

A 'PENNY DREADFUL' FACTORY.

THE factory in question consisted of a small, low-roofed room situated in one of the many courts adjoining Fleet-street, London. Five flights of rickety stairs had to be climbed before the workshop was reached. The room was badly ventilated and reeked of the odour of stale tobacco. A long deal table, covered with the picturesque ornamentations of various ink stains, and four more or less dilapidated chairs, comprised all the furniture.

Three of the chairs were in use, and their occupants, seated at the table, were writing at full speed. In front of each writer were paper, pens and ink, while at his elbow stood a pewter pot, at which he took a pull as each page was completed and thrown quickly aside. The owner of the fourth chair, to whom the writer of the article was indebted for the introduction, took upon himself the duties of host and explained everything.

'You see, he said, 'there are four of us; we rent the room among us and divide the proceeds of our work each week. How much do we make? Well, not very much. The usual rate of pay for our stuff is from 3s 6d to 4s per 1,000 words, and a story may be anything from 20,000 to 30,000 words long. If we could get the work to do it would be easy for us to turn out 100,000 words in a week.'

'We divide the work up here. I myself do all the plots, such as they are; another does the school stories; a third the Wild West and Indian yarns, and a fourth those dealing with naval or military life. The publishers do not want high class literature; they must have a

thrilling, blood-and-thunder story for boys, and they care not how badly it is written. Plenty of strong incidents, startling situations, hair-breadth escapes, following quickly after one another, put into language full of strong adjectives.

'Scarcely any plot is required, merely a thread running through the story, on which we string the adventures like beads. The hero goes abroad in search of immense treasure, or else devotes his life to discovering the murderer of his father; and, chapter after chapter, he performs marvellous feats of skill and daring, until the last one, in which the villain is killed and all ends happily.

'I have heard it said that a man writes best about that of which he knows nothing, and my experience proves it. For instance, the man who does our sea stories—and pretty good stories, too, of their kind—was never out of London in his life and has, therefore, never seen the sea. He possesses a dictionary of nautical phrases, and slips them in haphazard. I don't suppose the majority of his readers know any more about a ship than he does. The same remark would apply almost equally well to the writer of our Indian stories, who has certainly never been out of the country.

'When the Wild West Show was over here he went to see it, and was greatly surprised. Though he had been writing stories of renskings for over three years, yet he had not the faintest idea of their real appearance.

'Who buys all these books? Boys, of all sorts and conditions. There is an enormous demand for this class of publication. Personally, I think they are exceedingly

injurious, for they fill a boy's mind with utterly wrong and pernicious views of life. Almost every day one sees in the papers cases where boys whose imaginations have been fired and aroused by these books have been led to commit crime. They run away from home with the notion of becoming a pirate captain, and generally steal the money to start them in their new career. Perhaps you may say that my practice does not agree with my opinions. That is true; but if I do not write them some one else will, and I must live.'

A WOMAN OF THIRTY OR TWENTY?

THE *New York World* has started a discussion in its columns on the question, Would a man over thirty secure greater happiness by marrying a woman near his own age, or one ten or fifteen years his junior? The following are a few of the letters which have been received:—

TEMPERAMENT NOT AGE THE TEST.

A man should marry (says 'L. M. O'D.') the woman he chooses, be she young or old. For his wife he wishes a woman whose society and companionship will make him better the longer they are together, yet does not place around his neck the band of slavery for her special benefit. A man should use his own judgment and search for the heart that beats responsive to his own.

EXPERIENCE SPEAKS.

After a married life of over twenty years I have come to the conclusion (remarks 'L'Esperance') that a man of thirty should marry a woman about twenty-six. She has had, or ought to have had, by that time the enjoyment and freedom every girl should have in early life. She will know how to keep house without worrying her husband about every little domestic detail. Her character will be firmly formed, and 'bear and forbear' is more likely to be her first principle in married life.

LOVE IS ALL.

That man is happiest in his marriage who loves with all his heart and whose love is returned by one who is congenial in tastes and compatible in temper. To such a couple (says 'G.W.D.') the years numbered of their past life make no difference in their present happiness, while the coming years shall only draw them into a closer and happier union.

WINSOME EIGHTEEN.

I think a man over thirty years has taken long enough time to feel the darts of Cupid piercing through the tendrils of his heart, if not he needs (says 'A Married Lady') a nice, winsome miss of eighteen or nineteen years to charm him beyond the delights of bachelorhood into those of married life.

TWENTY THE PROPER AGE.

If it be a possible thing that a young man loves both alike, let him marry (advise 'J.M.S.') the girl of twenty for several things. The girl of twenty would no doubt marry him, because she loves him, but the woman of thirty would no doubt marry him just for a home, as every woman ought to marry before that age.

STUDY TEMPER, NOT YEARS.

Love, age, beauty, and all other attributes of wedded bliss have been ruthlessly swept aside by that ungovernable ruler, temper. Where two persons possess fiery tempers age has no power (says 'O. Sauson') to prevent the battle of words which often ends in divorce and sometimes death. Still, a woman ten years a man's junior will be obedient, and through obedience happiness may come.

MARRY THE MAID OF THIRTY.

A man is likely, contends 'An American Girl,' to secure happiness by taking a wife near his own age, as then their ideas of life will be in common with each other, and they will grow old together. One many years his senior would not understand him, and therefore would not so readily sympathise with him. Twenty years of age is hard to suit, and will not decide to forsake 'single blessedness' yet; but the woman of thirty or thereabouts is thinking more of getting a husband. She has added dignity to her maidenly charms, understands somewhat of life's struggles, and has had time to reconnoitre and study character.

THE YOUNG WIFE SOON WEARIES.

A man of thirty and a woman of twenty may love each other at first, but in a few years their ages will make (says 'Thayendenega') such a change in their appearance that love will die out. But if he marries a woman of thirty, as the years roll on there will be but little change in their respective appearance; they will love each other, and to my mind that is the correct solution to the query contained daily in your paper.

TOO ARDENT PHILATELISTS.

THE mania for collecting stamps and the high price which some command has just caused the discharge of a number of minor officials in the United States Treasury, one of whom is an old negro, a well-known character in Washington. There was occasion a few months ago to refer to some old documents in a treasury vault, when the astounding discovery was made that hundreds of valuable papers had been badly mutilated by someone in his efforts to remove old revenue stamps. Suspicion was aroused by certain actions of the negro before mentioned. He was found to be in communication with certain stamp dealers, and when confronted with proof of his guilt, confessed, alleging, however, that a score of employees were in the conspiracy, and that some extraordinary prices had been obtained for stamps thus stolen.



THE ORCHARD (GATHERING APPLES).—BURNHAM INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL, CHRISTCHURCH.



Photos by Wheeler.

VEGETABLE GARDEN, BURNHAM SCHOOL.