

like slaves on custom coats. There was a fire in the stove on which men heated their irons, and two boxes of garbage just outside on the pavement filled the room with their odors.

Leaving the field of cloth and cloaks I applied to E. A. M., the confectioner, on West Jackson street. The forewoman is a thin, bloodless young woman, with wild eyes and unmistakable evidences of overwork.

"No, I can't give you a place. You are too big. I want little girls. All these hands have been sent to us by peddlers because they are so very poor. You couldn't live on the salaries we pay. These children get \$3 and the old hands up-stairs \$4."

The midget laborers are filling pans with chocolate and maple caramels. Young boys cut the sheet of soft, brown saccharine stuff into squares which a dozen little girls transferred to the tins. At deep troughs filled with pop-corn and gum-drops were other children filling small paper bags. Up-stairs the girls worked on stick goods. Their quarters, while rude and bare and hot from the steaming syrup-pots, were light and airy.

At Brougham's packing-house on Jackson street, I applied for work in the canning-room. The foreman was kind. He took me out in the dark, little packing-room, in which the light and breeze were fenced off by walls of tin cans. The girls were pale and thin and very young. But, oh, how they did paint! Each stood near a wall of cans that had just been filled with meat—pressed corned beef, tongue or ham—still warm. At hand was a pot of Japan paint with which the girls brushed the ends and rims of each can. I told the foreman I knew I could do the work. He tried me. I daubed on the paint, held the brush wrong, and got more color on my hands than on the can. The girls laughed at my awkwardness; so did the foreman. I was chagrined with my failure and asked for some water to clean my hands. The man gave me a benzine bath and then showed me to a basin of dirty water on the

surface of which a hundred or more dead flies were afloat. The quarters in which these girls work are little more than deadly—no sunlight, no free, fresh air, no place to sit, and the blue paint smeared over their hands and arms and dripping from the breast and belt of their dresses. Their wages are \$5, but each is expected to paint at least 1,500 cans per day. Dirty little girls in rags and broken shoes, many of their wrists not bigger than your two fingers, were in the rear of the shop scouring cans, for which they are paid \$3 a week. The hours of toil are from 7 o'clock to 12 and from 1 o'clock to 5. The girls were gay and inclined to be happy in their dungeon slavery, for, after all, they are better paid than scores of help in the employ of P., J. S., E. and Mrs. W.

At the suggestion of the foreman I took a Halsted street car for the stock yards and with so much experience presented myself at the F. C. company. I did not see Mr. N. K., and what is more, didn't want to see him. The girls, numbering a hundred or so, were at work up on the second floor in one of the numerous buildings. They painted and labeled by the piece, getting 5 cents a hundred. Plenty of girls handled 2,500 cans a day, giving them a salary of \$7.50 a week. Experienced hands earned \$9 and beginners and dryers \$4 per week. No provision was made for the comfort of these girls. They swept the greasy floor when necessary, packed the goods and were jostled and pushed about by the bloody butchers and greasy packers. All worked in cast-off clothing, many literally dripping with paint. A great many of the girls were Irish, but the Swedes and Germans were numerous. I cannot understand how they endure the work which, while purely mechanical, requires them to be on their feet from 7 to 5:30 every day, and from all I could learn they do not stand it. Few with whom I talked had been in the yards five years; all wanted to get married, not to have money and nice clothes and theater tickets, but to get rested.