

WOMAN AND HER BOOTS.

WOMAN is not in the habit of taking the advice so freely offered her in a kindly spirit by man. She listens apparently to all he says as to the inconvenience and extravagance of her dress and of its prejudicial effect on her health, but she pays no attention to his warning, and resolutely follows the path of her own inclinations, even though it leads to the workhouse or grave, with that firmness which is one of her most charming characteristics. At this season of the year, however, when, owing to the treacherous nature of our climate, and the greasy condition of our pavements, outdoor exercise is often as dangerous as it is beneficial, woman can hardly fail to see the absurdity of her high-heeled boots. It is quite impossible for her to walk with any ease, comfort, or safety to herself in these instruments of torture, which, by throwing her out of the perpendicular, give her the appearance of the leaning tower of Pisa, and produce an impression on spectators that she may at any moment topple over. Her boots, also, are too thin for walking purposes, and it was only last week that an inquest was held on the body of a young lady who, owing to a nail piercing the sole of her boot, received such an injury to the foot that she died of lockjaw. Woman, moreover, now that she takes so active a part in the business of life and is almost ubiquitous, requires to be strongly, if not ponderously, shod, so that, when necessity arises, she may hold her own with man, returning kick for kick with that fascinating but foolish creature. A few words from the pulpit would perhaps induce her to take the question of boot reform into her serious consideration.—Pall Mall Gazette.

EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN IN THE BLACK COUNTRY.

THE following extracts from the report of Mr. Baker, inspector of Factories, gives a terrible picture of the condition of women in the Black Country. The report from which the extracts are taken was made to Mr. Baker by Mr. Sub-Inspector Brewer, who says—

"From both the nail and chain trades there are strong representations made against the labour of women, whether as to the number employed or the size of the articles made. The women are said to take the place of fathers as well as of husbands, while the men are idle and drunken. So difficult, too, are some of these shops to find, that the same place may be passed many times, and only be discovered at last by the merest accident. . . . 'I thought this was a free country,' was a remark which greeted me as I entered a nail shop in the outskirts of a large manufacturing town. I enquired what was the matter now, and was answered, 'Do you call this a free country where women are employed in such trades as these are here?' I replied I had again and again discussed this question with working men around me, and I am continually asked whether I cannot do something to stop women's labor, especially in and around Halesowen, where 'hundreds' work; making the large nails or spikes is the order of the day, and is far fitter for men's work than women's. The root of all the evil in the Black Country appears to be drunkenness, no matter whether the drinker be puddler, collier, chain or nail maker. The outcry against the colliers' and puddlers' wives working is very great; not, perhaps, so much from their influx into the trade, but from the fact that they work night and day, and toil and slave—and for what? Not for the price that straightforward masters would give, but for any price any crafty knave of a master chooses to offer. These people work, and do not stand out for 'tommy' and 'beer' so long as they can get something to satisfy their half-starving families; while the ought-to-be bread-winner is luxuriating in some public-house at his ease in 'training his whiffet' for some future running on beefsteaks and the best of good fare. Day by day I am more convinced that this woman's labor is the bane of this place. Nor do I confine this remark to the nail and chain trade alone. It was only the other day that a young woman, addressing me, said, 'I say, master, I wish you would make my man do a little more work and me less.' At Bromsgrove I heard also of the growing custom of idle, lazy young lads looking out for skilled, industrious wives in order to obtain an easy life. Things go on smoothly for a time, but then come children, and perhaps sickness, and the idle hand of the legitimate bread-winner has lost its craft, or a course of drunkenness has so debilitated him that he can no longer stand the fatigue and heat. While the mother toils and slaves, the children are left uncared for, to wander shoeless and in rags, till they are old enough to blow the bellows for their father at a miserable pittance per week—to be kicked and cuffed, hear filthy, indecent, and blasphemous language, and are then sent into the shop amid men degraded by drink and gambling, in time to follow the same course. My experience is that the chief encouragers of such labor as this are the middlemen, the foggers, and the drunkards.

"It is explained that 'foggers,' 'middlemen,' and 'factors' are synonymous terms for a class of men who get a living by buying nails at a somewhat cheaper rate from the working nailer, and selling them at an advance to the large masters. To these 'foggers' the improvident hasten, who live from hand to mouth. The fogger gets the advantage of all little odd quantities, as, for instance, a nailer who takes in 18oz. of iron would only get paid for the pound. Foggers are supposed to be greatly mixed up with truck. 'Not many days since a tale was related to me by an ironmaster of what happened in a brickyard near Bilston a short time back. The manager noticed a girl carrying clay looking exceedingly ill. Thinking she had been drinking overnight, he exclaimed, 'Why Clara, you don't look up to much this morning.' 'No more would you,' was the retort, 'if you had had a child during the night.'

"Mr. Baker acknowledged that this report of Mr. Brewer's is 'sensational,' adding, however—'But I have not introduced a tittle of what he and other writers have said of this Black Country. In a report of this kind, or any kind, it is indescribable, and much must necessarily be omitted. But I believe, from what I have myself seen, all that I have written is true, and I am afraid that all I

should have written is true also. And the remedy? That I respectfully leave to the Royal Commissioners, before whom I have laid Mr. Brewer's report.' Mr. Baker calls attention to one possible result—namely, that as women are often obliged to use the 'olivers' to weld their chain links, &c., weakly work, or occasionally bad iron, may be introduced in the fabrication of cable chains, on the safe holding of which many lives may depend in rough weather at sea; and that, at all events, testing by a Government official is desirable before they are trusted for such purposes."

CATHOLIC SCOTLAND.

THE following extract from the report of the British Government School Inspector for 1874, refers to the Catholic schools in the middle and lower wards of Lanarkshire, and is of interest as showing the vigorous condition of Catholic education and progress in Scotland:

"Six or seven non-public schools are at present being erected in the district, chiefly by the Roman Catholics, who have shown very great energy of late in providing schools for the children belonging to their Church. By the kindness of Archbishop Eyre I am furnished with the authorised statistics from his Secretary, Mr. M'Farlane. The number of the Catholic population in my district is about 422,700. The following table summarizes the progress of Catholic school building during the past four years: Since 1st January, 1871, twenty new Catholic schools have been opened at a cost of £52,912 9s 9d, the number of children being 7,584; and four more new schools are being built at a total cost of £8,810, the number of children being 865—making a total cost of £61,722 9s 9d with 8,449 children. It thus appears that the average cost of these twenty-four schools is £2,571 15s 4½d each, and that the average number of children they (according to regulation) can each contain is 362. These schools are fitted up and furnished with all the modern desks and apparatus, and, indeed, so far as fabrics are concerned, they will bear comparison with any school under my inspection. The above facts attest the extraordinary efforts the Roman Catholic Church is making for the education of her children, while Catholics, like all others, are rated for the public schools. There are now on my list thirty Catholic schools, and five will soon be added. Numbers of the Arabs of the street (Irish) are pouring into the Catholic schools, and it is wonderful to see how soon they get tamed into habits of civility, obedience, and attention to lessons. These schools afford the best of accommodation, a very important fact in considering discipline; but they also show a systematized and regimental regularity in all school things—a fact not less important."—Catholic Citizen.

NEW IRELAND.

WE have often commented with regret on the little care taken to direct the stream of Irish immigration to the United States. While the provident Germans had various associations in different parts of the States, by whom their brother Teutons were taken in hand on landing, and pioneered to some locality where their strength or skill and industry were sure of profitable employment, the poor Irish were allowed to shift for themselves as well as they could. Some semblance of a society took them in charge of later years at Castle Gardens, but it went a very short way in seeing to their welfare; once out of its ken, they might sink or swim for all anybody seemed to be concerned. It was lamented that while the influx from continental nations under direction of countrymen already settled were able to find their way at once to the best parts of the Union, where they joined and aided communities already flourishing, our people were without guides, lost purpose as soon as they touched the Transatlantic shore, and, becoming absorbed in the overcrowded city, soon yielded to its temptations, or retained no longer the taste for an independent life or the desire for a more respectable one. We are gratified to see that a really practical step has been taken to root the Irish people in the American soil, a thing which has been already done on so large and successful a scale for the Germans, the Swedes, the Danes, and others, whose nationalities individualize whole tracts of the Great Republic. The plan we have to notice with approval is not only Irish but Catholic. It is the inspiration of the Most Rev. John Ireland, Coadjutor Bishop of St. Paul, Minnesota. This energetic prelate has selected along the line of the Pacific Railroad over 150,000 acres of railway and government land, of splendid quality, and on most favorable terms. On this it is his lordship's intention to locate two thousand Catholic families. Minnesota is a State of very salubrious climate, a land of crystal lakes, of beautiful prairies, of the dreamy Indian summer, and bounteous harvests, a region abounding in fish and game. The soil of the projected settlement is the golden vein of this territory, well adapted for growing all the cereals, and offering, thanks to the noble meadow tracts scattered through the district, peculiar facilities for stock raising. Water is plentiful, and calculating all the resources available, the Bishop thinks that suitable settlers will be owners of their own holdings, and independent if not wealthy citizens in a very few years. Dr. Ireland gives a cautious invitation. While confident that all who come determined to work will not fail to do well, he warns intending immigrants that they will have some rough work at the outset. By way of illustrating the probabilities, the Bishop declares briefly but emphatically, "I have conversed with thousands and thousands of Catholic farmers in Minnesota. Many a tale they told me of hardships endured in early days. But not one to say he was sorry he settled in land have I found. Whatever were once their trials, they to-day thank God with grateful hearts that they are farmers." The Bishop advises settlers to come prepared with £80 and £100 to provide for the first season. Of course a great feature of the settlement will be the fact that it will render the services and practices of religion more available than these could be to a scattered population dwelling a greater or less number of miles from priest or church. Bishop Ireland's invitation is directly addressed to the Irish inhabitants of the Eastern States. It is to be hoped that the response will be such as to increase the movement begun by the good prelate. The more our people are drawn away from the overcrowding and vice of cities, the brighter the future of Ireland in America.—Dublin Freeman.