

business required only a limited knowledge of reading words, figures, and human nature and that if I didn't sell goods I didn't want any pay. For the next five minutes I played the role of Gabriel and blew my own trumpet.

"Well, it's just this way: You are an inexperienced hand and I'll have to put you through all the departments before you will be useful in the stock. That's the way I train all my new hands, and when they leave here they can always get good places. You can try it if you've a mind to, and at the end of that time I'll give you a good reference or a place in the house."

"At how much?"

"Well that depends. If you sell \$50 or \$60 worth of goods in a day I'll be willing to pay you \$4, and if you sell \$150 worth you can have \$8. But you see I don't really need any one just now, for there is mighty little money to be made this season."

"Do all your girls have to go through the six weeks of probation?"

"All the new ones. Every one. That's our plan, for it gives us a chance to see what kind of material the applicant is made of."

"Well, I'll try it. If I find I can't live on nothing longer than two weeks will you give me a letter?"

"No, I can't say that. I can't recommend you unless you serve the full six weeks, because it wouldn't do you any good. I couldn't say anything about you except that you worked for me."

"And if I am found faithful and efficient wouldn't you say so?"

"No, I couldn't. It wouldn't do, don't you see, because I have a reputation for turning out the best kind of help."

"Well?"

In response to fatherly inquiry I told him I was staying with

friends, on whom I had only the claims of friendship, but that I had absolutely no resources beyond self-help. He spoke encouraging words about the rewards of industry and the face value of push, vim, and snap, and with so much fabric on which to rear hope—that trembling expectation of things far removed—I engaged.

The first direction was to go down in the basement, and put my hat in the cloak-room. I saw plenty of men and girls in the dim gaslight selling goods at the various counters, and little boys running around with bundles and checks, but no evidence of any cloak-room.

I asked a little tow-head and he pointed "over there." I pushed open the heavy black door that swung in and fear and horror seized me. The smell was sickening and the heat overpowering. The floor was wet and slippery and the place so dark that I could not see anything for a moment or so. The first door in the inclosure was marked "ladies' toilet," and I pushed it open to find even a more densely polluted atmosphere. The room was very large, divided by a partition, on one side of which was a small iron sink in which a large yellow bowl had been placed. There was a scrap of brown soap on the wet shelf, and near by hung a small looking-glass. A long crash towel drooped like a transferred sea-weed from a roller on the opposite side of the room. The next was a "gents' room," beyond which I found the cloak-room, a place so dark that I could not find a cubby-hole in which to stow my hat for some time. Like the annex, the floor was wet, the atmosphere foul, and the heat so intense that I thought my head would burst. The arrangement was of the usual order, each box being numbered and the inclusive numbers marked on the end of each tier. Notwithstanding the severity of my black chip hat I was not a little disinclined to lay it in the dusty, ashy hollow. But in it went and out I went, with my throbbing temples between my hands and my body streaming at every pore. On