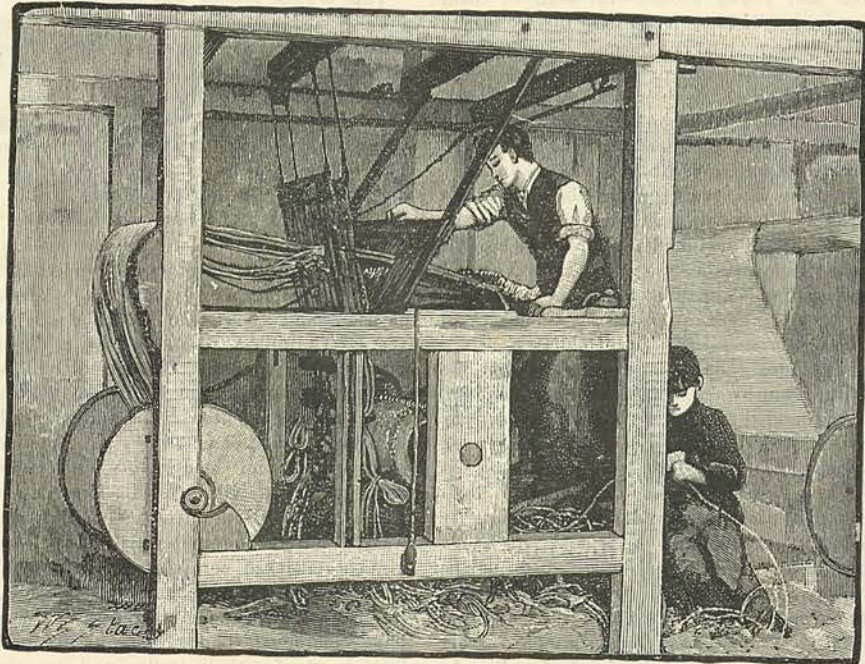
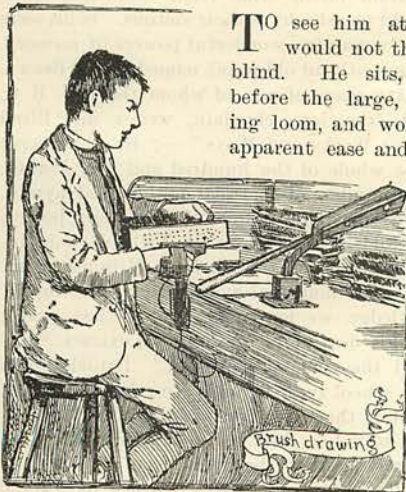


A GLIMPSE OF SOME SIGHTLESS FOLK.

BY F. M. HOLMES.



MAT WEAVING.



TO see him at work you would not think he was blind. He sits, or stands, before the large, heavy-looking loom, and works it with apparent ease and skill. He

can find the shuttle which ever and a n o n d a r t s backward and forward, then he presses cross-threads firmly in

their place with what we may call a large lever, and so by degrees the mat or rug is woven.

Even colours are filled in with accuracy. The different-hued threads are hung in certain positions on the loom, and the sightless operator can find the various colours—each in its own position or order—and incorporate them into the fabric. Working thus by the sense of touch, and upon certain well-defined mechanical rules, he is able to some extent to conquer

his loss of sight, and become, within certain limits, an efficient craftsman.

The apartment in which he is at work is long, and looms are placed on either side. Further on, you may see cocoa-nut fibre matting being made; and not far off, again, the smell of pitch will warn you of your proximity to a certain room where may be seen a blind broom-maker fastening the bunches of stiff bristles, or “hairs,” into the broom-head with the boiling pitch.

In another department brush-drawing is going on: that is, brushes are made by drawing the hairs into their position with wire; while—perhaps as marvellous as any when it is considered that the workers are all blind—wood-chopping is also carried on! And it is seldom that those engaged in this apparently dangerous employment for the blind hurt themselves. They seem to chop up the pieces of wood with a precision, accuracy, and freedom from injury which might make one, indeed, say: “They do not seem to be sightless.” In yet other departments, basket-making and chair-caning may be seen.

But there is other training than this. Enter the pretty little chapel and listen to the soft tones of the organ; or go into the concert-hall and hear the sweet music discoursed there. The musical instruments are kept going pretty well all the day long by one after another of the blind people practising; and the concerts given at intervals show that the violin and horn are

not forgotten in the tuition. Only a limited number, however, are taught instrumental music, those being selected who show talent sufficient to encourage the hope that they may become organists by-and-by.

And girls and young women—for some of them are stricken with blindness as well as their brothers—are they forgotten? By no means. Some of the musical instrumentalists are girls, and in some of the rooms girls and young women may be seen knitting, netting, chair-caning, basket-making, brush-making, or, with a very simple instrument, plaiting sash-lines! How seldom, when we throw up our window to catch the fresh morning air, or close it in the shades and damp of evening, do we think that very possibly the patient fingers of a blind maiden plaited those cords on which the window-sashes are pulled up and down! Yet the making of this apparently insignificant article appears to be an important industry among blind girls and women.

These things are taught at the School for the Indigent Blind, Southwark. This most excellent institution was founded in 1799 by a few good people, who have now passed to their rest. But this work of theirs remains, and has been maintained and extended. When first it was founded, green fields stretched on that part of the Surrey side of mighty London which now surrounds the school. It fronts the meeting-place of some of the main roads of the southern quarter, at what is called St. George's Circus. The neighbourhood around has changed; the Blind School remains. But it has now a branch further out, at Wandsworth, where, at Linden Lodge, Wandsworth Common, fifty little blind children of the poor are taught to read and write on the Braille,

Alston, and Moon systems; they also receive Kindergarten training, and instruction in the rudiments of music; they are drilled, trained in household work, and encouraged in industrious and self-reliant habits.

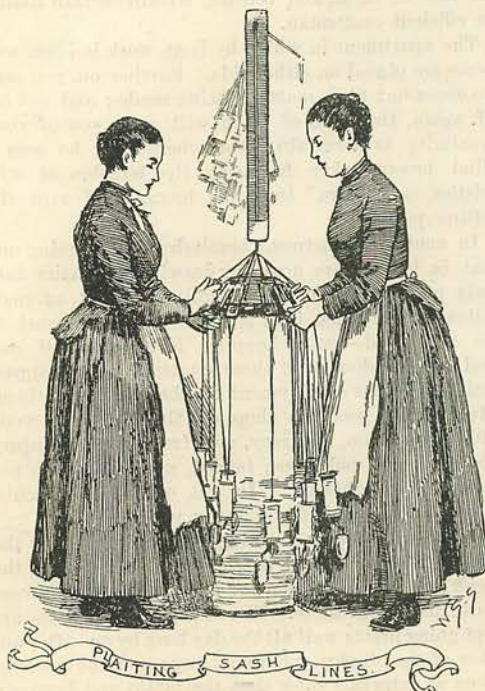
This branch school was established to divide the juniors, of ages from seven to twelve years, from the others, and that the institution at St. George's should be more of an industrial school. At the latter place there are about 150 pupils, and also some twenty-five older persons, who are paid for their work, and earn wages varying up to twenty-five shillings weekly. The latter sum is the highest average earned by basket-makers, the lowest average in this department being 8s. 10½d. The chair-caner is the lowest, the average earnings being 4s. 4d. per week.

All the pupils are taught and trained, fed and clothed, free from all cost. They are admitted by election, and their term of residence is about six years. The object of the school is tersely put in a prospectus, "to help poor blind children towards getting their own living." It is, as its name implies, "for the indigent blind," and pupils are admissible up to twenty, but not under seven. It is supported by subscriptions and donations, with interest and dividends on capital, while the sale of goods made pays the wages of the blind journeymen, etc., and goes a long way to purchasing materials for the work. It may also be remarked here that rewards and percentages are paid to pupils as encouragements; and on leaving the school, those who have been industrious, and have conducted themselves well, are presented with implements for their trades, and are also rewarded otherwise.

The causes of their blindness are various. Some are blind from birth, some from accidents, while small-pox and measles have their victims. Some seem gifted with, or acquire, wonderful powers of memory. There died recently an old pupil, named Daniel Brown, who was sixty years of age, of whom the Rev. B. G. Johns, M.A., the late chaplain, writes in "Blind People: their Works and Ways":—"He can repeat not only the whole of the hundred and fifty Psalms, and a large number of metrical psalms and hymns, as well as a considerable amount of modern poetry, including Goldsmith's 'Deserted Village,' but, incredible as it may seem, the whole of Milton's 'Paradise Lost,' with marginal notes and a biography." "This knowledge, we may add," says the last report, mentioning his death and quoting the extract, "was kept up till the time of his death." Daniel Brown entered the school in 1843, and, after being a pupil, was engaged in the mat shop, and also in the chapel as clerk up to a few days before his death.

It is interesting that the great poem of blind old Milton should have been so well learned by a blind compatriot so many years after it was composed; while it shows that handicraft, even if poor, is not a barrier to mental culture.

The day's doings are arranged very methodically. From Lady Day to Michaelmas the pupils rise at six o'clock in the morning, and have three-quarters of an hour's industrial work before breakfast. This is omitted from Michaelmas to Lady Day, as the hour of rising is then seven instead of six. Breakfast is served





at a quarter before eight. Then, at half-past eight, morning prayer is offered in the chapel, and industrial work or school takes place from nine until half-past twelve. The girls, however, have a brief recreation at eleven. Dinner is served at one, and from two until six industrial work or school proceeds again for boys or youths, while the girls close three-quarters of an hour earlier. Supper is served for the former at seven and for the latter at six, while from half-past seven until half-past eight schoolmasters and work-mistresses read from books, which are selected by the chaplain and secretary, the Rev. R. P. Stickland, M.A. Evening prayer is held in the chapel at nine, and the pupils retire shortly before ten. All the pupils have been divided into six sections by the chaplain, and to one of these religious instruction is given by him daily.

There is a gymnasium fitted up on the premises, where exercise is gone through regularly, one of the resident trained masters supervising. Swings, climbing-posts, giant's stride, etc., are in the grounds, where the inmates can play; and the girls are also drilled. They play much like other children, and when seen enjoying games, they do not seem to be sightless.

Like other children, too, they exhibit great differences in their aptitude for learning. Some are much quicker than others. In the Report already referred to there are some boys put down as having "no ability," two in each of the basket-making and brush-making departments; but there is a cheerful note affixed, to the effect that "two or three may learn something in time." No girls are put down as having "no ability"; but the total of those engaged in the two branches of work named is small—sixteen only; while in the boys' workshops the number given is fifty-

eight. The principal employment of the girls seems to be knitting and netting, the total number engaged therein being set down at fifty-seven. Seventeen are marked as being engaged in chair-caning, which is the same number as among the boys. Girls are not employed at weaving at the heavy looms. So it comes to this—that out of some two hundred indigent blind folks only four are marked as having no ability, and of those some hope is entertained.

The space occupied at St. George's is of fair size. In the front building, which is of a curious, almost castellated appearance, are offices and sale-room, and near by is an entrance suitable for vehicles. The other buildings are ranged in something like a roughly circular form around the grounds. Here are the chapel and the concert-room, the "shops"—some of which are partly below ground—and the schools. The dormitories above are long and airy. As soon as all the pupils have reached the dormitories, the bell rings for five minutes' silence for private prayer, after which they are allowed to talk quietly till once more the bell rings, and all is then quiet till the slumberers are awakened by the sonorous tones of the large bell in the morning. Rooms or cubicles for masters are in the dormitory, so that its inmates can be overlooked throughout.

At the school at Wandsworth there is a large garden, and some of the children have little plots of their own, and these they tend with interest. Assistants always supervise the children in the dormitories and in the garden, where they may be seen merrily at play. In the recreation-ground, also, are see-saws and swings, and a shed for drill.

Connected with the institution are thirteen annuities of £4 10s. each, which are given to blind persons in different parts of the kingdom. These annuities are from two bequests to the school of £1,000 each. A noteworthy circumstance is that H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, having given a donation of three hundred guineas, is entitled to always have one pupil in the school; and the executor of Miss J. Pigott, or his legal



representative, has the privilege of always having a pupil in the establishment on what is called the Pigott Gift, the lady named having bequeathed £2,000 to the school. A life subscription is ten guineas, and an annual is one guinea, each entitling the subscriber to one vote for each vacancy. But there is another and very useful method of helping the institution—that is, by purchasing goods made at the establishment. In the trade department a great variety will be found, and orders executed. Government contracts are sometimes undertaken, and duly carried out. But it is to private purchasers

that the managers must necessarily trust for the greater part of the income to be derived from this source.

The endeavour is made to produce good work and to assist the inmates to become self-reliant, happy, and efficient. The institution appears an embodiment of that kindly and healthy Christian spirit which helps people to help themselves. It is not in the power of mortals to work miracles, and say to the blind, "Receive thy sight;" but by the patient pursuance of the right principles they may be helped in a measure to remedy their great loss, and such seems to be the case here.

THE SLAUGHTERS IN ITALY.

A NEW BOOK OF MARTYRS.—V.

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR W. G. BLAIKIE, D.D., LL.D., ETC. ETC.



IN the old "Book of Martyrs," by John Foxe, the chief members of "the noble army" whom he commemorated in connection with Italy are the Waldenses. He had a very pitiful but glorious tale to tell of their sufferings and testimony in early times, and if he had had the gift of prophecy, and could have described the fearful persecutions that culminated in their expulsion from the Valleys, and

their tragic and terrible march over the Alps in the winter of 1686, he would have had a still more memorable story to tell. It might be suitable to rehearse that story now, especially in view of the commemoration of the "Réntree Glorieuse"—the marvellous return of the exiles in 1689—which is to take place in the coming autumn. But the present writer has already done this in *THE QUIVER*, in one of a series of papers entitled, "Two Hundred Years Ago." (See *QUIVER*, July, 1885.)

Besides dwelling on the persecutions of the Vaudois in their Valleys, Foxe touches briefly on the awful fate of that singularly flourishing and beautiful colony which they founded in Calabria, in the kingdom of Naples, a hundred and fifty years before the Reformation. It was in the year 1370 that, finding themselves straitened in the Valleys, they sent some of their number into Italy to look out for a convenient settlement. An unpeopled district was found in Calabria, which was soon occupied by an industrious and religious peasantry. The lords of the soil welcomed their arrival, and soon found their rents increased, and their land more valuable, while even the clergy rejoiced in a considerable addition to their tithes. Some efforts were made to disturb them, but the character of the people was so good, and their rents and tithes

were paid so regularly, that for two centuries they met with little opposition. But when the accursed Inquisition began its work in Italy, it seemed as if the very fiends of hell had been let loose upon them. Their numbers had increased to about four thousand. Two monks, accompanied by some soldiers, were sent from the Holy Office to convert them. The poor people, in alarm, fled to the woods. The soldiers got orders to shoot them down. The Vaudois, after offering in vain to leave the country, being attacked by an armed force, fought for their lives as their fathers had done in the Valleys, and scattered their enemies. Hereupon it was reported that they were all in rebellion, and a large force was sent to crush them. The scenes of cruelty and barbarity that were enacted are incredible. On June 11th, 1560, eighty-eight men were butchered like so many sheep. The executioner brought them out of the house where they were confined, one by one, tied a bloody napkin round their heads, made them kneel down, and with his knife cut their throats. The process was repeated till the whole eighty-eight were slain. Their bodies were then quartered, and fixed up in various places. A Roman Catholic describing the scene says it was so awful that no person who witnessed the execution of one could stand to behold a second. It mitigates the horror to be told that most of them, especially the old men, met death joyfully, comforting one another with the thought that they would soon be angels, though some of the younger showed signs of fear. Women were seized in the same way, stripped and put to the torture, sixty or a hundred at a time. The treatment of the women was often too shameful to be described. Sixteen hundred of the people were condemned to death. What remained were easily disposed of; the men were sent to the Spanish galleys, the women and children were sold for slaves, and, with the exception of a few who renounced their faith, the whole colony was exterminated. It was one of the bloodiest and most infernal chapters in the hideous history of the Inquisition.

But we ought not to forget that many noble