

CITY SLAVE GIRLS.

A "Times" Reporter Gets Into a Paper-Box Manufactory That Puzzles and Bewilders Him.

He Finds Little Children Toiling Away for a Miserable Pittance of \$2 or \$3 a Week.

The Employers Are Not Altogether to Blame for Having the Unfortunate Youngsters at Work.

A Proposition of Marriage to a Pretty and Brainy Seamstress Is Taken Under Consideration.

Correcting an Erroneous Impression that "Nell Nelson's" Articles Are Not Founded on Fact.

Nothing short of a Philadelphia lawyer, a Chicago health officer, a proprietor, or a "devil-chaser" that hits the spot once in a thousand times could without a guide explore the labyrinth that is known as H. Schultz & Co.'s paper-box manufactory, 34 to 38 East Randolph street. It occupies only the three upper floors of a four-story building, but the stairways are so dark and narrow that one must grope his way from somewhere to a supposititious somewhere else, which resembles nowhere when he gets there because the rooms are so overcrowded with material that one employee cannot in many instances see her nearest neighbor two yards away.

Of the 120 employees ten are mere girls, who get from \$2 to \$3 a week, while the others receive from \$5 to \$7.50. Each girl keeps her own account-book and at the request of the proprietor submitted it to inspection. It showed the exact amount the owner had been paid each week for many weeks. One advantage of working in this stuffy place is that there is work the year around.

Mr. Schultz had the usual explanation to make as to the employment of young boys and girls, and no doubt made it truthfully. Their parents needed their assistance and would sign any sort of a certificate as to age, and supplement it with personal solicitation asking employment as a charity. In extreme cases he negotiated a compromise with his judgment, as most manufacturers do, and gave the child employment.

"What kind of work do you do?" a group of five boys was asked at the noon hour.

"All but him binds packages; he glues."

"How old are you?"

"We're pretty old and gettin' older, all de time."

The closets are separate and fairly decent. The ventilation is bad.

"I am a man of few words and you have no time to lose, so I will proceed direct to business. Do you want to get married?"

The proposition was made by a *Times* reporter to an attractive young woman employed as a seamstress in a custom shop on the fourth floor of S. Nelson's building at the southwest corner of Wesson and Hobbie streets, on the North side.

The reporter had seen the young woman but once before, and after that meeting the following paragraph was printed in *The Times* on Aug. 13:

"This man is a blonde, tall, somewhat portly, and a widower with three children," he began.

"Can't you make it five? She just does on children. If she won't take him I'll be No. 2 and run for the chance. Can't you induce him to call here? We are tailoresses here, but when we appear on the street we are—"

"Well, what are we then?" asked the girl with the light hair.

"Why, then—then we are ourselves. What time is it?"

"Seventeen minutes to 1 o'clock."

"Then we have just two minutes to live," and the trio began preparations for renewing their toil after the forty-five minutes allowed for lunch. The author of the letter might wait a long time before finding a brighter or better head for his household than this girl whose ancestors worshiped Thor and Woden.

"Nell Nelson," in a recent article in *The Times*, described the trousers manufactory of K. B. Oleson, on Sedgwick street near Division, as a two-story and basement frame, the stories being used for girls and the basement for horses. This is true as to the girls, and only the qualifying expression "in part" is needed to make it fit the basement, the rear portion of it being used for stabling, with all that the word implies. Miss Nelson, it will be remembered, worked an afternoon at this place making a pair of trousers for 5 cents, and after relating her experience quoted the words of a young woman who sat at the same table and who complained that the shop was cold.

Of course the girl had no idea that her language was to appear in print and spoke carelessly. But Mr. Oleson was displeased and the girl was promptly discharged from his employ. The Knights of Labor were notified and so was *The Times*. Yesterday a reporter was instructed to investigate the case, and if the facts were as reported to assure the girl, whose name is Mary Kane, that *The Times* would secure for her another and better position.

Mr. Oleson was found on the upper floor of his shop and pretty mad yet, though he had had a week to cool off in. But he soon quieted down, led the way to the office in the basement, and sent for Foreman Matson. Then *The Times* article was read and liberally commented on, Matson doing most of the talking because he could turn sharp corners in English a trifle more skillfully than Oleson.

"Mary Kane has left but she wasn't exactly discharged," said Oleson. "If the rooms are cold in winter why didn't she complain to me instead of 'Nell Nelson'? I know they are cold at times, but not for half a day. I frequently feel chilly myself in the early morning. I know the house is not a model; it was built directly after the fire and needs many improvements. Why didn't Mary Kane complain to me?"

"She preferred no charges against you. In a casual way she stated to a table-mate that the shop was cold in winter, as you, now acknowledge. The situation is this: If you have discharged Mary Kane because of a chance word *The Times* will see to it that she immediately secures a situation in some other shop."

After a few moments Mr. Oleson said the girl was one of the best in his employ, that nothing could be said against her work or her character, and he would be willing to take her back.

"You may tell Mary Kane she may come back to work if she wishes to. I don't want to do anybody any injustice. All I had against her in all the years she worked for me was that remark about my shop being cold."

"But I may not see her, as she is away from home."

"Well, just go over and tell her mother that it's all right and Mary can go to work when she likes."

Each escapes the twenty-five girls employed, and is gratuitously distributed among the patrons of the sidewalk above. In every instance *The Times* has given names and street numbers, so that any person taking an interest in the labor question, and having the slightest doubt as to the truthfulness of the reports could satisfy himself with but little trouble. Of course it must be understood that there is a difference between.

"Sappho at her toilet's greasy task, And Sappho fragrant at an evening mask."

The shops and factories have been seen by *The Times* as they are from day to day. As a result of the inspection hundreds that were in an unsavory condition a month ago have been placed in a cleanly and fairly sanitary condition. If nothing else should be accomplished by this investigation the results would amply repay the effort to better the condition of the working women. But more marked results are to come.

All laundries are not disagreeable. That of Munger, at 520 West Madison street, is clean, airy, and the employees give evidence of tidiness and thrift. The women usually start in at about \$4 a week and increase their wages to \$6 and \$8 in a few years. Much of the work is done by the piece. One girl gets 1/2 cent for starching a man's shirt, another 1/2 cent for ironing the bosom, another the same price for ironing the body, and still another 1/2 cent for ironing the collar-band and folding. Most of this work is done by machinery run by steam. Closets and ventilation are all that could be asked.

At the Oriental laundry, on West Madison street, of which E. Jennings is proprietor, there are eighty women and twenty men employed. Quite a number of the women are past their prime, but some are young and looking ahead. One jolly woman of 62, who has worked eighteen years in this establishment and earns from \$5 to \$7 a week, said the only way to increase wages was to stop immigration. "She was quite a philosopher in her way. The range of wages is from 87 1/2 cents a day to \$8 a week. It is here that the laundering is done for the Pullman Palace Car company, at least 20,000 pieces being handled daily. They are returned to the different depots by delivery wagons and in bales. One bale contains 200 sheets, another 900 pillow-slips, and a third 1,400 towels. Most of the curtains for the Pullman cars are made on the upper floor of this busy building, the sewing girls averaging about \$7 per week. Everything possible is done by machinery. The stairways are lighted and ample. There are fire escapes. The closets are separate and in good condition. In short, the establishment is well arranged throughout.

PUBLIC OPINION.

Miss Willard's Views.

TO THE EDITOR: The press report of my address before the Knights of Labor in Evanston last evening fails adequately to set forth the plan I have in mind for relieving the frightful situation brought to public knowledge through the kindly columns of *The Times* and *Mail*.

My thought is this: By concerted action of the ballot-box such municipal officers can be elected as will adopt and enforce an ordinance for the protection of women and children from the industrial atrocities against which they are powerless to protect themselves.

Employers can be required to provide suitable toilet-rooms, lunch-rooms, fire-escapes, adequate light and ventilation and "sweat-rooms" for all employees, the hours of work to be limited. Next in order, some legal plan should be devised to secure wages that will cover the cost of board, fuel, and food and clothing and lodging. Such state and municipal laws should, of course, include the appointment of inspectors to see to their enforcement.

I believe the "Woman's league" of the city, recently organized and in which about seventy societies of women, with an aggregate membership of thousands, have already manifested an interest, would gladly undertake this work. As the Woman's Christian Temperance union has been the moving force to provide police matrons at the police headquarters and the Woman's club gave the impetus that resulted in the Protective Agency for Women and Children, so this league might bring about this new work of inspection, which under righteous laws would de-

velop the scenes and incidents in these establishments where every young woman of most fair hands and face soon learns that her privilege to toil for barely enough to satisfy hunger depends upon her readiness to grant favors to the power that be. To earn barely enough to feed her must become an expert at her work and then in silence at her highest rate of speed, subject the time to rules which subtract from her meager earnings for the least infraction, while an immoral and often brutalized boss scolds, humiliates, and abuses her at his pleasure.

If you doubt the veracity or accuracy of Nelson turn to the fourth biennial report of the bureau of labor statistics for 1888, and there will find her words verified; you will find some thing only less in detail. And the commissioners say that many of the proprietors of these slave pens, learning who they were, their mission, refused them admission to the workshops and would neither permit them to the employees or learn their names. And yet employers justified themselves for putting certain work which required the strength of an account of the cheaper wages for which they could work, because they could make a profit their living upon the streets at night, and could not. And this was in a cloak manufactory employing about 300 girls.

Think of that, you fathers of daughters, you for more protective tariff to dignity and American labor; voting to take the taxes of whisky and tobacco rather than reduce the taxes—rather than surrender any part of protective system."

There is a tariff of \$57.54 on each \$100 worth of imported cloaks. That is to protect the manufacturer who will hire you daughter preference to a man because she can work at night. He will pay her 1/2 cent for making a pair of 1/2, 80 cents a dozen for making shirts, 25 cents for making vests, 25 to 30 cents for jackets and jerseys, 30 cents for a cloth coat from 75 cents to \$1.75 for making a silk lined, trimmed beaver, plush, or empress cloak, will pay her \$1.50 each for making a Fanny belt coat and from \$2 to \$2.75 for a dress overcoat. And while she is doing this she must wash her own thread and needles, pay him for machine and ice water, and he will see to it he gets back from 25 to 35 cents of her weekly earnings in fees.

If she is five minutes late she is fined from 10 cents. If she talks or laughs while at work is fined from 10 to 25 cents; if she makes an usual noise she is fined; if her stitches do not match the boss she is fined; if she is absent on "sick day" she is fined 50 cents. For her thread and needles she is charged double what she can them for at retail stores. And she is dominated over, bullied and harassed all the time.

If you do not believe these things, which Nelson writes turn to the official report of the bureau of labor statistics of 1888, and you will find it all there. These conditions prevail the cotton mills, shirt, trouser, coat, men's women's underwear, and cloak manufactory Chicago.

Do not these facts remove from before your eyes a little of the glamor of protection of "American industries" to dignify and enable American labor?

Do you ask why this pittance of wages, slave-like servitude and degradation is submitted? It is submitted because the saint who longer is gnawing at the vitals. It is submitted by the mother because her little ones must shelter and food, and by the girl because she must feed and clothe herself and because a desk of her employer is a hungry, struggling, ravenous for her bread and craves her miserable position. It is submitted to cause the pauper labor of Europe is here employed thousands, shelterless and hungry. Bureau County Ill., Tribune.

THE DOCTORS DISAGREE.

Dr. Earle Is the Only One Who Thinks Johnson Is a Leprosy.

There is a decided difference of opinion among the physicians at the county hospital regarding the disease with which A. Johnson is afflicted. Dr. Earle is the one who believes it to be leprosy. Dr. Witter, who has charge of the case, says his judgment it is an aggravated cutaneous vulgaris, a skin disease which enters into the flesh and forms ulcers, blotches on the patient's face and body dissimilar in appearance and are not in line on the surface, as in typical leprosy. Witter thought that there might be a combination of loathsome diseases, but it will require some days' study of the condition before it could be definitely decided what the matter was.

Everybody on THE TIMES tells fortunes.

Another sample institution is Loomis' laundry, at 193 and 195 West Monroe street, comprising a one-story and basement shanty. If any man has a particle of doubt as to the truthfulness of THE TIMES' representations he can visit this or any other establishment that has been inspected and see for himself. In the wash-room in the basement men and women wade around in slops half an inch deep. The only redeeming feature of the disgusting premises is that one of the dirtiest of the dirty closets is under the sidewalk, some four feet removed from the windows, so that a part of the

One page four we give brief extracts from Nelson's white-slave labor, as published in THE CHICAGO TIMES. As the master in THE TIMES filled quite forty columns, mostly in small type, a summary of it condensed into a column and a half of the Tribune must necessarily be of the briefest.

This summary can give you no exact description of the treatment accorded the female employees toiling for a beggarly pittance and at their own risk, in the sweatshops of the city. It can give you no idea of the surroundings, nor of the slave-pulling rules, regulations, and discipline to which they are subjected by direct or subtle. Nor have the reasons

CHAUTAUQUA, N. Y., Aug. 18.—Dr. F. V. Woods of Chicago lectured to a large audience "John Hampden" this morning. The lecture was greatly applauded.