

dress, of which I gave you some particulars not so very long ago. Mrs Ward in the course of her narrative told a pathetic story of a lame little lad whose mother, with infinite devotion, had carried him daily for months to a school at a distance where other children with like infirmities were taught. The London School Board opened one of its branches for feeble-minded children, and the poor mother, on whose the weary struggle was a sore burden, listened to advice to her boy there. The little fellow became very unhappy, and after a week or two his parents asked the cause. "Oh mother," he said, "God has taken away my legs, but I have got my head," an answer which led the brave woman to renew her trying labour.

Hospital problems came in for a good deal of discussion, and the members of the Conference seemed very generally agreed that women ought to be represented on the courts of management of London hospitals.

The Drink question received a great deal of attention. Dr. Branthwaite, of the Home Office, dealt with the question of homes for inebriates, and declared that the number of licensed establishments and the number of patients admitted increased year by year, and large numbers had to be turned away for want of room. Lady Battersea, who is a visitor to female convicts for the Home Office, commended the recent establishment by the London County Council of a retreat for women drunkards, and said that the crime of at least 80 per cent. of the women in Aylesbury prison was due to drink. This liquor question, the solution of which will be the problem of the next century, is one that especially affects women, not only because drink among men brings ruin into so many homes, but because inebriety among women

themselves is on the increase, and there is an increase of insanity among them due to that cause. The Council of the Charity Organisation Society in fact, held a special meeting the other day to discuss the subject.

Mrs Flora Annie Steel, who is, of course, a leading authority upon India, threw a bombshell into the camp when she complained of the Englishwoman's want of sympathy with the Indian natives, and hazarded the opinion that Englishwomen "have undoubtedly been responsible for almost every serious trouble that we have had in India."

THE DOMESTIC STATUS.

The eternal "domestic question" evoked a great divergence of opinion, some speakers attacking the mistresses for their lack of consideration, others declaring that in many cases mistresses showed their employees almost too much consideration. Mrs Bunting, who read a paper on "Training for the Profession of Domestic Service," claimed that mistresses should give their servants more freedom, and complained that the increasing habit of having dinner parties on Sunday, which kept the servants in, was an infringement of their rights. Servants, too, should have an improved status. An interesting contribution to the debate was made by Mrs Lucas, who herself had been in domestic service, and had a happy time. She found the objection of so many girls to domestic service in the way so many mistresses treated servants as if they were mere machines. We have ourselves discussed this thorny question ad nauseam, and come to the conclusion that while on the one hand the mistress by a very little self-sacrifice could often extend the hours of her servants' leisure, on the other, the servants only too often have too little regard for their part of the bargain, and either from want of training or from carelessness or idleness do their work in a slovenly fashion and dawdle over it. How

many girls, for instance, in London can lay a fire? The domestic servant should be an expert, who can do her work expeditiously and thoroughly, not a mere diletary drudge. If she were really an expert, she would then have the status of an expert, and her duties and leisure time would be fixed by contract.

THE CO-OPERATIVE KITCHEN.

The difficulty of getting a decent plain cook for a small family—a cook who will work without a kitchen maid—has led to a scheme for co-operative kitchens. The scheme is at present a counsel of perfection, rather in the air, as the suggestions that have been made generally put the financial and business footing rather in the background. You can easily understand the tremendous waste of labour there is in the cooking in a block of small flats, each of which for a family of two to four has its own cook and its own kitchen fire, and its own tiny supply of provisions bought at retail prices. If all the occupants of the flats combined to "run" one kitchen for their mansions, they would need only one kitchen fire, a very small number of cooks, compared with the number employed on the individualistic system, and thoroughly good cooks could be obtained instead of the at present incapable and undesirable with which the small family of limited means has to put up, to the detriment of digestion and the destruction of domestic bliss. Another advantage is offered to women by the scheme. Ladies who have made cookery their profession have a natural aversion to going into service as cooks under the present regime, and living in the not too refined atmosphere of the kitchen, subjected, as some friends of mine once were, who for a freak went out to service as cook and housemaid, to the amorous attentions of the butcher and baker. In the co-operative kitchen the lady cook would find her proper sphere of action as manager

and mistress, not as menial. The following picture of the ideal cuisine has been presented in the "Humanitarian." (At present, says Tom, too many cooks, like Kruger, "stagger humanity.") Imagine the bliss if every morning, instead of the butcher-boy, a smart boy in buttons handed you in the menu for the day, consisting of the usual dishes in favour. You select your dishes, and name the hour, early or late. At the appointed time a cart, fitted with hot-water vessels, will deliver you your dinner, hot, well cooked, and daintily garnished, and next day the dishes will be called for in the morning. That the dinner sent in would cost more than if the materials were bought and cooked at home goes without saying, but when one remembers the saving of the cook's wages and her keep, and the large saving in kitchen coal, the additional cost would be reduced to a minimum. A district should be chosen of well-tenanted houses of the upper middle-class families, and the co-operation of not less than twelve should be secured before starting; a home should be rented in the centre of the district, and suitably fitted for extensive culinary operations. A good start, with a smart boy in livery, properly fitted carts to carry the goods, a liberal but not extravagant menu, say of one soup, or fish, a choice of two entrees, a joint, a sweet, a savoury, and enough capital in hand to bear the first year's expenses, and the scheme would not only be self-supporting, but very remunerative. The profits would necessarily have to be just sufficient to pay, not to expect to make a fortune all at once. There would have to be more or less fixed hours—a margin of from 1 to 2 mid-day, and 6.30 to 8 p.m.—most households could fall in with. The dishes would be sent so hot they could very well be kept hot for a short time if the family were accidentally late. What anxiety guests cause us now! But

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