

produce of a plant. He then showed me a number of other articles made by the girls: brushes of every description, each good and flawless in its place—from the stout scrubbing-brush to the highly polished toilet-brush. No critic, however keen-eyed and severe, could have found fault with any. Brush-making for girls is another branch of work introduced about ten years ago. Before that, the idea of making blind women self-supporting workers was not entertained. It is interesting to note how the spirit of 19th century womanhood is at work even here, how bravely, blind girls avail themselves of opportunities for honest independence, and how well they justify the *raison d'être* of their training.

In the basket-making department, which was one of the largest, every kind of basket-work, from the sturdy dress-hamper to the highly ornamental paper-basket, was made; and here again the work was excellent and above the average—and German basket-work is rarely bad. Chairs of every description are made and mended here, and it was bending over one of them that I noticed the saddest face I ever remember having looked upon—that of a young man of about 20, who had become patient and pupil here only a few months ago.

A blind basket-maker who knows his business can earn from 10 to 20 shillings a week. Rope-makers earn about the same.

After looking at the rope-walk, and admiring a store of firm twine, cable, and netting, we were allowed to see the fine kitchen with its adjacent dependencies, all well kept and fitted with modern improvements.

It is unnecessary to give in detail here the record of much that is excellent in this Asylum for the Blind—the play-rooms for the children, large and airy, and apportioned with regard to sex and age; the dormitories, where all the windows were wide open, and where the sleepers were never left unguarded, all pointed to the fact that the rule of the house is laid down with kindness and common-sense that leave no doubt as to the results obtained. No latent energies are cloyed here by weak indulgence, no talent need wither away in darkness. If the system is kind it is also firm. Mentally and morally healthy workers leave the training home to take their place bravely in the world.

The great bell ringing for four o'clock coffee reminded me that our visit had been prolonged above my original intention.

Thanking our kind host for all he had shown and explained to us, we made our way through the grounds, passing on our right a number of chairs and tables, round which the children congregated to work or take their coffee in fine weather. To the left lay the drill-house in which girls and boys alike take exercise. A swing, a round-about, on a large adjoining sandy plain, are reserved for the amusement of the little girls. The boys have a playground elsewhere.

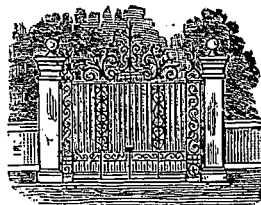
A rustic bridge leading over a moat brought us into the forest. A fine drizzle was falling, and we were in for a long wet walk. And yet an unusual sense of the harmony of our surroundings haunted us all the way. Each drop twinkling at the point of a leaf, each flower bending its damp bells under the old trees, each peep of misty distance through the stems appealed to us just then as fit impetus for gratitude for that greatest of physical delights—the gift of sight.

L. M.

— Outside the Gates. —

WOMEN.

TRADE UNIONISM AMONGST WOMEN.



IT will indeed be disappointing, if the Conference convened by the Women's Trade Union Association, and held last Monday at the Holborn Town Hall, does not result in a powerful and representative body, which will lift women's labour out of the anomalous position it holds to-day. A splendid start was made. The sympathies of our leading men are clearly with the movement. At the morning sitting, the chair was taken by Sir John Hutton, Chairman of the London County Council; in the afternoon, Canon Scott Holland, whose sympathies are always with our toiling masses; and in the evening, Mr. Haldane, Q.C., M.P. Further, all who attended, whether men or women, were thoroughly representative. They came there with the sincere endeavour to initiate a promising movement, and not merely to pass away a few hours in listening to startling statements. Letters of sympathy from Professor Marshall, Mr. Charles Booth, Lord Farrer, and Mrs. Henrietta Barnett, were read; and among those present, though it is invidious to mention names, were Mrs. Sheldon Amos, Mrs. Brownlow, a candidate at the late School Board Election, Miss March-Phillips, a lady lecturer, Miss Florence Balgarnie, Dr. Garnett, Mr. Hatton, of the People's Palace, Miss Webb (Women's Co-operative Guild), the Rev. A. Lilley (Christian Social Union), Miss Heather Bigg, and a considerable number of delegates sent by various Men's Trade Unions.

Sir John Hutton, in a straightforward speech, set forth, as far as possible, the present condition of working women, and what it was hoped to accomplish in the future. He could not refrain from speaking of the work done by the County Council. Their efforts in regard to Shop Hours' Regulation were at present, he said, more tentative and experimental. He pointed with regret to the fact that while the County Council had undertaken Lodging Houses for men, they had not advanced to such places for women. The women had a righteous cause, and with that knowledge they would increase in strength.

Miss Clementina Black, whose name will always be held in honoured remembrance as that of one who has worked earnestly in the cause of those who labour and suffer, followed with a graceful little speech, in which she welcomed Miss Irwin, the delegate from the Scotch Federal Council. After deploring the difficulties they were so often confronted with, in consequence of the lack of knowledge on trade disputes, she moved "that in the opinion of this Conference it is desirable that a Central Council shall be established to organise special and systematic inquiry into the conditions of working women, to provide accurate information concerning those conditions, and to promote such action as may be conducive to their improvement."

Miss Irwin, who it will be remembered was a delegate at the Glasgow Conference of Women Workers, then delivered a capital address, in which, after seconding Miss Black's resolution, she gave a history of the movement.

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