

I AM only afraid that "Georgina" and "Sabina Ann" would soon learn that twelve or fourteen hours a day Nursing work leaves little time for thoughts concerning matrimony.

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I HAVE very much pleasure in drawing the attention of my readers to the "Invigorator Corsets" made by Messrs. Hubbard, 15, Claremont, Hastings, which are really most comfortable, as having straps for the shoulder, they give an unusual and gratifying amount of support to the figure. These corsets can be also had in natural wool, and would prove invaluable to those requiring warmth and support with little weight.

S. G.

WOMEN AND THEIR WORK.

BOOTS AND BOOT-MAKING.

THESE "gloves for the feet," as they have been called, are necessities of civilization. The savages can with bare feet tread the dense forests or open grass land; but roads, be they Roman or otherwise, are different. Both man and horse find themselves non-plussed here, unless the pedal extremities be enveloped in some covering or other. Sandals were worn by the ancients, but our modern ideas have invented boots; and still more modern science has decreed that now-a-days these boots should be made by machine usually, and men gladly agree in saying that machine work is equivalent to saying cheap work and cheap prices for the public.

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YEARLY hundreds of girls are apprenticed to the boot trade, with the natural consequence that, like many another trade, the demand for work far exceeds the demand for workers. The terms of apprenticeship are three months' time given to the employer, then two shillings a week, increasing gradually to eight shillings, whilst the whole period served is from eighteen months to two years. If not then perfect the girls next go as improvers, receiving then only the low salary of five shillings a week. Only the uppers are done by women, men being employed for making and fixing the soles. The workers are divided into machinists, paste fitters, rubbers down, welters and buttoners, often called finishers. In the rooms they each keep to the one department; but for making at home it is necessary to know all four. Here I must say that these boot makers can be separated into two distinct sets, *i.e.*, the workers at home, and the workers who are under masters or mistresses, and who assemble in large rooms under their superintendence; the machines, &c., being found for

them, though the machinists have to provide themselves with scissors, and the paste fitters with slab, hammer, two knives, scissors, &c. The latter are now far more numerous than the former, who are being gradually undersold, the apprenticeship system enabling the employers of "hands" to offer a lower price to the firms than can ordinary workers, who accordingly find themselves now very badly situated, and indeed find it often hardly possible to earn a living. In fact, that gloomy monster "sweating" has upreared its head in the boot trade as well as in the tailoring and plain sewing, and the awful competition, which is the mark of the age, causes the workers to be both overworked and underpaid. Boots are given out from the warehouse as usual to the lowest bidder, the usual price now given being two shillings and sixpence for one dozen women's button boots, or if buttons done by hand, five shillings; one and sixpence dozen women's boots, spring side; lace boots are the same as the button, whilst for the common shoes so much in vogue with certain classes, only from one shilling to one and threepence per dozen is paid. By very hard work a machinist can throw off a dozen pairs of button boots, that is two and sixpence worth, a day; but as one pair takes about an hour, this means long and close labour. The working constantly the machine, which resembles in appearance a treadle sewing machine, is, however, very bad for the back; so that work at the rate named above is scarcely possible as a continuance. The machine costs two and sixpence per week to hire, or to buy outright seven pound ten shillings. The masters, or middlemen, to use the true term, for they stand between the warehouse authorities and the girls, give their "hands" (those who are not still in apprenticeship bonds, that is) from nine shillings to fourteen shillings per week according to their department, webbers and buttoners receiving the largest salary. The hours at the rooms are from half-past eight till seven, and at some of the smaller ones from eight till eight. The girls' greatest trouble is the fact that they are liable to be turned off at a minute's notice if the work is slack, as it often is, especially during the spring months, for with their small wage it is almost impossible for these girl workers to lay by against that ever-looming fear, "being out of work."

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THERE is no union amongst these girl boot-machinists, although the men have one, which they used successfully in the strike of boot-makers—a just strike caused by the mean desire of the firms to lower still more a sufficiently low wage, or, in other words, to accept the lowest contract offered. This strike, by-the-by, told severely on the women workers, who found them-

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