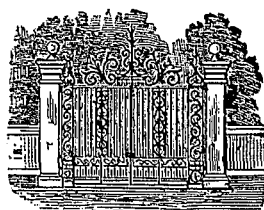


carried on chiefly by their energy, enthusiasm and talent for business. We hear a great deal still about Woman's sphere and the supreme importance of her dwelling within it, thankful to be sheltered and protected, cribbed, confined. But the most belated and captious critic can hardly pretend that it is unwomanly to protect the lives and limbs of tender infants, to shield young girls from the dangers of overwork and overcrowding, and to spread a knowledge of the elementary laws of health in homes where even a mother's love when uninspired by science is powerless to perform the simplest offices of prevention, but must wait, helpless and bewildered, until a harassed doctor can be summoned or a distant dispensary reached.

Outside the Gates.

WOMEN.



WE quote the following from the Minority Report of the Labour Commission, concerning women, which appeared in full in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of the 30th ult. :—

“WOMEN WORKERS.

Another important section of workers requiring separate consideration is that of women and girls. The evidence obtained by the Assistant-Commissioners indicates that especially in the sweated trades in great cities, many hundreds of thousands of women are working at wages far below those of even unskilled men, often indeed at rates which are insufficient for health and decent maintenance. Women, too, are special sufferers from long hours and unsanitary conditions, and have hitherto enjoyed but little means of obtaining redress through trade-union action.

We regard the economic degradation of the women and girls in many of the industries of the great cities as constituting one of the most serious of industrial problems. Their condition is best in those industries in which the factory system has become universal, and worst in those in which home work is most prevalent. We consider that a strenuous endeavour should be made by the Government to raise the East London trouser finisher or fur puller to the level of the Lancashire mill worker.

We do not propose any special legislation for women. We regard, however, almost every page of the Assistant Commissioners' reports relating to women and children as demonstrating the necessity and urgency of the reforms already described. Though much may be hoped from the spread of trades unionism among women workers, it is difficult to see how they can obtain by mere voluntary combination either an eight hours' day or any material rise of the standard of wages or sanitation. Their only hope lies in the extension of collective action by the State. The thorough enforcement and amendment of the Factory Acts, the gradual supersession of home work by the factory system, and the promotion of shorter hours and greater regularity of employment, appears to us the

most promising means of raising the condition of the poorer women workers. The extension of the Army Clothing Factory and other Government and Municipal employment would together with a stringent enforcement of clauses prohibiting home work, and requiring recognition of the trade-union wages, co-operate most usefully in this work.

A few special points may be noted. We think that the number of women factory inspectors should be increased, and that local authorities might advantageously be urged by the Local Government Board to follow the example of the Kensington Vestry and the Nottingham Town Council in appointing women sanitary inspectors, with the special object of enforcing the sanitary law in women's workshops. Laundries should, as we have already proposed, be brought under the Factory Acts, and these should likewise be extended so as to include those workplaces in the hardware trades in which women hire stalls or forges. The hours of labour of bar and restaurant assistants should be regulated like those of other workers.

Special attention should be paid by the Home Secretary, in dealing with unhealthy trades, to those in which women and girls are employed. The evidence shows that the rules hitherto prescribed have been quite inadequate, and that the enforcement even of these has been greatly neglected by the Factory Department. We think, for instance, that every case of “phossy jaw,” lead colic, or the wrist drop, and other results of specially dangerous industries, should be made the subject of a detailed and separate report by a medical expert which should be considered by the Home Secretary and laid before Parliament, until some way of preventing such fearful incidents of modern industrialism is discovered. And though we are loth to recommend the closing of any career to women, we are driven by the medical evidence of their greater susceptibility to lead poisoning to the conclusion that their employment in the more dangerous portions of the white lead manufacture should be absolutely prohibited. This is strongly recommended by the Home Office Committee.

— Science Notes. —

THE INFLUENCE OF LIGHT ON BACTERIA.

LIGHT is an indispensable condition of healthy life to the higher animals and plants, although, perhaps, the explanation of its utility is easier in the case of the latter than in that of the former. Most persons are convinced of the desirability of bright rooms where the sunshine can enter, but they would usually be at a loss to explain the particular advantages of sunlight; without doubt a sunny room is less likely to be damp, though a dark room need not necessarily be so; and, again, the effect of light and sunshine in raising the spirits is universally admitted.

According to Prof. Marshall Ward and others, the lowest members of the vegetable kingdom, the bacteria, so far from being beneficially influenced by light, are, in many cases, actually destroyed by it; and as we know that numerous diseases are due to the

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