

"What's the \$3 for?" I ask.

"Can't you read? The \$2 is to pay for the samples and instruction and the \$1 as a security for our material. I don't know who you are and if I gave you the thread I might never see you again."

"I don't need instruction. I can make the stitch and I don't want to put any such amount in samples. If you can't trust me with a spool of thread and a pattern will you sell me the material?"

"That's not the way we do business. If you want to work for us you must comply with the contract. You pay \$3; that entitles you to a sample mat which we teach you how to make. After you have \$15 made worth of work we refund the \$1."

"What about the other \$2?"

"It goes to us for instruction and samples."

"Will I have to make the samples?"

"Yes."

"Then there are thirteen in the lace manufacturing company's dozen?"

"If you want to put it that way, yes. But you get one of each set."

"But I don't want any. I have a supply. Tell me how much will you sell me a thirteenth of a dozen of this set for?"

"The price is on the tag."

"Ah, I see, 15 cents; and you pay 60 cents a dozen for making them, a profit of \$1.20. The best thing I've struck yet. Any stock for sale?"

The scowl becomes threatening, but I venture to ask how much thread it takes to a mat for a closer calculation of the profits.

No answer is deigned.

"If I give you \$3 you will give me work?"

"Yes," in a sullen tone.

"How much?"

"All you can do," brightning up a little.

"How do I know you will give me back \$1 after I've earned \$15?" I ask. "I don't know anything about you; I never heard about your firm before, and there is no name on this paper."

"I guess your motives are bad. You don't want work."

"What guarantee have you to offer of honesty or respectability?"

With glaring eyes, distended nostrils, and face crimson with rage he threw down a pile of 2-cent blank books in front of me. "There's our customers; every state in the union is represented; go to them if you want references. Here are more, too," slamming down a sheet of paper with the names and Chicago addresses of about forty women.

"I see you have a minimum local trade. Chicago women don't seem overzealous about the crocheting business." Then I asked him where he got a market for the goods, and the name of some business man to whom I could go for reference.

"Now I am not going to do any more talking with you about this business."

"Why? Is it a secret organization, a sort of Masonic——"

"No, it isn't secret or Masonic, but I don't believe you're all right and I won't answer any more questions until I know who you are and what you want."

Poor Mr. F. was so furious by this time that I thanked him for his attention and bade him good afternoon.

At the foot of the stairs I waited to tie my veil on and see how Martha fared, but at the expiration of thirty minutes she was still waiting for Mr. W. and her \$16.

Of the five women I interrogated none of them were able to earn 20 cents a day. All expressed a liking for the work but complained bitterly of the way the concern gave out the work. For instance, bedspreads paid \$10 a dozen, but not more than three spreads were given to a hand and one of these was the