

anxiously until some old person dies and vacates a cottage before they can have an abode—but beyond this the great man refuses to allow any male resident on his land to wear the



THE COUNTESS OF WARWICK.

hirsute decoration that impartial Nature, thoughtlessly ignoring the special virtues of "blue blood," has allotted to the peasant as well as to the Prince! If any young man will insist on wearing a moustache, he has no other alternative—he must leave the village! This sounds so preposterous that I ought to say that it is a fact within my own personal knowledge. I mention it as an illustration of the absolute power still exercised by the aristocracy over the toilers in this age of the world in this old country.

As a very general rule, however, the leaders of society recognize duties towards their neighbors. Sometimes a lady of fashion is quite devoted to her own people's benefit. In this respect take as an example the Countess of Warwick. This beautiful and gracious woman is more often referred to as "a great friend of the Prince of Wales" than in any other capacity; but it is as a true helper of mankind that she shines, for her plans and interests and the trouble that she takes, all for the benefit of others, give her an eminent position amongst society's leaders who lead not more in fashion and splendor than in beneficence.

Lady Warwick is a noted beauty and she was also a great heiress. Her father died when she was quite a child, leaving as family only her and a baby sister. He had a liking for the law of primogeniture, under which the eldest son generally gets the lion's share of what there is to bequeath, and as he had no son he concentrated his great fortune chiefly on his eldest daughter. Lady Warwick lost no time, when she grew up and had the power to manage her own affairs, in making over to her sister a good share of the wealth that their father had concentrated on his first-born. In her own right she is possessed of large estates in Essex, and as Lord Warwick's wife she is mistress of the ancient domains that appertain to the title, close to Kenilworth. Now in Essex, as there is no coal found, little industry except agriculture is carried on; and, as the present President of the United States observed to the writer in the course of a conversation at the time of the World's Fair, a purely agricultural community is always poor and lacking in means of developing each and all the varying sorts of talent. Lady Warwick was pained to see delicate Essex girls going out

to work in the fields, and others, the only children of widows or widowers and therefore much needed at home, setting off to London to enter domestic service to avoid field labor. So she went about thinking how she could help them to get a living at home, when they were not fit or willing for field or farm work and when their going away altogether was undesirable. The outcome was the establishment by her of what is now known far and wide as "Lady Warwick's School of Fine Needlework." She procured excellent teachers of handwork, both plain sewing and ornamental stitches; she personally brought from Paris the smartest and most elegant patterns in *lingerie* and then, when her workers were trained and skilled she talked of her plan to her friends and asked for orders for *trousseaux* and so forth and had them well executed; ultimately, the large sums of money that she laid out came back, and the enterprise is now self-supporting and keeps at work a large number of the more refined or delicate girls. Finding that strangers were willing to buy from her, Lady Warwick had the courage presently to take a shop in the most fashionable of London shopping streets—Bond street, where rents are highest—and actually to put up her own name and title in full in fat gold letters over the front. There anybody willing to pay the price that the excellence of the work demands can order the finest of stitchery, knowing that they are helping the Essex girls to gain a happy and comfortable living at home in their own village. Another enterprise grew out of the workroom. The fine clothes needed to be well laundered before being sent home, and some big strong girls do not take kindly to the needle, so her ladyship became a laundry proprietor and the Easton washing is as famous as the stitchery.

At Warwick Castle, owing to the proximity of great towns, different activities are needed. Lady Warwick is there a member of the Board of Guardians of the Poor, who administer the poorhouse and the State charity. She and Lord Warwick have also allowed themselves to be appointed Mayor and Mayoress, so as to lead the town's social life. Last year, when a Victorian Era exhibition was organized in London in honor of the Queen's long reign, Lady Warwick undertook the post of president of the education section and made hers the most useful and successful of all the departments. She organized a series of conferences on education and has just published the most important papers that were then read, in a book edited by herself. Her latest idea is a novel one. She holds that what the French call "little culture"—the growing of fruit and making it into jams and preserves, the production of small cheeses, the management of poultry, the keeping of bees and all the rest of the lighter agricultural production for which each year enormous sums are paid to our Continental neighbors—might be managed in our own land by the class of educated and refined women who are hard put to it to discover occupations suitable to their strength and upbringing. So Lady Warwick now proposes to form little colonies or villages exclusively of such ladies, each to have her own piece of land and the whole to be under the general direction of an advising expert, where the individual ladies concerned can do a good deal of the work with their own hands and cooperate in employ-



THE COUNTESS OF ABERDEEN.

ment.