

Agricultural Labor in England.

The employment of women and children in the field work. A board of commissioners were lately appointed by the English Government to inquire into and report upon the facts connected with the employment of women and children in the field labor in the kingdom. Their report has been presented, and from it we gather the following facts.

Speaking of Northumberland, the report says:—

"Women are extensively employed throughout the whole year, and their labor is considered essential for the cultivation of the land. The work of two women is usually required for every seventy-five acres of the light land, and a larger proportion for that which is heavier, or farmed on the four-course instead of the five-course system. Their labor consists in the various operations of cleaning the land, picking stones, weeding, etc.; turning hoes, hay-making and harvest work; rousing and shaying (that is, shearing) turnips; barn work, with the threshing and winnowing machines, filling dung-carts, turning dung-hoes, spreading dung, and sowing artificial manure; turning-outting in the winter for sheep, etc., and occasionally driving carts or harrowing; in some instances forking (pitching) and loading hay or corn, though these are retained so that they are able to do the work of one man. The Northumberland women who do these kinds of labor are physically a splendid race: their strength is such that they can vie with the men in carrying sacks of corn, and there seems to be no work in the fields which affects them injuriously, however hard it may appear. The universal opinion and feeling is that it conduces to health.

"The dress of these north-country women is almost unique for their work; being made to fit as it does not accommodate the bulk of strong materials it does all weathers. Generally it consists of a pair of stout boots, a very short thick woollen petticoat, warm stockings, a jacket, &c.; over all a washing muslin with sleeves (called a slip), which preserves their dress from the dirt. Their faces are protected by a shade or 'ugly' of divers colors.

"Children seldom, if ever, go to work in the fields before eleven or twelve years of age, and are retained so that they are able to continue their school attendance during the winter. As the farms are generally provided with cottages for their outworkers, women and children employed upon them have no great distance to go to work, although in exceptional cases, where the work lies at the extreme boundary of a large farm, their walk may be somewhat extended. The hours of labor for women and children are nine and a half hours in summer, viz., from six to six, with two hours and a half for meals—that is, two hours for dinner and a short break at it and at 4. In winter the hours are regulated by the light."

"Of Gloucestershire the report speaks as follows:—

"The physical, social, and educational condition of the laboring class appeared to be low. Many cottages in the parishes of Newent, Linton, and Taynton are simply unfit for human habitation. There are large areas nearly destitute of schools, or only provided with inefficient ones, and in the wild tract of country round Mayhill there resides a population, probably upwards of 1000 in number, wild and almost savage in their habits, who seem to lie entirely out of the pale of civilization."

Mr. Frazer, one of the commissioners, finds that children under ten years of age are largely employed in irregular field labor; that this labor, irregular though it is, is made an excuse for entire absence from school; that the parents seem to have no idea of utilizing scraps of time for educational purposes; and that their apathy, as well as their poverty, stands in the way of the success of the teacher.

The Manufacture of Ultra-Marine. Until the commencement of the present century all of the ultra-marine of commerce was prepared from a mineral called lapis lazuli. This stone is found in China, Tibet, Tartary, and sparingly in the United States, and the preparation of the blue color from it attended with much trouble and expense. If the world had been dependent upon this source, there never could have been more than four or five pounds per annum produced. Hence the discovery of an artificial method of manufacture was one of the most important contributions made to the arts of this century. Instead of four pounds yearly production, we now have at least twenty million pounds per annum, and as its applications are daily extending, the production increases in proportion.

It could never have entered into the imagination of any man that the blue color which Raphael and Guido used with so much effect in their paintings, and which cost several times its weight in gold, would in the nineteenth century be made by the ton, and sold so cheaply that every household could use it for the ordinary purposes of the laundry. It may be of interest to give a sketch of this important industry. The German chemist Christian Gmelin, of Tubingen, was the first to prepare a small quantity of ultra-marine artificially, in 1822. About the same time a French chemist, Guimet, was occupied with similar studies, and to him is ascribed the credit of the invention in France.

The first manufactory on any considerable scale was established in 1834. A single sentence in "Dumas' Applied Chemistry," edition of 1828, is said to have inspired one of the principal founders of the industry to undertake the work. Dumas says:—"There is no doubt that we shall hereafter be able to prepare ultra-marine from alumina and sulphide of sodium." This sentence attracted the attention of a Nuremberg chemist, and he immediately set to work to find a process for the cheap manufacture of ultra-marine. He did not live to see the task accomplished, but his successor pushed it forward to completion.

Since that year, one establishment after another has been started in Germany and France, so that at the last Paris Exhibition a single manufactory was able to send at least a ton of the most beautiful ultra-marine to be placed on exhibition. There are single establishments that produce two or three million pounds per annum, and this article of commerce is now employed in the manufacture of paper, in the whitening of sugar, as a bluing in the class of articles, in the manufacture of colors, and for many purposes that would have been inconceivable a few years ago.

The lapis lazuli of the ancients is now chiefly employed in the manufacture of mosaic, and is no longer ground up as a color; and what was called ultra-marine, because it came from beyond the seas, is now a home-made article, brought to our doors and rendered available to any one who may wish to use it. It is not surprising that Liebig should pronounce this crowning discovery in the artificial preparation of minerals. Ultra-marine is essentially a mixture of silica, sulphur, alumina, sulphuric acid, iron and soda, and the proper proportions to take for its preparation vary according to the manipulation in different manufactories. The best brands come from France and Germany.

Coinerfeit Curiosities. At the last meeting of the Boston Numismatic Society, Mr. Colburn read the following paper in regard to the counterfeit pine-tree money that made its appearance in 1857:—"In the summer of 1856 I was waited upon by a person from New York city, who desired to see my collection of coins and medals. When shown my pine-tree money he made inquiry as to the varieties. I showed him Felt's work on the Massachusetts currency, which he was very desirous to obtain. He asked me if I had ever seen the 'Good Samaritan' piece, and the silver penny, as figured in Folke's Coins. I informed him that I did not believe that any such coins were struck. He afterwards obtained a copy of Mr. Felt's book. Shortly after a notice appeared in the Boston Journal saying that a hoard of 'pine-tree money' had been found in Chelsea. After much inquiry I was convinced that no coins had been found there, and that the item had been got up for a special purpose. Within a week or two after the appearance of the notice a collector in this city purchased a set of the coins, including the penny, the Good Samaritan piece, and the (N. Y.) shilling and (Vt.) the last two pieces were forgeries from the plate in 'Felt's Currency'—even to the lines across the sides of the pieces, which do not exist except in the fancy of the artist. I wrote to the person who fabricated the dies, saying I should like to procure a set of the pine-tree money lately found in Chelsea. Shortly after he replied, and furnished me with a set of five pieces, on certain terms specified in his letters, which are still in my possession. A well-known collector in the city of New York once expressed the fraud, and the individual who issued the bogus piece denied having ever had anything to do in relation to the matter. Occasionally specimens of them are found in collections, and are difficult to be detected. I think they are all of silver, and exceedingly well executed."

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