

No. V....The Map-Colorers.

Although there are of course many exceptions to its application, yet it is a general truth that the nature of an employment exerts a very strong influence over the manners and habits and even the appearance of those engaged in it. The Map-Colorers, engaged in a light, graceful and picturesque business, seem to imbibe something of the variegated and agreeable character of the colors which it is their task to lay so carefully and delicately upon the paper. They do not work, on the average, more than eight or nine hours a day, and their wages range from three to five dollars per week.

There is only a fair proportion of apprentices engaged in this business, and they get about \$1 50 per week. The trade is not over-stocked with laborers, as comparatively few who work possess sufficient nicety of hand and artistic knowledge to excel at the business.

The number of girls engaged in coloring Maps in this City is perhaps two hundred. They work by the piece, generally, and are paid from three to ten cents a sheet, according to the quality of the work done. Ordinary Maps containing four sheets, pay a shilling each for coloring. A common industrious hand will color five maps in a day.

Some of the work is very fine and requires a good deal of care and skill. Much of this is performed by girls who have partially studied Painting and Drawing, and frequently by those who have taught those branches, and find themselves out of employment.

The coloring of Lithographic Prints is an employment that comes under the same head as Map-coloring, and employs an equal if not a greater number of hands. The number of coarse, common Lithographs—such as the Black-Foot Indians draw with elder-juice on the dried hides of buffalo—is almost incredible. Barbers'-shops, Groggery-walls, country Taverns, Peddler's packs, the parlors and bed rooms of sailors' Boarding-houses, &c. &c. furnish ornamental use for hundreds of thousands of these pictures—to describe any one of which, accurately would set one's teeth on edge.

The colorers and stainers of these inimitable and inappreciable works of art are usually employed by the week and receive, in the most extensive establishments, from \$2 50 to \$3 50 per week. Free competition, however, has over-supplied the demand, even for these precious pictures. Prices of coloring, consequently, have been pushed down, until in some concerns we find that wages are on a par with those of classes generally far less favored.

In these poorer establishments, if we are rightly informed, (we found it somewhat difficult to get accurate information,) a great portion of the work is performed by apprentices who get at best very poorly paid and sometimes not at all. The mountains of colored pictures for sale at the cheap print-shops emanate from these concerns and can be afforded very cheap.

The harvest of the Colorists comes about mid-winter, when all the shops, high and low, are preparing for St. Valentine's Day. Then delicate pink-fingers are in huge demand, and their lucky proprietors can have as much work as they choose. Better prices, too, are given at this time for all kinds of coloring, and the profession of Paper-Colorer rises to an equal importance with that of the Paper discolorers who scribble for the Journals and the Book-makers.

The majority of girls engaged in the business are tolerably and some very well educated, and they are generally of good character. Most of them reside with their relatives or friends, and nearly all have a great fondness for showy dresses—a taste which, whether acquired by their high-colored labors or derived from the instinctive inspirations of the sex, many of them strain every nerve to gratify. In common with many other classes of working women they give themselves much needless anxiety in trying to reproduce in muslin and calico the gaudy vulgarisms which the unrefined wealthy flaunt along Broadway in silk and velvet. But, while many of them thus waste their earnings in hopeless attempts to imitate what is in itself only contemptible, others learn prudence and forethought from their observations and experiences, and lay aside all they can spare from the fruits of their labor. Many of them thus accumulate snug little sums of money, which at the proper time serve to establish them in life, and insure them comfortable and happy homes.

These remarks are true, to a greater or less extent, of all classes of female laborers in the City, who find the love of dress one of the strongest and most irresistible of the thousand temptations with which they are beset.