

at the extreme southeast corner of the floor, leading up a short pair of steps to the sidewalk. About this doorway so many goods were piled and draped and hung that the passage of air was obstructed. There must have been forty, and there may have been eighty, clerks, cash boys, and girls on this floor and five times that number of customers surged in and out under the glaring rays of gas-jets and electric burners. Babies squirmed and cried under the suffocating heat; children screamed and fretted; men and women fanned and wiped their faces, but the little cash girls and the languid clerks endured their prison uncomplaining. Add to the heat from gas-jets, electric lights, and machinery, the exhalations from so many people, the moldy smell from damaged goods, the dampness of the freshly mopped floor, the fumes from a stray disinfectant, and the mildew that lurked in dark corners, and you have some idea of the quarters in which customers are invited to look for bargains, and where helpless, honest, freeborn American men and women, boys and girls are forced to work for clothes and bread.

What about the soul? It's mockery to mention it to these slaves in such a dungeon.

On a rude plank door painted black is the word "Ladies." The irony of it! "Serfs" would be less impertinent and "bond-women" or "drudges" better than either.

The door yields to my touch and I enter the toilet and cloak room. The atmosphere is so intense and the effluvia so offensive that I am almost stifled. A window about eighteen inches square has been cut in the side of the staircase leading from the street, and here I stand, my face turned up to the clouds of dust that float in from the feet and skirts of the passing customers. By and by I get accustomed to the foulness and turn round to explore the place. The floor is black and wet from recent mopping; the janitor has swept all the previous day's rubbish in from the basement and it forms a big pile behind

the door. There is only one gas-jet in the room and I do not see the wet sweepings until I have stepped in them. On either side of the inclosure are the cloak-boxes, communication to which is afforded by a window a foot square. A young and very pretty colored woman is in one section and in the opposite window is a little boy possibly 13 years old. All the female help pass their hats, wraps and lunches through these windows, and they are put in a cubby-hole the number of which corresponds to the number of the clerk. The smell of mold forcibly assails the senses, and mingled with the foul odor of the adjoining closets the effect on the lunches must be left to the imagination. On the east side of the partition is the toilet inclosure, built like the rest under the pavement. But for the perforated coal-hole covers over head the place would be pitch dark. It is damp, dirty and smelly, the stone sidewalk forming a ceiling, and gray flagstones the floor. The closets, four or five in number, have not even the luxury of doors, and in a space at one end is a dirty little iron sink into which runs a stream of water. As only two girls can approach the narrow trough for water at a time it is not hard for the reader to understand how great a luxury this single stream of clear, cool water is to the slave-girls. At one time I counted twenty-eight girls in this filthy little hole, which is unfit for cattle and in which no man would water a faithful dog.

When I had accustomed myself to the deadly smell that pervaded the place it was 9:30 o'clock and the girls were beginning to come in to wash their hands and clean up, after arranging their stock. About the little mirror were seven girls, some combing their hair, some dressing it, and all trying to get a peep at their wan faces. The closets were crowded, and while three young girls were washing at the sink five moved about with bits of soap in their hands, their arms and faces covered with lather. The soap may have been furnished by the house, but of the absence of towels I am positive. Most of the girls