

"Want to stitch?"

"No, I would rather finish."

"Give your name to the clerk."

I complied and was entered on his book as the resident of a vacant lot on Monroe street. The forewoman selected a bundle as big as a Kamschatka baby from a mountain of bundles and said:

"Here, go over there and wait till I come."

"How much do you pay for this class of work?"

"I don't know. It seems to me you're mighty particular."

"If you don't know who does?" I asked.

"You make me dizzy," she said, dropping the bundle and giving me a look of intense disgust. She took a small book from her pocket containing the price-list and asked me what number.

"I don't know."

"Look."

"Where?"

"You'll come down a peg or two before long," and with a groan she bent over the bundle at her feet, flushed apoplectically and said "360." Referring again to her price-list: "Them's sixty-five cents," and left me.

I raised that sixty-five cent ulster, and with my arms folded about the fuzzy, ill-smelling thing, moved "down there" as directed, and halted at the edge of a huge rag box. Here I stood for twenty minutes, when the forewoman came aft and bade me "this way." I pursued. There was a halt about the middle of the shop and I seized it for a "scoop."

"How many girls have you here?"

"Never counted them."

"What can experienced cloak hands earn in a day?"

"Never asked them."

"How much of your salary is for politeness?"

"You can sit here," pointing to a cane chair with half the

seat gone. "That girl with the black dress will do your stitching; the one at the end of the second table will bind the seams, and Annie down there in brown calico—she's fixing the machine now—will give you any help," and she was off.

"I beg your pardon, did I understand you to say I would get sixty-five cents for making this cloak?" following her.

"Now your're just a little bit too fresh. If you don't want the work, say so."

"I do want the work but I want to know what it will pay first."

"This is a sixty-five cent cloak. Do you get that through your head? The stitcher gets twenty cents, the binder gets fifteen cents, and you get thirty cents for finishing if the work is right. If it isn't, you get out."

I thanked her and was alone. Here I thought lay my fortune. Thirty cents for making a long cloth cloak, after the seams were stitched. It had to be trimmed down the back gores around the collar, cuffs, and pockets with mohair plush. The sleeves had to go in, eighteen buttons sewed on, eighteen holes worked, and all the seams and edges faced with black muslin. Thirty cents! To save my life I couldn't have finished the garment in ten hours. I was just reaching that conclusion when the forewoman appeared with a small book, two checks, and a piece of tailor's chalk as big as a dime.

"Your number is 180; chalk it on all these pieces and if you lose any you will be fined."

"How much?"

"How much? You cheeky thing! The cost of the cloth and the cutter's time. That's how much. Give this check to the binder and that one to the stitcher."

"Will you please tell me how this side gore goes?"

"Go to Annie. I ain't here to learn you how to sew."

"May I have a needle?"

"Furnish your own needles."