

"35 cents each" I concluded the fragrant stuff had been reduced and told her so. While I was stating the fact the floor-walker came along and told me I was mistaken. "There's the price plainly marked 40 cents, madame, and it's a bargain."

"No, I won't pay but thirty-five cents, that's what this girl told me," and the gentleman said take it along. When I had run the check and the lady had gone, he came back and blew me up, as a bit of a girl in the tidies said he would. He asked me what the matter was; if I hadn't "better soak my head and learn to read," and wanted to know where I had been "hanging out." I suppose the proper thing would have been to cry, but I only yawned and said I wished there were chairs for the clerks to sit down when they were tired. Then I was told to take and mark these queen colognes forty cents.

"Does the firm provide lead pencils?" I asked.

"Yes, and gold watches."

"Where shall I go to get a pencil; I have none?"

"All you get here will go in your eye," and the elegant overseer left me. A girl who heard the talk said I could go down to the stationery counter and buy one for two cents.

At noon Mr. P— came along and told me he had been watching me and that I would make a first-class clerk in time.

"You have the ambition and that's what we want. Did you bring your lunch?"

"No sir."

"Well you can just go up to the lunch room and get your dinner. I'll pay for it. Only twenty minutes noon today."

I thanked him and rode up to the sixth floor. The place was an immensity of space, partially occupied with boxed goods. In one small corner a small boy had charge of a large table about which were upholstery and way down a hundred feet or more, sat a young woman sewing brussels carpet. Her face was unforgetably sad and her form slight and stooped.

"I don't mind being up here alone," she said. "I prefer

it to the crowd down on the other floors. I get very tired and would rather work five hours longer at this than stand on my feet from eight to six. I get five dollars a week. I have been here going on two years. It's a nice house to work for because they never fine you, and Mr. P— always takes the girls' part when the boys are insulting."

In the center of the great roomy floor was an old piano, and as soon as the girls ate their lunch there was music and song and a whirl or so about the dusty floor. You pert young ladies and insolent old women who think it necessary to abuse and brow-beat these brave little bread-winners would be ashamed of yourselves could you hear the melody their fingers extract from the disabled instrument, and remember the money wasted on your musical education. They not only played with grace and feeling, but they sung and danced and talked about books and magazines borrowed from the libraries—a proof conclusive that "oft in a wooden house a golden room we find."

In and about this playroom of shop girls I saw many sweet things that were more than human. The big girls took a motherly interest in the little clerks and told them how to "treat the customers" and how to "get along with the walkers." One gentle creature with "odd" shoes on gave a little freckle-faced girl of twelve years, whose hair she was combing this lecture:

"Now, you mustn't get sassy."

"I'll sass them if they sass me," retorted the child with a storm of tears.

"No, no. Now, don't you cry," and she put her arms about the little one and loved her as tenderly as if she were a daughter.

"It isn't any matter what a lady says to you. You musn't pay any attention to it. But if you say anything back she'll report you and 'E'll' discharge you. I tell you how I do.