

their time sometimes laudably enough in domestic or philanthropic work; but often, she was convinced, they had hours of hopeless vacuity.

She went on to say that, in manufacturing centres like Manchester, there must be many young women with the inherited shrewdness which was frequently latent in women of commercial parents. If the business carried on by their fathers was congenial, they should enter it, and learn it just as their brothers might. In many manufactories of artistic articles and dress fabrics, the suggestions of a cultivated woman might be of the utmost advantage. Women, too, might conduct hotels, might be publishers and builders.

In connection with this paper it may be interesting to note that, of the two women now most before public attention in the United States, Mrs. McKinley received a thorough training as a banker in her father's bank, while Mrs. Bryan is a fully-qualified lawyer and barrister, in fact, she first met her future husband at a Law College where they studied together.

Mrs. Amié Hicks, of the Women's Industrial Council, read a paper dealing with "Fines and Deductions in Women's Wages." Mrs. Hicks quoted from various reports to show the extent of the deductions and fines—an extent, she said, which made all the difference between comparative comfort and hunger. She said no one should have the right to keep back from the workers any part of that which they had honestly earned.

A subject which brought out much that was interesting on women's influence over men was that of Mrs. Papillon who read a paper on "Work among Men and Boys."

The Honourable Mrs. Joyce (Women's Emigration Association) sent an excellent paper on "Openings in the Colonies for Educated Women." South Africa contained the best colonial openings for all the good sorts and conditions of women. The Colonies wanted efficient women. If they were trained Nurses, they must have three years' training and be certificated. For such—if well born, educated, and refined—Mrs. Joyce said she had a perpetual call at £60 a year, all found, and a comfortable Nursing Home in Kimberley, under the wise and kindly direction of Sister Henrietta. The life was sometimes very rough, but had its interest in its adventure, in its variety, in the importance of being sent in sole charge miles from any doctor. To a well-disciplined and self-reliant woman it was a splendid sphere.

Mrs. A. Phillip read a paper on "Competition among Brain-workers," in which she dwelt on the evils and poverty resulting to workers—in Sick Nursing, teaching, and other departments—by women "who only want to add to their pocket-money," underselling the true worker, who had to make a living and save money for the future.

The Conference was brought to a close by a delightfully bright farewell address—delivered by the Honourable Mrs. A. J. Lytton—and many ladies present expressed their determination of meeting again if possible, at the Conference of 1897, which is to be held at Croydon.

A Book of the Week.

"EN ROUTE."*

"EN ROUTE" is an elaborate study of the journey of a soul from the lowest depths of iniquity, to faith. Some years ago Monsieur Huysmans wrote a terrible book (which I am glad to say I have never read) called "La Bas." Durtal, the principal character in "En Route," is also the "hero" (if such a word be applicable) of that former appalling book, wherein he makes experience of Satanism, Black Masses, and other forms of Black Magic, but Mr. Kegan Paul, in his excellent preface, states that it is quite needless to read "La Bas" for the understanding of "En Route," which is the story of the frantic struggles of a Soul against unbelief, and the trials and temptations of the flesh.

Incidentally the book contains essays on Church Music, Architecture and other Arts, Monasticism, the Lives of the Saints, and last, but certainly not least, on—*Mysticism*. Mr. Gladstone, writing to the translator, said, "It places the claim of the Route through mysticism higher, I think, than any other book I have read, and by this fact alone it imposes modesty and reserve upon all critics from outside and from a distance."

Faith comes to Durtal after a prolonged course of the most impious unbelief (Faith given as a free gift from God, how, or under what conditions, Monsieur Huysmans does not relate), and in consequence of this spiritual gift, his awakened soul yearns for a closer communion with the Powers Above. Led by his love of Art, the services of the Church of Rome appeal to him profoundly. "The commonplace repels him;" he cannot endure the frivolity of the Churches in Paris, and at last, influenced by the friendship of Abbé Gévresin, he determines to make a retreat in a Trappist Monastery, and there makes the first confession and Communion that he has done since his childhood.

Mr. Kegan Paul claims that the true interest of the book is its defence of the Monastic Orders, and the description of such a life seen from very near. "Go to a Monastery to make a retreat," is, in fact, the teaching of "En Route," for "You can never astonish a monk!" as one of the Trappists says to Durtal, and indeed, this may well be believed after reading the record of the trials to which those are subject who give themselves to the cloistered life.

The above short synopsis of the aim and intention of "En Route," is, to a considerable extent, culled from Mr. Kegan Paul's interesting prefatory note, which should be carefully read before perusing the book itself, as it sets several things clearly before English readers, which otherwise they might very likely not understand for themselves.

I must confess to having been deeply absorbed in this strange record, and though I cannot own to being convinced of the truth of the record of the awful struggles with the powers of evil that are undergone by the contemplative monastic Orders, nor in the veracity of the beatific visions that are subsequently accorded to the monks (visions so glorious and so satisfying that all

* "En Route," by J. K. Huysmans. Translated from the French by C. Kegan Paul, 6s. (Kegan Paul & Co., 1896.)

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)