

the Exhibition and the extraordinary enthusiasm and helpfulness of the school masters in the districts round about.

But it is not only things connected with the work in hand which have fascination for this energetic nurse. There are all sorts of experiences to be sampled in a lecturing tour. To-night you may sleep in some fine castle or country house full of beautiful antique treasures and pictures, next night you may probably stay in a cottage or little country inn, or, on rare occasions, in an up-to-date modern sort of hotel. Be that as it may, Mrs. Earp finds novelty and enjoyment in all, as anyone can testify who has spent an evening with her in her pretty flat with all its bits of old furniture, old china and other trophies of her lecturing expeditions, picked up here and there with zest, when she wanders beyond the beaten path of the ordinary commercial collector. We can well realise, indeed, that she must find the atmosphere of her home both stimulating and restful—re-creative in fact. Moreover, there are other joys for visitors to her charming home, for Mr. Earp is not only a successful musician but an artist of no mean talent, and there are many among a large circle of acquaintances who love to spend a bohemian sort of evening in this artistic home, where one meets with so much goodwill, good music and good cheer. Mrs. Earp is an able writer on nursing and kindred subjects. Along with Mrs. Sherliker, another Member of the Association, she has just published a book, "The Coming of Baby," and we learn that there is one for Health Visitors in progress. Collaborating with a colleague she was joint winner, a few years ago, of the £50 prize and medal of the Royal Sanitary Institute.

LECTURE.

THE UNDERWORLD OF LONDON.

Her Royal Highness Princess Arthur of Connaught, R.R.C., S.R.N., took the chair on Wednesday, February 10th, when Mrs. Cecil Chesterton gave a most interesting lecture on the Women of the Underworld of London.

Mrs. Chesterton said that, in order to get knowledge of the life of these women, she had set out one day, for a week's sojourn in the Underworld, without a penny; she was clean but shabbily dressed. She walked to Euston Road, where a kindly policeman gave her twopence, and then she went on to the Salvation Army Hostel at Mare Street, Hackney. Mrs. Chesterton spoke very appreciatively of the kindness shown to people who seek help from this hostel. No questions are asked except whether the applicant has been there before. To use Mrs. Chesterton's own words, "I arrived right out of the night and they took me in and gave me a good meal and a very comfortable, clean bed"; in the morning she was glad to find that the water in a yard tap was hot. The Superintendent asked each person, who had come in during the night, what work

she could do. Mrs. Chesterton, on stating she could cook, was sent to a Labour Exchange, but found she could get no work from there without references. After several efforts to get work she was given a flight of steps to clean, for which she received fourpence and spent twopence of this on a tram ride to the Angel. She went through various experiences of a similar kind, most of them showing how very inadequate is the provision made for women who find themselves destitute in the London streets; and a large number of their misfortunes Mrs. Chesterton attributed to the terrible shortage of houses. The lecturer emphasised very specially how much more ample was the provision made for men as regards clean beds, baths and other comforts than that which is available for women and said that she thought there was a great need for more efficient inspection of women's lodging houses by the London County Council.

In the course of her lecture Mrs. Chesterton pointed out a fact which she herself had proved by personal experience. For the first night a woman may walk about, and carry on through the next day as well, but during her second night in the streets she is utterly overcome by an unbearable desire for sleep; actually she becomes doped by the poisons caused by fatigue—so much so, that often she is looked upon as being drunk when, in reality, she has never had alcohol at all. In fact, Mrs. Chesterton maintains there is very little drunkenness among the women of the Underworld. They cannot afford to indulge in drink, and if they did take it they would be knocked out completely owing to their excessive tiredness.

Most of the women of the Underworld carry their wardrobes on their backs. A few may have a parcel as well. Mrs. Chesterton paid a tribute to one of the Southwark car conductors when she asked to be put down at the Casual Ward. "Certainly, Madam," he

said, with the most punctilious courtesy. At the Casual Ward she had many enquiries and when she demurred at having to give details as to age, weight, &c., she was blandly informed, "The Ministry of Health is *very* interested in your weight, Madam!" The Superintendent of the Women's Ward was very humane, but Mrs. Chesterton was horrified when she found her room was called a cell. It was little more. The mattress was decent, the pillow hard as iron and, although the door was not actually locked, the handle was removed, a fact which Mrs. Chesterton condemned as "an official trick of the system." It is quite possible that the effect of finding oneself shut up in one of these little cells, when one is in the last stage of tiredness and hopelessness, may turn the brain altogether, with very disastrous results. In the case of an inquest on a woman who died in one of these cells recently the reply to the question, "Was the



MRS. ATHERTON EARP, S.R.N.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)