

## THE GIRLS ON THE PICKET LINE.

Cigarette-Makers Yet on Strike Because They Will Not Permit Those Who Did Watch Work to Be Dismissed.

### WAITING FOR THAT SIGNAL OF SUCCESS.

Miss Van Etten Has Ordered All the Young Women to Their Homes, Where They Sew and Sew, Hoping with Every Stitch for the Expected Announcement of Their Triumph--Hard Work, Long Hours, Small Pay and Families to Support.

Billor's cigarette factory, on the corner of First avenue and Eighty-ninth street, looked lonely yesterday afternoon. The interior was screened from curious eyes by hastily improvised brown-paper curtains at doors and windows, but the precaution seemed

useless, for there was nothing inside to be seen save one solitary man, who worked in a distant corner. Not even a fluttering ribbon told of the presence of a cigarette girl, and the feminine pickets of Wednesday had been replaced by three determined-

looking "young fellows" who watched the building from adjacent doorways.

Miss Van Etten had commanded the girls to depart, and they had departed. She had furthermore impressed upon their youthful minds the fact that home was the best place for them, and that hanging about the factory doors would not especially assist their cause. Miss Van Etten is the President of the Workingwomen's Society, at No. 70 East Fourth street, and may be termed the general commanding the small army of amazons now on a strike. Consequently her remarks carried weight, and the pretty strikers went yesterday in the bosom of their own families.

There are about forty girls in all, and half a dozen of these are the workers and spokesmen for the others. It may have seemed hard for the leaders to come down from the rostrum to the sewing machine, and to exchange the blue ribbon of picket duty for the calico apron of dish-washing, but if they suffered they made no sign. The brightest and prettiest of them, Maggie McDonald, was the one who threw the most soul into her sewing, and was apparently the most anxious as to the result of the strike, although she is the best worker and is losing more money by her enforced idleness

than any other of Billor's employees. Miss McDonald may safely be called the "star girl" of the factory. She is level-headed, sound of judgment and exceedingly popular among her associates. After Miss Van Etten her word is law, and having reached the mature age of twenty-two or twenty-three, it is she who has seconded the general in directing and sub-directing the enthusiasm of the younger girls. She has been in the factory almost a year, and it was to her that the proprietor first confided his pleasing intention of reducing the wages of rollers from \$1.20 to \$1 per thousand. She headed one of the first committees to approach him after the deed had been done, and is now interested in the establishment of a cigarette-makers' union which shall be exclusively for women.

Miss McDonald was sewing busily when a World reporter called yesterday at her home, No. 117 East One Hundred and Fifth street, but readily stopped to talk about the strike.

"I think we cannot fail to be successful," she said, "for the busy season is at hand and Mr. Billor is losing a great deal of money daily by the strike. He offered to compromise ten days ago, as you know, but

one of the conditions was that we should let him discharge four of the 'pickets' who did duty in preventing non-union workers from going in.

"You know we had them at the factory very early every morning to argue with applicants for work and to persuade them to keep away and let us have a fair show. They did fine work, and convinced the non-union girls that the best thing they could do would be to quit and join the union, which they did. Now, we are not going back on the pickets after that, so we told the boss we would not begin again unless the pickets can come too, and that's just where we are now.

"Mr. Billor is a just man and a kind man. I think he will do the right thing by us yet. He has been always good to the girls who worked steadily and attended to business, for that's the kind of person he is himself."

"Would he make overtures to you or through Miss Van Etten?"

"Through Miss Van Etten. You see, he has her address, and as soon as he wishes to make us an offer he will notify her. She sends special messages to all of us when anything turns up, calling a meeting at once, and we go down to her rooms, talk the thing over and decide what we'll do. It

was only the rollers and bunchers that got their pay lowered, but the others went out in sympathy. The only way anything can be done is for all to work together. The rollers had been getting \$1.20 a thousand. It needs a pretty quick worker to roll a thousand in a day, and the majority of them roll from 500 to 800. The bunchers had been getting 55 cents a bunch, and their pay was reduced to 50 cents.

"A first-class buncher works mighty hard in a day to bunch 3,000. Of course sometimes one hears of their bunching 4,000 and 5,000, but that's not common. The pickets can make from 43 or 44 a week to 46 or 47. When they get 47 they're in luck."

Miss McDonald herself is considered the fastest worker in the factory and understands all the different departments of cigarette-making. She says the girls will wait patiently, feeling that success is assured in a few days.

Another belle and favorite among the striking damsels is Nellie Hollivell, of No. 408 Fourth avenue. Nellie is an exceedingly pretty brunette, with a dash and go that have made her famous in a small way. She understands the strike question thoroughly, and has a wise head on her

eighteen-year-old shoulders. She has been in the business two years, working in several different factories, and her views of a girl's chances there are hardly so rose-colored as those of Miss McDonald.

"You see," she said, with great frankness, "20 or even 10 cents is a good deal more money to us than it is to many other people. We can't make much at the best, and it's not easy to pay board, our fare, wash bills and buy clothes and shoes on 45 or 50 a week. Even if the girls board home they must help their people. Maggie McDonald supports her family and so do other girls. People don't stop to think of this, because 10 cents or 20 cents is a small sum to them. Mr. Billor is a very kind man to work for, and I suppose he thinks he's right now, but he can't hardly understand just how we are fixed."

The pickets who have covered themselves with laurels in the discharge of duty are Annie Cline and Maggie Murphy, both bright and independent young women, possessed of great powers of moral suasion, as their record shows. They were "on deck," as they would say, as early as 4.30 and 5 a. m., and labored under many disadvantages, as they could not enter the factory and were obliged to waylay the non-union

girls as they went to or from work. They are equally sure of success and the re-establishment of the old rates, and they are prepared to make it very lively for any individuals who attempt to begin work until it looked-for message from Mr. Billor is received. Sympathy in that neighborhood with the girls, and assistance has been offered them in several quarters. But the feel confident that they can hold out, as their confidence is heightened by the knowledge that a union for women is to be established, and that their power will increase thereby. Heretofore they have met with 1 men at No. 201 Broome street, but the place and neighborhood was one they did not care to frequent.

Their hours are long (from 7 until 6), their work hard. They make the best of the financial question, but outsiders are interested in them say that they do average more than 43 or 44 a week the round, and that it is simply impossible them to get along on less than they are receiving. Pride makes them tell flatter tales of good incomes, but when there is prospect of a 10 or 20-cent cut in the wages pride falls to the ground and the needs of themselves and others force them to act evenly and promptly.