

THE BANNER-MAKER AND HIS ART.

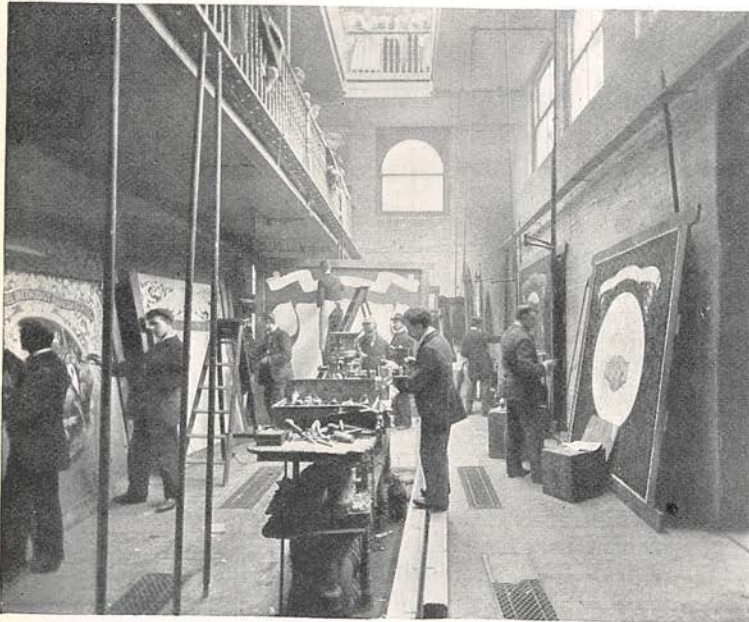
BY LEONARD W. LILLINGSTON.

Photographs by C. PILKINGTON.

THERE were £20,000 worth of banners from Tutill's, of the City Road, at one year's May Day demonstration alone. Mr. Tutill is Universal Provider to the friendly societies and trade unions. He is, however, a banner-painter first and the rest afterwards.

Now, the actual painting of the banner is merely an incident in its production. You must begin at the beginning, with the hank of raw silk. It must be dyed, then wound,

marvellous accuracy of hand and eye, for a single broken thread would show in the piece. There are objections to the ordinary twilled silk of commerce, even if it could be procured of the right width. Every pound of raw silk contains about a quarter of a pound of curd soap, added in the throwing. This must be boiled out. Twilled silk, again, is "weighted" with dye and adulterated with cotton. For banners, pure silk, and nothing but pure silk, is suitable.



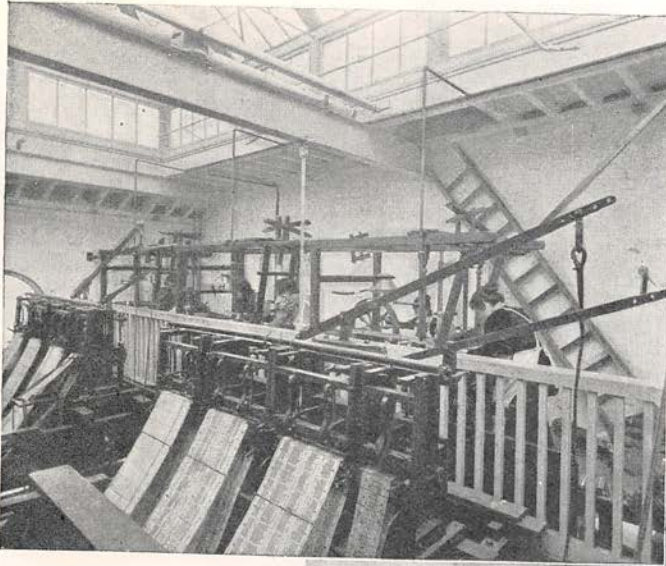
THE STUDIO, WITH THE ARTISTS AT WORK.

then warped. Next it is woven into pieces four yards wide. If the banner were not all of one piece a high wind would soon find it out. This unusual width of silk requires looms of unusual size. The Jacquard looms of the City Road are probably the largest in the world. The weavers are descended in an unbroken line from the little colony of Huguenots who made their home in Spitalfields upon the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The craft has been handed down from generation to generation. It requires

The strength of these banners is astonishing, if you consider how light they are. The largest banners made, measuring twelve feet by ten, weigh only about two pounds. Mr. Tutill told me an amusing anecdote, illustrating the tremendous powers of resistance a banner of pure silk possesses. He was explaining it to a visitor. There was a square of silk stretched upon a frame near them, awaiting the artist. "You might throw yourself bodily against it," said Mr. Tutill, "it would not break." The

visitor, without more ado, took him at his word. He was painfully surprised, a moment later, to find himself lying upon his back, in the middle of the floor, six feet from the banner!

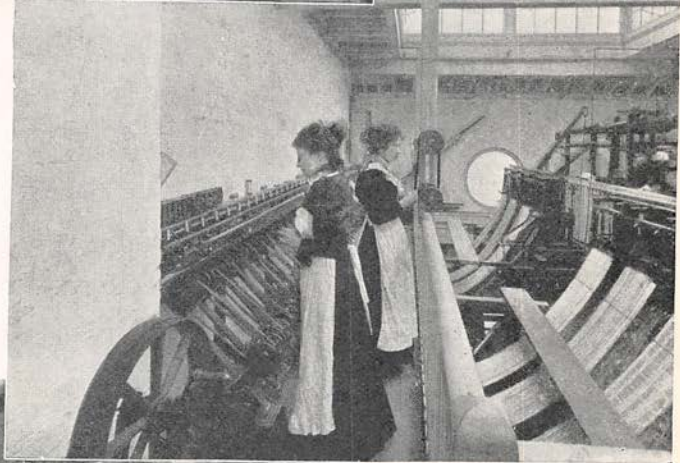
The chief buyers are the friendly, trade, and temperance societies and religious bodies of the United Kingdom; and there are a good many of these, though not all are known to fame. Everyone has heard of the Foresters, the Oddfellows, the Druids, the Ancient Britons, the Shepherds, the Buffaloes,



SMALL HANDLOOMS.

the Good Templars, the Sons of Phoenix, and the Rechabites. But the Ancient Order of Comical Fellows, the Free Gardeners, the True Ivorites, the Romans, the Anglo-Saxons, the Caledonian Corks, and the Modern Masons will be new to some of us. They are, however, all good

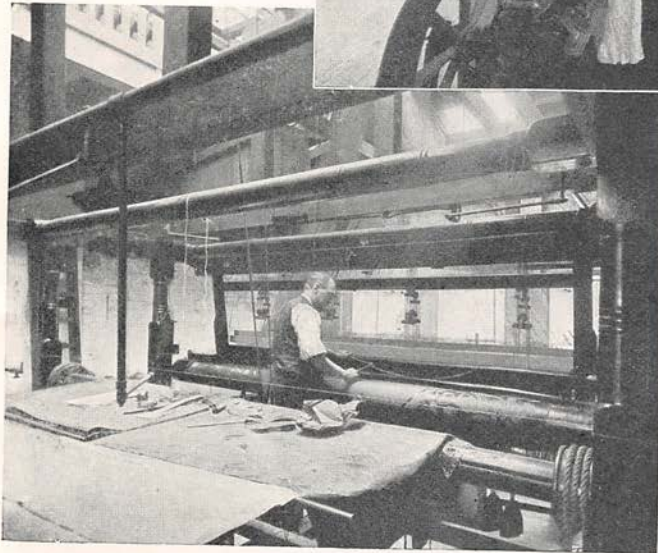
customers of the banner-maker. There are friendly societies all over the world, as far north as Iceland, as far south as the Cape, and they are all addicted to banners. It has been observed that societies are a weakness of the race. The first thing that two or three Britishers in a foreign land do is to call a meeting and form themselves into a society of some sort. Their example sometimes infects the natives. Tutill's



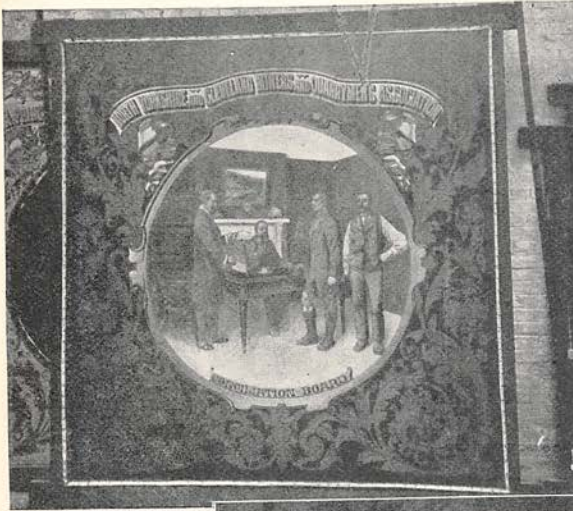
WINDING THE SILK.

received an order for a banner from an Ashantee prince who had founded a lodge. Money was not yet the universal medium of exchange in his country; so he paid his bill in coconuts and palm oil. There are hundreds of lodges in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa. Germany, France, and Holland have also their friendly societies.

Some banners are of plain silk, others have woven ornamental borders.



WEAVING A BANNER. ONE OF TWO LOOMS WHICH ARE PROBABLY THE LARGEST IN THE WORLD.



There is invariably a broad band or scroll left at the top, for the name of the Society or for a motto or text. The mottoes may be somewhat hackneyed, but they are good sense and sound philosophy to boot—as: “Unity is Strength,” “Labor Omnia Vincit,” “United We Stand, Divided We Fall,” “As the Tree is Bent the Twig’s Inclined,” “The Labourer is Worthy of His Hire.” With the religious and temperance organisations a text of Scripture generally takes the place of the motto.

In painting trade union banners a considerable amount of technical knowledge is required. The engineers, for example, may want a picture showing the forging of the crank of a man-of-war; the railway man, the latest type of locomotive; the cooper, the making of a cask. Flax dressers, printers, farriers, boot clickers, miners, paviors, iron-founders, platelayers, weavers, brick-makers, costermongers—these are a few of the callings with which the

artist must have a working acquaintance.

The trade unionist is a shrewd judge of the value of the law of contrast. Look on this picture, and on that! A journeyman baker is coming out of a shop with a tray of loaves on his head. His form is thin and wasted, his face cadaverous. He works sixteen hours a day! See the sprucely dressed young “feller” who is passing. He works eight hours a day. “Not done yet, Bill?” he says. “No, I’ve eight hours more to put in,” replies his friend. Or the miner — “After Twelve Hours’ Work; After Eight Hours’ Work.”

On one side of the picture he is seen sitting at the table, his head in his hands, regardless of the meal that is spread before him, of his wife and the little one brought from her bed to wish him good-night. On the other side he is dancing the child on his knee, the good wife smiling happily down upon them



THREE TYPICAL CLUB BANNERS.

both. Or a contribution on the question of child labour. Two little boys, one in the pink of condition, the other wan and woe-begone. "I go to school," says the first. "I go to the mine," says the second.

Sometimes, however, the trade societies affect the allegorical. Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, after they had "sewed fig leaves together to make themselves aprons," is a design greatly favoured by the tailors. What a vista in the evolution of dress is opened up to the mind's eye! But symbolism is on the wane. Actuality is becoming popular. The banner of the Portsmouth costermongers represents High Street, Portsmouth, lined with the costers and their barrows, and business at its best. On the other side a picture of Portsmouth Town Hall. The coster seems to be a thorough realist. In a banner painted for another society he is seen arguing the point—no doubt with studied moderation—with a stony-hearted policeman, who has an eye to obstruction.

The banners of the friendly societies are somewhat stereotyped; the design is regulated by the rules of the order. No two banners, however, are exactly alike. It is usual to have the emblematic device of the society on one side, and a second picture, illustrating its works and aims, on the other. For example, the society may affect a design which represents a member of the order visiting a sick brother and giving relief to the wife and children. He is generally clothed in a loose tunic, and very little besides. This is, no doubt, a little fanciful; we may safely assume that the almoner does not pay his calls so dressed.

The banners of the religious bodies generally illustrate some well-known incident of Scripture—the Good Shepherd; the

Infant Samuel; Daniel in the Lions' Den; the Baptism in the Jordan; Christ walking on the Sea of Galilee. The temperance societies are inveterate symbolists. We have, for example, the Giant of Intemperance slain by the Sword of Total Abstinence; Want, Crime, and Misery are fleeing away, Joy, Love, and Plenty are taking their place. Or again, in the centre of the picture a sheaf of barley. On one side of it a British workman with his wife and family, the apotheosis of happiness and contentment. A female figure—probably the Goddess of



ANOTHER WELL-KNOWN DEVICE.

Plenty again—is handing him a loaf. There is a mill in the background. The moral is obvious—here is barley put to its proper use. On the other side of the sheaf another British workman with his family. He is lying drunk upon the ground, his wife and children lost in sad reflection. Instead of the Goddess, we have the Skeleton of Want and Despair looking down upon them with ill-concealed satisfaction. The whisky-still at the back drives the moral home once more—barley put to an improper use.

Portraits of their public men are highly popular with all the societies. The trade

society will have a well known labour leader ; the friendly society the founder of the lodge ; the Sunday-school a portrait of the pastor or superintendent.

Probably the most elaborate and expensive banners go to Ireland. A number were specially painted for last year's celebration of the Centenary of '98. There were portraits of Robert Emmett, Wolfe Tone, James Hope, and other Irish patriots, and a stirring presentment of the battle of Castlebar—at which place the rebels gained a temporary victory over the English forces. The Orangeman's pictorial favourites, on the other hand, are the battle of the Boyne, or a portrait of William the Third of "Glorious and Immortal Memory."

Tutill's made a notable banner of silk and gold for the last Jubilee. It was flown by the railway company from the train which brought the Queen to London. The design was of an heraldic character. Her Majesty is very particular in such matters ; it probably had to pass under her critical eye before it was hoisted. There was very little of it left when the Jubilee was over. The banner has yet to be made which will survive several successive railway journeys, even at a moderate rate of speed.

The Marquis of Bute made a remarkable display when the Prince of Wales visited Cardiff. The walls of Cardiff Castle were

covered with banners bearing the arms of the noble families to which he is allied by birth or marriage.

A banner is by no means complete when the painter has finished with it. A silk border must be attached to the edge, a fringe at the bottom. The cross-pole from which the banner is suspended is covered with silver leaf. The polished carrying-poles have spearheads fixed at the top by way of a finish. Then there are the broad leather straps—with brass sockets to take the poles—to go round the shoulders of the bearers. On the top of these carrying-poles are the guy-lines, the ends of which are held by two men other than the bearers, to steady the banner should a breeze spring up. Finally, ornamental tassels are hung from the cross-pole, so as to fall one on each side.

The cost of the processional banner fluctuates between £50 and £80. With good usage they sometimes last as long as thirty years. The dock labourers bought and wore out many hundreds of pounds' worth during their historic struggle. Banners may even be hired, at a charge of a guinea a day ; for what would a procession be like without them ? Suppose for a moment that a sumptuary law were passed forbidding their use, it would very soon fall out, I fear, that there would be no processions. You must have a flag to march under, as well as a tune to keep time to.



TRIMMING THE BANNERS.