

I HAVE received the preliminary programme of the twelfth congress of the Sanitary Institute to be held at Brighton, from the 25th to the 30th August next, which, as far as it can for the present go, is well worth perusal, as it speaks volumes for the enterprise of the committee and secretary, who may very truthfully, I should imagine, be sure of a successful and interesting congress. S. G.

WOMEN AND THEIR WORK.

ART NEEDLEWORK.

DEAR old grandmother! Art and needlework were far as the poles apart in the days of her youth, when æstheticism still kept closed her folded wings, when her "high priest," the great Oscar, was yet unborn. Since then the craze for high art has arisen, but only to vanish like a beautiful dream, for it was not of stern stuff enough to survive the terrible realities of life. Now-a-days, alas! sweet lilies are really eaten, not only feasted on by the eyes. But though the craze, as it was well termed, of æstheticism, with all its follies and extravaganzas, is no more, laughed out of existence by a play—nay, rather killed by the extreme lengths to which its votaries would go—yet in this case it is the evil, not the good, which has been interred, and its purest influence is with men still. The sweet lovely "æsthetic art shades" still adorn our walls, still drape our furniture, still proclaim themselves in the soft Indian silks which beautify the windows of certain shops. The very fancy work "our daughters" stitch at home so diligently shows how marvellous is the development in the taste for the beautiful in this the latter end of the nineteenth century. People hunger after, people admire, people gladly purchase aught they consider and their friends consider

"A thing of beauty and a joy for ever."

But beauty has utilitarian powers as well, as the School of Art Needlework at South Kensington has abundantly proved by its great success. Here the desire of the rich for the beautiful and the desire for bread of the needy have both found a satisfactory answer. It is more and more patronised by the nobility as well as by royalty as the years roll on, and deservedly, for the work is most excellent, and the show-room (situated in the Exhibition Road, South Kensington) is indeed well worth a visit, if only just to see what "women's nimble fingers can produce." One small piece, the cover of an album, is a representation of the Madonna and Child, wrought so finely as to give the impression at first sight

of being a most delicate painting. Some screens in bold outline are most effective, also several blotters in perfectly blended shades of colour. Charming table cloths for afternoon tea, and quaint-fashioned seats (meant surely for ornament, not for use), and other novelties too numerous to mention tempt the eye and the pocket of the visitor. After these few words on the work, I would now speak of the workers. "They must be gentlewomen by birth and education," and "must give two references to prove their position." The second rule is—"They must be able and willing when employed to devote seven hours a day to work at the school." Every applicant is given, first, a test lesson, when, if satisfactory, she is allowed, on payment of a premium of five pounds, to enter on the course of instruction, consisting of nine lessons of five hours each, three a week for three weeks. If sufficiently skilled she then becomes a qualified worker of the School. All work is paid by the piece, and according to its quality and difficulty. It is very difficult to give even an approximate rate of pay by week, as it all depends on the orders received by the school and the talent and quickness of the worker. From fifteen to thirty shillings is the average, but the school does not engage to give employment by entering the worker's name in their list, but only whenever in need of her services. All work is done at the school, which, of course, the more orders, &c., it receives the more workers it employs. Thus purchasers at the school's show-rooms have the pleasant consciousness that they are helping their poorer sister at the same time as gratifying their own artistic tastes. "We have many applicants who fail in their first lessons, and these we recommend to retire," said the lady who was showing me over the school on my visit there a few days ago. Believe me, needlework, especially art needlework, is a distinct talent.

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YOUNG girls are often received into Berlin wool shops, as apprentices, giving their time and minding the shops, receiving in return lessons in fancy needlework, but the fashion now-a-days changes so quickly that in most cases by the time the girl has perfectly mastered any one style, that style has been doomed to oblivion by a capricious public. This is not the case, however, with the School of Art Needlework, simply because it leads rather than follows the fashion, or rather holds its own against that fickle jade by the superlative excellence of its work.

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LOUISE MICHEL has, I learn, been after an examination by a committee of doctors placed in a government lunatic asylum, as they held that

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