

My experience began at 7:50 A. M. and lasted just three hours. When I climbed the dusty stairs I took a ten-minute rest at the top. Everybody was at work but a hungry-looking man about 27 years old, with skin the color of a Russia turnip and thin, peaked features. He was dressed in a pair of heel-less slippers, a white shirt, and a pair of shop pants that a clothing store pays 18 cents for making. Neither collar, vest, coat nor suspenders burdened his emaciated form. He moved among the workers with a cat-like tread, his shoulders drooping and his knees opening and shutting with a sort of accordion movement at every step. He passed me several times as I stood at the desk and eyed me so unpleasantly that I turned my back to him.

After waiting at the desk for three-quarters of an hour, I asked the clerk, a sweet little girl of 16 years, with pretty red cheeks and dark eyelashes and hair, for work, and was told to wait till the forelady came round. A dozen girls were waiting too, some with cloaks, others with check-books and tickets, and a few with hand-made fringe. The fringe-girl I spoke to. She told me she received 5 cents a yard for making an imitation of seal-ball fringe, such as winter cloaks are trimmed with. She had a piece three yards and a quarter long that had taken her all the previous day to make. Here was a child of 15 working nine and a half hours a day for a competence of 16¼ cents. Will the Prairie avenue woman, who, at the suggestion of Mrs. Ormison Chant, is trying to find one hundred girls who are earning less than 28 cents a day please enter Maggie W—— on the list, and will the women of the P—— agency who want a new field of inquiry, call and see this slim, snake-gaited, jaundice-faced creature who has charge of this human mill.

Maggie's fringe being measured and her book checked, she was given another box of material and went off to weave it into tassel-trimming. The girl who took her place would not be interviewed. She didn't know how much stitchers earned

and wouldn't tell how much a week she could make." She was, possibly, 25 years old, with a deathly pale face, and looked as if she hadn't eaten any breakfast. Her successor was less reticent. "I'm here since May, but I don't like it; the boss is a horrid thing. Him and the forelady watches us all the time, and they don't give us hardly any work. I can only make one cloak a day; some pays 30 cents, some 40 cents, and some 50. Yesterday I had only 60 cents coming to me for two days. Are you long here? Oh, you won't stay. They search your bag and your pocket when you go home nights to see if you have any thread or pieces about you."

Before I had a chance to talk with another unfortunate the little rosy-cheeked clerk told me "it's against the rules for new hands to stand here. You must go over by the stairs and wait till the forelady comes." I smiled at the pretty child and she rewarded me by bringing a chair to me a few minutes later. All means of communication being cut off I amused myself making sketches of the shirted, slippered, sleuth-like creature as he passed.

This pastime was interrupted by the appearance of a fat woman. She had on a black sateen suit that fitted her puffy figure like the raiment of a well boiled suet pudding. She carried herself like a drum major on a dress parade and by way of ornaments wore a gold watch with a double coil of gold chain at her belt, gold earrings, a gold breast pin, gold cuff-buttons and two gold rings. Bigger than bust or bustle was the woman's head I discovered when I asked:

"Are you the forewoman?"

"Forelady, yes. What do you want?"

"Work."

"What can you do?"

"Sew."

"Where have you been working?"

"N. R. Co."