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questions. The Bureau has wisely not attempted to predict when it will have had time to digest this enormous mass of information and be in a position to publish the results. Sooner or later we shall have a very valuable monograph on the condition of labour in a big industrial city and by far the fullest and most trustworthy information which we shall possess on the condition of the peasantry of Upper Italy. The two enquiries are to be followed by others as to the condition of the *métayers*.

BOLTON KING

ARTIFICIAL FLOWER-MAKING: AN ACCOUNT OF THE TRADE, AND A PLEA FOR MUNICIPAL TRAINING

THE first glimpse of girls at work at this delightful trade fills one with enthusiasm for it, especially at the contrast it makes with the unskilled, rough and dirty trades so often pursued by women. The long tables at which the girls sit to work are covered with many-coloured fabrics, which their quick fingers twist and pinch into the flowers, which are hung, when finished, on wires running the length of the tables above their heads. The bright materials in their hands, and the rows of flowers above, give a gay and festive appearance to the workrooms.

The processes to be learnt are many, and chiefly done by hand. Broadly speaking, all flowers are made on the same principles, but each flower requires a different treatment. These principles may be taught, and much may be done, by good training to develop the intelligent and artistic treatment of the work. The first process is done by men; the fabrics,—muslin, sateen, silk or velvet,—are cut to the shape required for the corolla of the flower. A pile of material is placed under a mould of the required shape, and the mould is driven down on to it, cutting sixteen shapes at once. In a large factory the mould descends by machinery, in a small one it is driven by a mallet. The men usually do the dying, painting the corollas by brush and spreading them on sheets of porous paper to dry in ovens. After this the remaining processes are done by women. In the case of some flowers, the corolla needs shading, the petals being of a deeper shade at the centre of the flower than at the edges. The corolla, when painted and dried, is still a flat surface and must by heated irons be pressed into the cup shape. Moulds for the purpose are fitted to machines and heated; each petal or corolla is put into the mould and the iron descends, making the material take the shape of the mould. The cup shape is thus given to the rose leaf. Next comes the process of “veining” the flower. The corolla is placed on a pad and the worker with a kind of goffering iron heated in a gas jet, gives the crinkled appearance

to the edges of the petals, or the groove down their centre by pressing the iron on to the flower and pinching the material round it. Then the flower is ready to be put together. The stalk, which is made of wire, is crowned with the seed vessel and stamens. A touch of paste is put on the bottom of the seed-vessel and the corolla is then threaded on to the stalk and pressed on to the seed-vessel. The calyx or culot is threaded on and fixed in the same manner, and if any leaves are needed, they must be wired to the stalk which is then ready for covering. Green muslin is rolled round it very deftly and tightly—a highly skilled piece of work. Lastly the flower is ready for mounting, *i.e.* making up sprays or wreaths, and this is the most skilled and best paid part of the work. At first it seems a simple thing to do, but it is amazing how different a flower appears before it is mounted and after. Often the whole style and finish is given to the spray by the mounter, a very mediocre flower unmounted, becoming a finished and stylish production when mounted.

From even this cursory description it may be seen how highly skilled this trade is. Much of the good work is copied from the French models, and can be done by any one who has deft fingers, a good training, and will be a faithful copyist. But the possibilities of the trade are for those who have a sense of colour and form, which enables them to appreciate the exact depth and warmth of colour in the shading of the petals and to reproduce the nearest imitation to Nature in the shape of the flower they make; who have the artistic taste which enables them to mount with the greatest possible effect; and who possess that inventive faculty which suggests possible or impossible new flowers, and can adapt old models to new uses.

A girl on entering the trade earns 2/6 a week, and is paid more as she improves. It is difficult to give an average wage for the competent worker, so much depends on the nature of the firm that employs her, as well as on the skill of the employee. Some firms, who find employment for their hands all the year round, give good wages, as women's wages go; 15/- to 22/- for the competent worker, 9/- to 10/- for the slow, 25/- to 40/- for the exceptional. Other firms, who do not find continuous work for their hands, pay 15/- to 20/- in the season to good workers, and about 8/- in the slack times, when girls are out of work or on short time for three or five months in the year.

A. Averaged 15/- a week, piece-work, all the year round. She had been in the trade six years.

One employer paid two pattern mounters 22/- time-work a week all the year round, and would pay more if they asked for it. To his other workers he paid 18/- to 24/- piece-work, and there was no slack time.

B. Paid 14/-, 15/-, 16/-, 17/-, usually; 20/- in busy times.

C. Considered the average 10/- to 12/-. "Of two girls working side by side, one may earn 9/-, the other 18/- or 20/-."

D. Paid 15/- to 20/-.

E. Paid 15/- to 23/- piece-work in the season,¹ 10/- in slack times. Has paid 40/- to an exceptionally artistic hand.

F. Paid 14/- or 15/- piece-work all the year round; 25/- to a pattern-mounter; 30/- or 35/- to a very skilled artistic worker.

G. Pays 15/- to 42/- time-work all the year round. "Any worker can earn 15/- if she is any good at all. If I get hold of a really good hand, some one with taste and inventiveness, I would not let her go, either in slack or busy times. She is worth anything to me."

H. Paid 35/- last week to his best mounter; 20/- or over to ordinary hands, as this is a good season.

I. Paid 15/- piece-work in season; 8/- or 9/- out of season.

J. Paid 25/- piece-work for a good hand in the season.

K. Averages 12/- a week, exceptional worker 30/-.

L. Pays 14/- a week up to 20/-, in busy times, but there is very little work sometimes, and has stood and wondered how to keep the girls employed.

M. Pays 12/- to 15/-. He used to pay 25/- to 30/-.

N. Pays 10/- to 25/- piece-work, slack times 8/- or 9/-.

O. 18/- to 25/- in busy times, 10/- in slack.

P. 12/- to 15/- all the year round.

Q. Would not recommend any girl to enter the trade. There is so much slack season, and she can earn only 8/- or 9/-.

The darker side of flower-making is the home work. It is natural that the indoor hands should be considered before the out-door, and therefore most of the hardships and uncertainty of the slack season falls on the latter class of workers. The work is cut, dyed and moulded in the factory, and only the least skilled and least profitable part is done in the homes. This usually consists in "threading and sticking," *i.e.* the corolla is threaded and pasted on to the stem. As this is almost unskilled, it is of course very badly paid, and women can only earn 4/- or 5/- a week working a good many hours a day at such work. The Women's Industrial Council issued a short report on home work, and the Research Committee of the Christian Social Union made a very careful inquiry into the aspect of the trade, and I quote the following from the report they issued :—

While the better workers are able to earn as much as from 12/- to 15/-, 18/-, 21/-, or 25/- a week, by working ten hours a day, a very large proportion of the workers are earning at the rate of only 1½d. or 2d. an hour. They sit at work for very long days, in order to earn sufficient to pay their rent, and they work in ill-ventilated places, with insufficient sanitary appliances. Their homes are such as may be expected under the circumstances described. In many cases children are employed in the work after school hours, or are kept at home to work.

The following are instances of cases which have been found.

1. A. Earning 4/- to 5/- a week in making poppies and common flowers.

2. B. With the help of her children, earning 12/- a week, and paying 4/- rent.

¹ The season for flower-making is from December to May. There is a short season in July, August and September, for autumn flowers.

3. C. Rarely makes as much as 6/- a week.

4. D. Could earn from 6/- to 10/- a week by working 14 hours a day.

The following will show the circumstances in which some of those visited were working :—

Cleanliness.—E. Working with her husband in a small dirty room, for which they pay 3/- a week. They earn from 10/- to 12/- a week.

F. Working 10 hours a day in great discomfort from dirt.

G. Working with her husband and little girl, 12 hours a day; and has no time to keep herself and her house clean, as she is continually at work.

H. Working in a small dark, dirty, back-room, where she and her husband sleep.

Ventilation and Sanitation.—1. Working with her nephew in a small stuffy back room, rent 2/- and living from hand to mouth.

K. Working in a kitchen where two people sleep.

L. Working in a room occupied by two adults, two children and two babies.

M. Working in a dirty, draughty room.

N. Working in a room occupied by herself and three little boys.

O. Working with her children in a completely underground cellar.

P. Working in a small dark room, with another worker—the room occupied by six persons. A typhoid case had just been taken to the hospital.

Employment of Children.—In one sixth of the cases visited, children were being employed. They are kept from school when there is extra pressure of work.

Employment of Young Persons.—In one-ninth of the cases, young persons were employed; generally in the living rooms of those employing them.

Conclusion.—The investigations of the Committee show how much work in this trade is being carried on in domestic workshops, not visited by the Inspectors, and where constantly the laws for the regulation of work and protection of the workers are not enforced. Work is being given out by factories to be executed under circumstances which would be impossible in factories and large workshops. Not only do the workers suffer, but the public have no security against the work being given out to be done in places where there is infectious disease.

Flower-making appears to be a trade that is leaving England. The census figures of 1891 show 4,011 flower-makers in London, as compared with 2,337 in 1901, showing a decrease of 41·7 per cent. As it is a trade which requires great skill, in which good earnings can be made, it rouses in those who are desirous of seeing women enter skilled, instead of unskilled industries, a desire to discover the reason why it should leave the country.

There is first of all the undoubted fact of foreign competition.

French flowers have been, and bid fair to remain, best in the labour market. Frenchwomen, as a class, have a finer artistic sense of colour and form and style. They are, moreover, more highly skilled, and they specialise far more than English people. Whilst an English flower-maker is expected to make any flower, a Frenchwoman makes rose petals only, or rose buds, and nothing else. With clearer water and clearer skies, it is said that their dyes are more delicate and clear than ours. A Frenchwoman, moreover, has a higher ideal of perfection than an Englishwoman. One employer, in speaking of the in-

efficiency of his work-girls, compared the work of English and French women in making *La France* roses. The Frenchwoman's rose, he said, was *La France* in perfection, with its beautiful curves—the English-woman's something she would call a rose, though its shape might resemble a shuttlecock. Until recently, moreover, English flower-makers took the second place. They have always been able to do good second-rate work, and all the cheap work, but of late years German competition has threatened to supersede them. German work is thorough and conscientious;—it displays none of the style and beauty of French work, but it is very cheap—so cheap that now no English manufacturer attempts to make small flowers, like forget-me-nots, or lilies of the valley. There is too much work in them for it to pay him to make them, and this is easily explained by the statement that German work is for the most part done in the homes, largely by the children, whose work is never taken into account in reckoning wages.

Nevertheless German firms cannot execute orders quickly, and here for once the *jade Fashion* does English flower-makers a good turn, for by the time she has decided what shall be her flower for a season, it must be worn. This, however, German ingenuity will doubtless gradually overcome. There still remains much excellent work, such as the matching of flowers to ladies' ball dresses, the supplying the craze of the moment, both of which can only be done by those on the spot.

Such are the impressions gathered from employers as a whole, and their views as to the possibilities and future of the trade are so coloured by their own attitude of mind—either sanguine or pessimistic, and their own individual success or failure—that it is difficult to disentangle a definite conclusion from the varied opinions that have been expressed. There are many flower-makers who at one time at their private houses in Islington made a good living at this trade by employing a few hands in their houses. Such people nearly all say that the trade is not what it was, that it is leaving England; and there are few drearier things than visiting these once flourishing neighbourhoods and hearing the same tale of struggle and disappointment from each. Yet here and there among them are a few who have learnt how to succeed; and it is apparently always the business instinct of knowing into which market to take their goods, which way public taste is tending, what will catch the public eye, that has spelt success to the few. Those who have failed are those who appear to go on making the same flowers year after year, old-fashioned good work, with no originality and no power of following the sudden changes of fashion. The failures make their work in the wilds of Islington according to traditional custom; the successes go about the world, keeping in touch with the latest thing and scenting new freaks of fashion from afar. There are other firms who do large effective work which is seen on Whitechapel hats and in Whitechapel shops, of which much is for transport—they make large and hideous flowers of fearful colours and common fabrics which one would imagine and hope would not be worth while import-

ing from Germany. These flowers are a travesty of fashion and good taste, but they command a steady sale and provide steady work of moderately good wages and conditions. Then there are the firms round Clerkenwell who import flowers, chiefly German, and mount them. This seems to be a large section of the trade in itself. Finally there are a few firms who make both mediocre and beautiful work—flowers which appear to be as lovely in colour and as perfect in form as anything that comes from France—and indeed when one hears that a flower to be high class must have a French label attached to it, one begins to wonder how many of the so-called French flowers have been made by English girls.

Further it is said that as flower-making is a seasonal trade and one very subject to the fluctuations of fashion, that girls will no longer enter it. Unfortunately many women's trades must be described in this way, and this fact does not act as a deterrent; in many cases it fits in well with the circumstances of their lives. It is true that flower-making proper is both seasonal and subject to fashion, but many firms have learnt how to obviate this disadvantage. The chief flower-making season is from December to May; there is a short autumn one in August and September. Firms which supply the Colonies—Australia, Canada—find that one season follows another fairly closely, and when the home season is over they are making for export. Other firms, because of the regularity of the seasons, find it possible to combine some other trade with flower-making. One large firm reserved part of the premises for quills and feathers, and the flower-maker of the winter became a quill-maker in the summer. We passed from the rooms filled with busy flower-makers to rooms empty of workers, but filled with boxes of quills to which after May they would turn their attention. Other firms do decorative work in the slack season. Artificial palms, the decorations for bakers' shops, the "perfect flower" made of rice paper, of which the carnation seen in chemists' shops is a good example; others again do sequin work, or make the dainty nothings of chiffon and lace which please the public for a season.

The vagaries of fashion incessantly present some new whim, which needs delicate handling and skill, so that even should flowers become impossible to the lady of fashion, some new trifle can take their place. "I am going to Regent Street this afternoon," one woman employer said, "to see how they make those petal boas." Firms that make black roses and poppies appear to have steady work all the year round, as England leads in the matter of black flowers, and there is a steady demand for a small quantity of mourning flowers always. The trade is a difficult one to gauge; few employers make stock, for they never know what the leading flower will be until it is well the rage. This year it is rumoured that a certain opalescent flower will prevail in the world of fashion, but no one dares to make it in any quantity yet. The demand will come suddenly, and the flower-maker who can turn out most quickly will come off best. There are years in which a

leader of fashion will not look at a flower for her hat. Even then the successful flower-maker will tell you that it is possible to turn his hands to the fashionable nothings that help to make a grand lady's toilet, that a girl who can make flowers is so skilful that she can quickly learn how to make such dainties.

A difficulty which is as serious as the uncertainty of season and fashion and of foreign competition, is that of procuring really skilled hands. Every employer will tell you that a really skilled hand who shows artistic and inventive taste is invaluable to him. One successful employer told us of two girls who made his trade for him. "They know," he said; "I don't know how they know, but if they say that won't sell, it won't; and if they say that's good style, it will be; and yet they stay in the work-room and I go out and sell the things."

It is the custom of flower-makers to go into the West End and study new models from Paris (where all the best flowers are made); and we were told by one flower-maker that her fingers tingled to be making the flowers that she saw there. Another told us how "Aggie" had longed to try to make new flowers, and, having been given permission, had quickly made something new, and suggested new methods. After that, Aggie had always accompanied her on the excursions to Regent Street, and had become so valuable that she finally earned 40/- a week. Such workers, one is assured, an employer will make any effort to retain. It is impossible to set a value on their work, for often it is at the suggestion of such a hand that a flower is made which is the rage of a season, or a new method discovered of making a flower which is a far more truthful presentation of it, sometimes a mould may be adapted to making a new flower, and this is a considerable saving to an employer; sometimes a new way of arranging petals so that another flower is made. It is for a flower-maker to keep her finger on the pulse of public taste, and to know by what has already succeeded what is likely to please.

It seems probable that the future success of flower-making in England will largely depend on the supply of skilled and inventive workers. "Tell me where to get girls really keen in their work, showing artistic taste like Frenchwomen, and I can make this trade pay at once. We can't get the workers." That is the dictum of the employers. The majority of girls do their work mechanically and unintelligently. They are without ambition, even without interest, in their trade. The "Aggies" are a *rara avis*, and occur once in thirteen years among the girls who pass through a work-room in that time. Most are like the girl of whom the employer said in summing up his indictment against the average factory hand: "Anything will do for them. The curse of our English work-girl is 'that'll do.'"

And the reason lies in what may be termed the industrial attitude of mind of women. It has often been said that women expect marriage to end their industrial career, and this industrial career lasts

far too short a time for them to care much what form it takes or what conditions obtain. To this tacit recognition may be traced that profound dislike to apprenticeship. All employers who teach the trade are sure that there is nothing like apprenticeship, but the girls will not be bound. No doubt there is a difficulty in ascertaining that an employer is not getting the best of the bargain; but the fundamental objection seems to be the desire on the part of the girls and their parents, to be free to follow the extra sixpence as fancy or need dictates. An all-sufficient reason to a girl who is supposed to be learning a trade and wishes to leave it is that Mary is getting 6*d* a week more at jam-making, or that Alice is making boxes and she thinks she would like to work where Alice does; or, having learnt flower-making with one firm for three months, she goes to another firm as "improver" for the sake of an added 6*d* a week. The idea of learning a trade thoroughly, the notion of sacrificing a little immediate gain for something permanently better in the future is non-existent. Nevertheless I am told that when a girl can be persuaded to stop for a year at a trade, the chances are that she will remain steadfast at it—it is the first year that costs.

This, as may be imagined, handicaps employers very much in obtaining skilled hands. In a trade in which two or three years' training is necessary, and delicacy of touch is essential, to pass from one trade to another is fatal to the making of an expert hand. Nearly all the skilled hands left in the trade are those who learnt twenty years ago when they were apprenticed. Nevertheless, to those who wish to see women take a worthy position in industry, this trade offers a fine field for an experiment.

Unlike most skilled trades which women have entered, there is no competition with men; they are not confined to the least skilled branches of it; there are very fair conditions to the really efficient and deft hand, and far more to the really artistic and inventive worker. It is a trade which, in its best work, becomes almost an art; and though it is subject to vicissitudes of fashion and season, it appears that that disadvantage can be overcome. In the ever-increasing difficulty of finding skilled work for women, is it not worth while to try to give excellent training in a trade which offers comparatively few complications? It has been said that women will not regard industry seriously, and this may be true; nevertheless this fault seems to be one which technical training could remove. It would seem that the factory girl needs to be impressed with the dignity of labour, with ambition to take a place among the front rank of workers, to regard her work not merely as a means to money-making, but as an art. With the best intention in the world it is not possible to teach this to girls in a factory; but there is no place like a school or a college for rousing this sort of feeling; and it is the dream of the enthusiast to see a municipal day school opened on however small a scale, where there shall be training for two or three years in

flower-making ; where with an excellent teacher, a generous equipment, the trade shall be taught in all its branches as an art as well as a trade ; and where it can be tested whether, given the ideal of producing good work for its own sake, of executing true and artistic representations of natural objects, the ambition and enthusiasm, which is so lacking in our work girls, cannot be aroused.

Is not this the sort of work for which technical education has been given to the nation, and which we may hope in time to see it compass?

G. M. OAKESHOTT

THE WORK OF WOMEN IN FRANCE

THE May number of *Le Musée Social* contains a monograph by Mdlle. Schirmacher on the work of women in France, giving detailed statistics as to the occupations in which they are engaged and the rate of wages they receive. In France, there is a disproportion between the sexes, the number of adult women exceeding the number of adult men by about 430,000, so, as the writer remarks, marriage is not possible for all women. Out of a working population of 18,000,000, 12,000,000 are men and 6,000,000 women. This latter figure does not include married women who are working as wives, mothers, and housekeepers, who number more than 7,700,000. Agriculture and farming claim the largest number of women workers, more than 2,700,000, and industries and manufactures come next with 1,888,000. Domestic service, the only occupation in which the number of women employed exceeds that of the men, accounts for 737,000, and commerce and trade for 571,000. In none of the other occupations do the women exceed 170,000.

After touching on the work of married women as wives and mothers, a work, so the writer remarks, too often remunerated in inverse proportion to the exertions made and the trouble endured, Mdlle. Schirmacher goes on to examine in detail the main groups of occupations open to women. Of those engaged in agriculture about 1,250,000 are entered as "femmes chefs," but whether all these are small proprietors it has been impossible so discover. As to wages, the rate ranges between 2.01 fr. per day in the Seine department to .90 fr. per day in Morbihan. The rate is always lower than the normal rate for a man, being generally a little more than a half and a little less than two-thirds. In manufactures and industry, out of 1,893,000 women, 1,135,000 are employed in the clothing trades ; 463,000 are employed in the textile industries ; in other industries, though women are never entirely absent, their numbers are small. Wages are generally low in the clothing and textile trades ; outside Paris, the rate barely averages 2 fr. a day. The maximum wage paid to a woman is not half the maximum paid to a man. Further, in an interesting table, Mdlle. Schirmacher shows