

at once change places with the ordinary housemaid, and the ordinary ticket collector with the ordinary laundress. "The physical labour of holding a pen or collecting tickets is infinitely less than the physical labour of carrying coals upstairs, scrubbing a floor, or wringing out a dirty garment."

It is perhaps unnecessary to follow the guidance of Mr. Bernard Shaw in "Press Cuttings" and compare certain risks "of the harmless domestic kind" run by women to the "fearful risks of the battlefield" on which men pride themselves. One has only to read the chapters in Lady Bell's "At the Works"—if one is so unfortunately constituted as not to be able to see what is passing before one's eyes in everyday life—in which the life of

Working Wives and Mothers

in a manufacturing town is described with the intimate knowledge of detail which comes of nearly thirty years' intercourse with the people, in order to realise that women's share of the ordinary work of the world is not allotted to them on the principle of saving them from the "strain and stress of unfeminine work."

It would be difficult to define with any degree of precision and accuracy what is and is not "women's work." The number of admittedly idle women in the community is extremely small: of the population of England and Wales between the ages of twenty and fifty-five, as Mr. Chiozza Money has pointed out, only 823,135 unmarried women figured in the census of 1901 as "without specific occupations." Even agriculture and coal mining are not yet exclusively the monopoly of men. The number of women employed in agricultural work is certainly diminishing, but so also is the number of men thus employed. At the census of 1901 nearly 12,000 women were engaged in agricultural work, a very considerable decrease compared with the 143,000 odd thus engaged in 1851; but those who have had the opportunity of seeing women at work in farmhouses and in rural districts will not need any further evidence than that which has come

under their own observation to prove that the lightest and most pleasant tasks are not reserved for women in this department of industry. More than 5,000 women and girls, again, are employed about the mines of the United Kingdom, though not now underground; and 643 of these are under sixteen years of age.

Domestic service accounts for the largest proportion of occupied women at the present time, no less than 109 out of every thousand being thus employed. What domestic service means from the point of view of easy, attractive work for women is again a matter of which it is not possible to write with any enthusiasm. It is, however, germane to the argument with which we are here concerned, to point out that

Among the Workhouse Inmates

whose occupations were given in the census of 1901 15,630 out of a total of women inmates of 77,249 were once domestic servants. At the same census there were no fewer than 111,841 charwomen returned, of whom 86,463 were married; and this, too, is an occupation whose natural termination appears to be the workhouse; 8,176 of the total number of women inmates of the workhouses given above were formerly charwomen.

Factory employment accounts for more than a million and a half women and girls; nearly half a million follow professional and commercial occupations. Mr. George Shann has commented upon a very significant fact in connection with the factory employment of women which illustrates the prevailing tendency to saddle women with the traditional domestic duties of their sex, whatever industrial occupation they may follow. "Often the woman works in the factory or in some other way all day," writes Mr. Shann, "as well as the man. But the woman does all the work of the house, while both the man and the woman take it for granted that the man should be free to rest or to amuse himself. Often the woman herself would resent the suggestion that the man should do his share of the housework. It would be