

"Very much.

"What kind of work have you been doing?"

I admitted I had never worked in a factory, but told him I could sew and was willing to do anything that would give me a living.

"Well, you ought to have a chance—a good chance if you are willing to work—but it's dull just now and I don't see where we can put you. You say you can sew. Run the machine too? Well, we start our skirt and cloak rooms in a couple of weeks, and then we can try you."

"But I must have work," I persisted, "at once.

Mr. W. sighed a little and left me to see a customer who had just then entered. While I was fixing up a romance in case any inquiry was made as to my age, name, residence and position in life, a sad-faced Irish mother came up the four stories with a sixteen-year-old daughter. They were as poorly dressed as myself, but considerably less happy. The mother's hands were hard, thin and work-worn, and her face seamed with care. She wore an old bonnet, a coarse black dress, poor shoes, an old shawl, and an expression of injury, despondency and severity. Annie was a well-developed girl, with a good, wholesome face, red cheeks, bright, fun-loving eyes, big hands and feet, a most ungainly manner, and a nice figure. She had been crying, for her lashes were wet, and she seemed expectant that a crisis of some sort was near at hand. I soon learned that the mother missed her calling when she adopted maternal duties. The family lived in the region of Blue Island avenue and consisted of the parents and growing children, two or three having married. Annie was the youngest and "had to do something for her grub," as the mother said. For a long time she worked in a box factory and made good wages, but the work was not steady, and last January she came to W.'s.

And what do you think she did?

She earned 80 cents a week cutting dress reeds from 7:30

o'clock in the morning until 5:30 in the evening. Annie will be 17 years old in September. Here is her account of the work:

"Oh yes, I like it. They don't pay me much, but the fore-lady's good to me, and Mr. — is awful kind. The girls is nice, too. The only thing I don't like is that they're always cuttin' me down. I can't make hardly nothing."

"Last week? Oh, last week I wasn't here. I staid home. It was so hot I didn't want to take the trouble to come down for 13 cents a day and walk and put up my lunch."

Thinking the girl's calculations were amiss I turned to the mother, who confirmed the statement, adding: "It don't pay to feed that kid to work on the pay she's getting."

"It's what all the girl's gets," added Annie, beginning to cry. I played mother for a little while, told her she was a good girl to help her parents and not to mind, for there was plenty of work, and if she comes to the *Times* I'll help her get it.

After the Irish gray eyes had been dried with both corners of her little black shawl she gave me the prices at which she had been working. Here they are:

One cent a gross for cutting steels in eleven, fifteen and eighteen inch length. The work is done by machine, the operator using one foot and both hands constantly.

Four cents a gross for sewing buckles on bustles.

Three cents a dozen for basting bustles.

Four cents a dozen for springing bustles.

Seventy cents a dozen for putting elastics on reeds and boxing the same.

Wages in this department vary from 60 cents to \$3 a week, \$1.50 being a very fair average, and this too, for girls of 19 years and less.

When the manager had dismissed his guest he waited on