeders at one side, and two others as receivers at the other. The feeder puts the article in; it is taken out by the girl at the other side and returned to her, as each article has at least to go twice through the machine. The second time it comes out most perfectly ironed, and is then folded up.

The clothes go through the laundry in what is called journeys. Perhaps four or five journeys will go through a laundry during a week. The first journey arrives at the laundry on Saturday night, and the customers who send their clothes in this journey receive 5 per cent. off their accounts. The sorters are thus able to begin their work quite early on Monday morning, and this journey is returned on Wednesday. The next journey comes in on Monday morning, and is returned on Thursday, and so on. Let us follow the work. It is carried away on trays from the ironing-room, and handed through a window into the packing-room. Three or four packers are busy sorting it as it arrives. Each customer in this first journey has her own bin with her name written over it, and the finished work is carefully put into it. When the bin looks full, the packer gets a covered hamper out, lines it with white packing-paper, and begins to pack it. She first places sheets and all heavy articles at the bottom, strapping them down with a wicker-work tray, on which she places the light and delicate articles. Each article is ticked off in the customer's book as it is placed in the basket, and then in her own book the packer writes "complete," if everything has come to hand, or, if not, she notes down what article is missing. The hamper is then fastened down, and a label with the customer's name and address attached to it. The van comes up to the door, the finished hampers are hoisted on to it, and away goes the first journey.

Such then is the busy routine of work which, week after week, is enacted in our laundry. With all its many workers, and all its different departments, it is quite a little world in itself, and under us, the owners, our manageress reigns supreme. It is she who engages or dismisses the hands; it is in her power to give a good or bad tone to the whole laundry. She walks about and looks after everyone; she is here, there, and everywhere. When the work is going smoothly, she goes flying off for a spin on her bicycle, or for a walk down into the town. She confided to me the other day that she loved working-days more than holidays; she liked to feel that she could run in from her sitting-room and find the laundry all one busy beehive better than on holidays, when she walked in and found it all deserted. Why more ladies do not take up this work and become manageresses, I fail to understand. Fancy ruling a little kingdom of men and women! Think of the infinite good a God-like woman in a position like this might accomplish. Swearing, cursing,

drinking would melt away in the presence of a lady. Unless you have worked in a laundry, perhaps you can hardly understand what a lady's influence can do. These poor good-hearted women all try to live up to her standard; they want to please the lady who is set over them. Sometimes they will be very tiresome, and "try it on" to see whether their work is carefully inspected; but any woman who will throw herself into their lives and try to understand them will soon get on with them. One must not come to them with ready-made thoughts about them; each woman has her own character, her own individuality, and if you come to her with an open mind she is well worth studying, and you will soon get to understand her.

I wish I could show you the packing-room with one of the journeys all ready in the bins, crisp from the hands of the ironers—the lovely blouses and pinafores, and beautiful underlinen hanging round. The lace all beautifully goffered, and the collars and cuffs shining with gloss, and all so pure and white, because you know we pride ourselves on the colour of our linen. To my washer-woman's eyes, it is a sight worth seeing.

Once a week a lady comes and reads and sings to our women while they are busy at their work. During the winter we have a grand treat for them; and the ironing-tables are loaded with food, and the crackers are banging in all directions; and after tea we play games, blow feathers on sheets amid shouts of laughter, and we have music and singing. Yes, there is no doubt about it, I am very fond of our laundry, and it would be a big miss in my life now if I had not got it! Of course, it has not always run so smoothly as it does now; sometimes it has nearly turned my hair grey with worry. Fancy going to visit it, and looking up as you walked down the street, and seeing no smoke or steam coming out of your chimneys, and getting nearer and hearing no whizz of machinery, and meeting on the threshold a despairing manageress, who told you the water-company had turned off the water from the main, owing to the breaking of some pipe, and for hours all your washing was at a standstill! We have guarded against such accidents now; we have a very large tank of water as a reservoir, and soon we shall have a well of our own. Then another day something snapped in our machinery, and work was again delayed until it could be repaired. But with all its anxieties and ups-and-downs, it is an interesting trade.

It is so amusing to go to one of the great laundry exhibitions. You walk up to a stall, and look at some new machine. You speak to the man in charge, and he answers you rather lazily, as he thinks a lady like you can't be worth taking trouble with; you are not likely to give an order for a machine. By some question you display a knowledge of the trade, then he begins to wake up. At last he asks, "Are you a laundry proprietor?" And now, all alive with interest, he is your servant, to explain anything or do whatever you may wish.

But I must bring my paper to a close, else you will weary of my trade; and may I say one last word in closing? In laying such great stress upon the necessity of occupation for women, I do not wish to undervalue one iota the great and high calling of the wife and mother. But all women, either by their own inclinations or by the circumstances of their lives, do not find themselves called to this highest work of womanhood—the education of their own children. At any rate, it would hurt no woman to learn and thoroughly master some profession, because often, even after she marries, time hangs heavily on her hands, and most women are only too thankful to have some occupation to fall back upon—some way in which, if they wanted to, they could earn their own living.

Girls, we have but one life to live—make the most of it. Let us be up and doing, fill it full of useful occupations, live and work for others, and in thus losing your own life, you will find it.

