

## Of Interest to Women



### CORRESPONDENCE.

Address all communications to Women's Department, office of Tribune, 106, 108 Adelaide street.

Write only on one side of paper.

Women's Department, Tribune:

Dear Madam,—Your questions in last issue of Tribune as to cost, methods of control, management, etc., of the institutes such as settlement abodes for women and girls in English and American cities, could be better answered by such people as Miss Jane Addams, of Hull House, Chicago, than one, who like yourself, has but a very superficial knowledge of such. The plan that seems best and offers the quickest results would be to organize a movement amongst women already organized with this end in view. The women's leagues, auxiliaries of labor unions, and similar bodies, should be the factors to outline the best plan from the present viewpoint. I have heard of co-operative homes put into effect and managed successfully by its members; one such was in the vicinity of Hull House, on Halsted street, Chicago. Who its original sponsors were has slipped my ken; no doubt Miss Addams could advise you. The Labor Temple, for any of the above purposes, social or otherwise, to my mind, can be of no benefit; it barely meets its present requirements. A committee representing all the women's progressive societies should first raise funds, select some building, arrange for its inmates on broad, liberal lines, and select some able woman to manage. Another and perhaps better system would be to let those who would favor co-operative ideas appoint their own assistants to superintend and accomplish the various functions. Going to work on the above lines would solve the essentials for homeless working women; the good accomplished would give an incentive for more effective methods and plans, and out of their practical common sense you would find the means for broader and better work. The prime thing to do is make a start. Get busy on any old line out of the present rut, and failure would be impossible.

Very truly yours,  
An Enquirer.

Your plans, as outlined in your letter, are good, and I should like to have an expression of opinion from some of our working girls. If sufficient interest is displayed in this question, I shall be very pleased to further the idea. I have a personal acquaintance with Miss Jane Addams, and I am sure she would be only too pleased to give us the benefit of her experience.

Toronto, Monday, Oct. 30, 1905.  
Women's Department, Tribune:

Dear Madam,—In the last issue of the Tribune a letter from "An Enquirer" appeared, the subject of which is, or should be, of vital interest to every thinking person.

Now, in order to discuss the matter our friend brings up, it is certain that we should know the working girl. By that I mean, of course, the average

working girl. But to turn aside for a moment, I would ask: What does our friend mean by the word "society"? If he means society at large, then, as far as I can see, the working girl (whom I include) has made her own conditions.

Wisdom, in the shape of public libraries, cooking schools, and other educational institutions has long been standing at the corner of the street, and the working girl does not like the sound of her voice, and will not heed her. She prefers to go to the Majestic Theatre for the purpose of hearing the worst possible gush and sloppy sentiment "mouthed" out by a fifth rate actor, who would be far better employed in breaking stones or street cleaning. I say, she prefers to go to this place rather than spend her little spending money towards bettering herself, either intellectually or socially. This theatre she has built herself. She has also made the popular song, an irritating fact.

Now, we cannot say with truth that the better classes of society drove the working girl to this, though we can say that with very few exceptions society has not done much to help her. In my humble estimation, the working girl has laid out on the Majestic Theatre enough money to have built and to maintain at least a dozen comfortable, well-fitted clubs, well stocked with all the books, games, etc., that she could possibly need.

I have made a study of the working girl for the last five years, and this is what I find: She is smart, clever, neat, industrious, good natured, economical, obliging, and (strangest of all) social. I say strange, because it is remarkable that when they are thus inclined they are not more together than they are.

Of course, conditions are not all they should be, but they might be far worse. I assure my friend, whom I fear by this time is sadly offended, that if he will look over the history of the world from "Genesis" to the Russian-Japanese war, and see how long a time and what terrific events and what dreadful loss of life it has taken to bring about conditions even as poor as these of the present day, he will see that it will be a long, long time before we can evolve perfect conditions, and perfect women (and men, too), to fill them. Ah, a dreadfully long time!

What puzzles me is, that the working girl, with all her virtues, can neither understand, nor will understand, the benefits of good literature. Good books are everything, and in all my life I never met an individual who read well and wisely, but what was greatly benefited thereby. Indeed, I have known cases where people have changed their whole lives. One instance will suffice. A young lady whom I knew, who worked in the factory of a certain well-known firm of this city, earned on an average four dollars a week. She now has a good position at nearly treble her original income, and this, she afterwards told me, was all due to the ideas she got from reading. This ought to show that a girl can better herself, if she will. But will she?

Yours very sincerely,  
Scherzo.

Your very interesting letter in answer to "An Enquirer" opens up a large field for discussion, and, like yourself, I hope it will be discussed, and in a friendly spirit, too. What Enquirer means when he (or she) uses the term "society" I will leave Enquirer to answer, but it seems to me you are dealing with this matter in a more or less superficial manner. It is true, that to outward appearance the average working girl does not avail herself of the opportunities that are offered to her along certain lines. Is it not possible that the very lack of opportunity along other lines is the cause of many of the evils you speak of—the cheap theatre, the cheap dance, and other cheap questionable amusement? It is too often the only thing within the working girl's reach. As for the imitating popular song, how many of us, to say nothing of the average working girl, would have liked to hear Calve sing the better class of music? But to most of us it was prohibited because of the cost. Some of us may be so constituted that music may be a necessity. What is left to us but the cheap, trashy and, unfortunately, popular form of music? And its very popularity may be caused by our lack of opportunity to cultivate our needs along better lines. You say society is not to blame for the working girl's condition. Then who is? Wisdom may be crying aloud at every corner, to the working girl, for admittance. But is it to be wondered at that the working girl is deaf to her cry. Eight or nine hours a day in shop or factory will not leave much desire, or, in fact, much aptitude for study. It is our industrial conditions—the fatal greed of the exploiting class—which has made the working girl what she is.

Your study of the working girl for five years has brought you to the conclusion (judging from your summing up) that she has about all the virtues that human nature could be expected to have. And you say: Strongest of all, she is social. Then the greater the need for something, some place to gratify her social nature in an honest, refined way. I think you are broad enough to agree with Enquirer that such homes as he speaks of would be the greatest boon to homeless working girls.

If the social side of these girls was satisfied, I believe the desire to cultivate the mental nature would grow, and with the means at hand the seemingly shallow nature of the average girl would disappear.

The case you speak of is, to my mind, the exception that would prove the rule. I shall hope to hear from you again.

Editor of Interest to Women:

Dear Madam,—I have been reading the Woman's Page in the Tribune with considerable interest. The letters up to last week were both interesting and instructive. I cannot say as much for one or two of the letters in last week's issue, which should have been placed in the W. P. B., as such stuff is not fit for a labor paper. I would like to compliment you on your answers. You certainly treated them as they deserved.

An Old Union Man.

I agree with you, the letters you have reference to were not fit for the columns of a labor or any other paper. Such letters should be dealt with privately (or not dealt with at all), as two, at least, of these writers should have had experience enough in life to answer such questions for themselves. If not, I do not think anyone else could answer for them. I thank An Old Union Man for his expression of disapproval.

Supposing a woman, passionately fond of music, and artistic to an extreme degree, was asked to become the wife of a man who, though kind and affectionate, was lacking the qualities mentioned in the woman, would this be a happy marriage. Do you think that love between such a man and wife would live,

or would it be wiser for the woman to refuse the offer of such a man, kind and gentle though he might be. I would like to have your opinion, as the argument was the subject of a small meeting which I attended this week. Trusting to hear from you soon, I remain,

An Anxious Enquirer.

To my mind, a man such as you speak of—kind, gentle and affectionate—would have at least, to some extent, the artistic temperament, although it might not find expression through either music or Art, but I do not think it would be possible for a man or woman to have the attributes you speak of without being at least susceptible to the influence of one or the other. It may be unconscious, of course, but the susceptibility would be there. If there is sufficient attraction in other ways, I do not see why such a union should not be a perfectly satisfactory one.

If the love and attraction between two such people were of the genuine kind it would live through all; for while there is a law of attraction, there is also a law of opposites, and in such a case the one might have the essentials the other lacked to make the marriage an ideal one.

### Let the Girls Help

Come out with us, girls, into the great and noble trades union movement. Men and women have lived and died for it.

There used to be a time when women were hitched to coal carts like beasts and driven on hands and knees through the mines.

There used to be a time when a day's work was 18 hours, a time when wages were only paid once in three or six months, and not paid in money then, but in tobacco or orders for food from company stores, etc.

Don't you see how much you owe the trades union movement? Are you going to take everything and give nothing, or are you going to help us make things still better for those who come after us? The little children now being born in misery cry to every woman for a fair chance in life.

When you organize unions, encourage every girl to take an active part. Sing good labor songs. Put every girl in the union on some committee, and hold her responsible for her share of work.

Every girl must be a leader, must learn how to run a meeting, to speak well on the floor, to put motions clearly and well.

Generally in organizations a few do all the work and the rest do nothing but criticize—and they think they could do much better than the "leaders." Give them a chance; make them all work. It does well to have a meeting every once in a while where you practice running a meeting.

### Trades Union Fees

Of all the organizations on earth there are none so little understood as the trades unions, and being not only voluntary organizations, but militant bodies, taking the active part—yes, really constituting the labor movement—they consequently come in for all the abuse, ridicule and antagonism of the avaricious, the ignorant and the presumptuous.—Samuel Gompers.

### Hence Prosperity

The union label on an article is prima facie evidence that the workmen who produce it receive wages commensurate with their dignity as free-born citizens. Here dove-tails the oft-repeated axiom that the better paid the workmen is the more he has to spend—hence prosperity.—Ex.