

WOMEN AND THEIR WORK.

IN our American contemporary, *Harper's Bazaar*, the following excellent article upon "Manual Instruction for Girls" appears:—"A great change is evidently going on in our public school system by the introduction, in various forms, of something in the way of manual instruction. The advance is along several lines, coming in some cases in the form of drawing, in other cases of natural history and experimental science, and in other cases still of something which nearly approaches industrial training. That is, manual instruction is sometimes given for its purely educational value, as where a rich man fits up a work-shop for his boy; but it is also given in many cases with a direct view to later industry. The college student, who appears a mere butterfly of fashion when he goes to play tennis with the young ladies, may be found at other times in overalls and an apron, grimy with smoke and iron, working in a machine shop in order to make himself an electrical engineer. Parallel courses of mechanical instruction are being arranged in various places throughout the high school system; so that one brother in a family may be studying Latin and fitting for college, another studying book-keeping and fitting for business, and a third studying applied mechanics and preparing to be an engineer or a railway superintendent.

"ALL this is as it should be. It looks in the right direction. It does not by any means show that our existing systems of public education are failures, but only that they have developed to a certain point, and are about to develop still more. It is not when all has failed and bankruptcy impends that a mill-owner enlarges his establishment and puts in new machinery, but it is in time of prosperity that these improvements take place. Our public schools, in particular, do a great deal if they simply turn out their pupils with the ability to read, write, and cipher. That fits them to go out into life with keen eyes and ready minds, able to adapt themselves to many different positions. But it is now held that a still better preparation will be made when a fair amount of manual training is combined with the intellectual. It is believed that this will tend to correct that undue preference for the walks of trade which puts into business employments—and keeps always in subordinate positions—many young men who ought rather to be captains of industry in new fields, organising and carrying on important departments of practical service. Accordingly, much has been done to train boys on the executive and industrial side; but, in the meantime, what becomes of the girls? The plain

fact is, that in this, as in most other provisions for general education, boys get their share first and girls follow afterward.

"IN some respects, no doubt, girls have already gained by the new methods. Drawing and natural history, for instance, have been taught to them side by side with boys. But when we look at the actual manual instruction, and particularly the industrial preparation, it has come thus far mainly to the brothers. A few sewing or cooking schools by no means balance the appliances, already large, which are being provided for those boys who are to learn carpentry and blacksmithing. The present writer, for instance, happens to be one of the superintending committee of a Manual Training High School which is this autumn to take in a new class of seventy boys, with no provision whatever for the girls. Yet it is the general testimony that, so far as the educational value of such teaching is concerned, girls need it just as much as boys; while for the industrial value they need it yet more. Hard as it is, since the decline of the apprentice system, to get a boy thoroughly taught any trade, it is harder yet for his sisters.

"A LADY who has had great experience in benevolent organisations writes to me: 'You may not happen to know how almost impossible it is for a woman to thoroughly learn any sort of trade. If, for instance, a dressmaker consents to take an apprentice, the girl is likely to be kept for the first year hemming ruffles, the next, perhaps, making sleeves, &c.; and not until a week or so before her dismissal is she allowed to see the inside of the fitting-room. We cannot blame the employer, who must guard her own interest, and who fears that so soon as her neophyte has got her idea of fitting she will leave her to begin fresh on raw hands. But we' (referring to a training school of which she is the head), 'who are not looking for compensation, could give the girl her trade in perhaps one-fourth of the time she must otherwise spend. Moreover, by a faithful system of diplomas, we could benefit the community by stating with as much precision as possible the degree of proficiency of the person holding our guarantee.'

"THE Society of which this lady is president, the 'New Century Guild,' in Philadelphia, has evening classes for young women in cooking, dress-making, millinery, stenography, book-keeping, and type-writing. Similar organisations exist in other large cities; but the need for which this Philadelphia organisation appeals—of a manual training day school which shall take those who,

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)