

lighted. On a long table that served as a sort of fortification for the private office of the company were the samples—"antique crocheted goods"—as they are listed in various shades of white. All were of different pattern and unvarying ugliness. There were round tidies and oblong tidies, square mats for a bureau and smaller ones of oval and circular design, intended for a lamp or cushion. Behind the table, sacheting between a writing stand and a desk, was a young man of 30 or so, of the blonde type, with a stationary scowl between his eyebrows and an otherwise pleasing manner. That is, I thought the manner pleasing till I began to get acquainted with it and then my opinion changed. After a lapse of five minutes or so the fair-haired gentleman turned to the young girl with a deepening of the scowl and a most unalluring "Well?"

"I brought the mats back."

"Oh, you have, eh?" opening a piece of newspaper and unfolding a dozen hand-made mats the size of a tea-plate. The work is carefully examined on both sides and as he proceeds the scowl deepens. Without a word he tosses the lot on the little table and reaches for the proffered blank the girl has opened.

"What's your name?"

"Rhafferty."

"How do you spell it?"

"R-h-a-f-f-e-r-t-y."

"Oh, yes; Martha Rhafferty," after hunting through a long list.

"Do you want more work?"

"No, sir."

"There's plenty more if you want it."

"No; my mother don't want me to do any more crocheting."

"Well, Mr. White isn't in now. Can't you come in again?"

No answer. A look of discouragement comes over the young face.

"Don't you have to do some shopping about town?"

"No, sir."

"Well, you can wait, can't you? Wait here. Take a chair. [I had the only one.] Just go in the next room there and take a chair."

As he went to lead the way the crochet-teacher called his attention, and the girl remaining I seized my chances for a bit of interviewing.

Martha showed me her contract in which the firm had agreed to refund \$1 of the three deposited when she had finished \$15 worth of work. On the back of the contract were the credit receipts of the company entered in lead pencil, dating from January to July. She told me she lived in Gross Park, away out on the West Side; that she helped her mother, and had been trying to earn \$15 since January. She received 60 cents a dozen for the mats and it took her a week to crochet a dozen.

"Then I must pay 10 cents car fare each time, and that leaves me only 40 cents. I had to pay \$3 before I could get any work. I always knew how to crochet, but they made me pay \$2 for lessons and \$1 as a security. I began in January, the first week, and now I am through. I have made \$15, and when they give me back the dollar I shall have \$16." Here is a company paying a girl of 18 \$15 for six months and one week's labor.

When Mr. F. came from the work-room he was met by a boy who had brought in some work and was in a hurry to be off.

"Mrs. C. sent in these mats and she wants you to receipt for them."

The paper is opened and the work inspected. The scowl deepens. There will be trouble and I prick up my ears.

"I don't like this. This is bad. They are all stained. Are you her—her—are you a relation?"

"Yes."