

Making Both Ends Meet eBook

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CHAPTER I

THE INCOME AND OUTLAY OF SOME NEW YORK SALESWOMEN

I

One of the most significant features of the common history of this generation is the fact that nearly six million women are now gainfully employed in this country. From time immemorial, women have, indeed, worked, so that it is not quite as if an entire sex, living at ease at home heretofore, had suddenly been thrown into an unwonted activity, as many quoters of the census seem to believe. For the domestic labor in which women have always engaged may be as severe and prolonged as commercial labor. But not until recently have women been employed in multitudes for wages, under many of the same conditions as men, irrespective of the fact that their powers are different by nature from those of men, and should, in reason, for themselves, for their children, and for every one, indeed, be conserved by different industrial regulations.

What, then, are the fortunes of some of these multitudes of women gainfully employed? What do they give in their work? What do they get from it? Clearly ascertained information on those points has been meagre.

About two years ago the National Consumers' League, through the initiative of its Secretary, Mrs. Florence Kelley, started an inquiry on the subject of the standard of living among self-supporting women workers in many fields, away from home in New York. Among these workers were saleswomen, waist-makers, hat makers, cloak finishers, textile workers in silk, hosiery, and carpets, tobacco workers, machine tenders, packers of candy, drugs, biscuits, and olives, laundry workers, hand embroiderers, milliners, and dressmakers.

The Consumers' League had printed for this purpose a series of questions arranged in two parts. The first part covered the character of each girl's work—the nature of her occupation, wages, hours, overtime work, overtime compensation, fines, and idleness. The second part of the questions dealt with the worker's expenses—her outlay for shelter, food, clothing, rest and recreation, and her effort to maintain her strength and energy. In this way the League's inquiry on income and outlay was so arranged as to ascertain, not only the worker's gain and expense in money, but, as far as possible, her gain and expense in health and vitality. The inquiry was conducted for a year and a half by Mrs. Sue Ainslie Clark.[1]

The account of the income and outlay of self-supporting women away from home in New York may be divided, for purposes of record, into the chronicles of saleswomen, shirt-waist makers, women workers whose industry involves tension, such as machine



operatives, and women workers whose industry involves a considerable outlay of muscular strength, such as laundry workers.

Among these the narrative of the trade fortunes of some New York saleswomen is placed first. Mrs. Clark's inquiry concerning the income and outlay of saleswomen has been supplemented by portions of the records of another investigator for the League, Miss Marjorie Johnson, who worked in one of the department stores during the Christmas rush of 1909-1910.



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Further informal reports made by the shop-girls in the early summer of 1910 proved that the income and expenditures of women workers in the stores had remained practically unchanged since the winter of Mrs. Clark's report.

So that it would seem that the budgets, records of the investigator, and statements given by the young women interviewed last June may be reasonably regarded as the most truthful composite photograph obtainable of the trade fortunes of the army of the New York department-store girls to-day.[2]

The limitations of such an inquiry are clear. The thousands of women employed in the New York department stores are of many kinds. From the point of view of describing personality and character, one might as intelligently make an inquiry among wives, with the intent of ascertaining typical wives. The trade and living conditions accurately stated in the industrial records obtained have undoubtedly, however, certain common features.

Among the fifty saleswomen's histories collected at random in stores of various grades, those that follow, with the statements modifying them, seem to express most clearly and fairly, in the order followed, these common features—low wages, casual employment, heavy required expense in laundry and dress, semidependence, uneven promotion, lack of training, absence of normal pleasure, long hours of standing, and an excess of seasonal work.

One of the first saleswomen who told the League her experience in her work was Lucy Cleaver, a young American woman of twenty-five, who had entered one of the New York department stores at the age of twenty, at a salary of \$4.50 a week.

II

In the course of the five years of her employment her salary had been raised one dollar. She stood for nine hours every day. If, in dull moments of trade, when no customers were near, she made use of the seats lawfully provided for employees, she was at once ordered by a floor-walker to do something that required standing.

During the week before Christmas, she worked standing over fourteen hours every day, from eight to twelve-fifteen in the morning, one to six in the afternoon, and half past six in the evening till half past eleven at night. So painful to the feet becomes the act of standing for these long periods that some of the girls forego eating at noon in order to give themselves the temporary relief of a foot-bath. For this overtime the store gave her \$20, presented to her, not as payment, but as a Christmas gift.

The management also allowed a week's vacation with pay in the summer-time and presented a gift of \$10.

After five years in this position she had a disagreement with the floor-walker and was summarily dismissed.

She then spent over a month in futile searching for employment, and finally obtained a position as a stock girl in a Sixth Avenue suit store at \$4 a week, a sum less than the wage for which she had begun work five years before. Within a few weeks, dullness of trade had caused her dismissal. She was again facing indefinite unemployment.



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Her income for the year had been \$281. She lived in a large, pleasant home for girls, where she paid only \$2.50 a week for board and a room shared with her sister. Without the philanthropy of the home, she could not have made both ends meet. It was fifteen minutes' walk from the store, and by taking this walk twice a day she saved carfare and the price of luncheon. She did her own washing, and as she could not spend any further energy in sewing, she bought cheap ready-made clothes. This she found a great expense. Cheap waists wear out very rapidly. In the year she had bought 24 at 98 cents each. Here is her account, as nearly as she had kept it and recalled it for a year: a coat, \$10; 4 hats, \$17; 2 pairs of shoes, \$5; 24 waists at 98 cents, \$23.52; 2 skirts, \$4.98; underwear, \$2; board, \$130; doctor, \$2; total, \$194.50. This leaves a balance of \$86.50. This money had paid for necessaries not itemized,—stockings, heavy winter underwear, petticoats, carfare, vacation expenses, every little gift she had made, and all recreation.

She belonged to no benefit societies, and she had not been able to save money in any way, even with the assistance given by the home. So much for her financial income and outlay.

After giving practically all her time and force to her work, she had not received a return sufficient to conserve her health in the future, or even to support her in the present without the help of philanthropy. She was ill, anaemic, nervous, and broken in health.

Before adding the next budget, two points in Lucy Cleaver's outlay should, perhaps, be emphasized in the interest of common sense. The first is the remarkable folly of purchasing 24 waists at 98 cents each. In an estimate of the cost of clothing, made by one of the working girls' clubs of St. George's last year,[3] the girls agreed that comfort and a presentable appearance could be maintained, so far as expenditure for waists was concerned, on \$8.50 a year. This amount allowed for five shirt-waists at \$1.20 apiece, and one net waist at \$2.50.

In extenuation of Lucy Cleaver's weak judgment as a waist purchaser, and the poor child's one absurd excess, it must, however, be said that the habit of buying many articles of poor quality, instead of fewer articles of better quality, is frequently a matter, not of choice, but of necessity. The cheap, hand-to-mouth buying which proves paradoxically so expensive in the end is no doubt often caused by the simple fact that the purchaser has not, at the time the purchase is made, any more money to offer. Whatever your wisdom, you cannot buy a waist for \$1.20 if you possess at the moment only 98 cents. The St. George's girls made their accounts on a basis of an income of \$8 a week. Lucy Cleaver never had an income of more than \$5.50 a week, and sometimes had less. The fact that she spent nearly three times as much as they did on this one item of expenditure, and yet never could have "one net waist at \$2.50" for festal occasions, is worthy of notice.

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The other point that should be emphasized is the fact that she did her own washing. The more accurate statement would be that she did her own laundry, including the processes, not only of rubbing the clothes clean, but of boiling, starching, bluing, and ironing. This, after a day of standing in other employment, is a vital strain more severe than may perhaps be readily realized. Saleswomen and shop-girls have not the powerful wrists and muscular waists of accustomed washerwomen, and are in most instances no better fitted to perform laundry work than washerwomen would be to make sales and invoice stock. But custom requires exactly the same freshness in a saleswoman's shirt-waist, ties, and collars as in those of women of the largest income. The amount the girls of the St. George's Working Club found it absolutely necessary to spend in a year for laundering clothes was almost half as much as the amount spent for lodging and nearly two-thirds as much as the amount originally spent for clothing.

Where this large expense of laundry cannot be met financially by saleswomen, it has to be met by sheer personal strength. One department-store girl, who needed to be especially neat because her position was in the shirt-waist department, told us that sometimes, after a day's standing in the store, she worked over tubs and ironing-boards at home till twelve at night.

It is worth noting, as one cause of the numerous helpless shifts of the younger salesgirls, that, living, as most of them do, in a semidependence, on either relatives or charitable homes, it is almost impossible for them to learn any domestic economy, or the value of money for living purposes. It seems significant that quite the most practical spender encountered among the saleswomen was a widow, Mrs. Green, whose accounts will be given below, who was for years the manager of her own household and resources, and not a wage-earner until fairly late in life.

This helplessness of a semidependent and uneducated girl may be further illustrated by the chronicle of Alice Anderson, a girl of seventeen, who had been working in the department stores for three years and a half.

She was at first employed as a check girl in a Fourteenth Street store, at a wage of \$2.62-1/2 a week; that is to say, she was paid \$5.25 twice a month. Her working day was nine and a half hours long through most of the year. But during two weeks before Christmas it was lengthened to from twelve to thirteen and a half hours, without any extra payment in any form. She was promoted to the position of saleswoman, but her wages still remained \$2.62-1/2 a week. She lived with her grandmother of eighty, working occasionally as a seamstress, and to her Alice gave all her earnings for three years.



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It was then considered better that she should go to live with an aunt, to whom she paid the nominal board of \$1.15 a week. As her home was in West Hoboken, she spent two and a half hours every day on the journey in the cars and on the ferry. During the weeks of overtime Alice could not reach home until nearly half past eleven o'clock; and she would be obliged to rise while it was still dark, at six o'clock, after five hours and a half of sleep, in order to be at her counter punctually at eight. By walking from the store to the ferry she saved 30 cents a week. Still, fares cost her \$1.26 a week. This \$1.26 a week carfare (which was still not enough to convey her the whole distance from her aunt's to the store) and the \$1.15 a week for board (which still did not really pay the aunt for her niece's food and lodging) consumed all her earnings except 20 cents a week.

Alice was eager to become more genuinely self-dependent. She left the establishment of her first employment and entered another store on Fourteenth Street, as cash girl, at \$4 a week. The hours in the second store were very long, from eight to twelve in the morning and from a quarter to one till a quarter past six in the afternoon on all days except Saturday, when the closing hour was half past nine.

After she had \$4 a week instead of \$2.62-1/2, Alice abandoned her daily trip to West Hoboken and came to live in New York.

Here she paid 6 cents a night in a dormitory of a charitably supported home for girls. She ate no breakfast. Her luncheon consisted of coffee and rolls for 10 cents. Her dinner at night was a repetition of coffee and rolls for 10 cents. As she had no convenient place for doing her own laundry, she paid 21 cents a week to have it done. Her regular weekly expenditure was as follows: lodging, 42 cents; board, \$1.40; washing, 21 cents; clothing and all other expenses, \$1.97; total, \$4.

Of course, living in this manner was quite beyond her strength. She was pale, ill, and making the severest inroads upon her present and future health. Her experience illustrates the narrow prospect of promotion in some of the department stores.

III

It is significant in this point to compare the annals of this growing girl with those of a saleswoman of thirty-five, Grace Carr, who had been at work for twelve years. In her first employment in a knitting mill she had remained for five years, and had been promoted rapidly to a weekly wage of \$12. The hours, however, were very long, from ten to thirteen hours a day. The lint in the air she breathed so filled her lungs that she was unable, in her short daily leisure, to counteract its effect. At the end of five years, as she was coughing and raising particles of lint, she was obliged to rest for a year.

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Not strong enough to undertake factory work again, she obtained a position in the shoe department in one of the large stores, where she was not “speeded up,” and her daily working time of nine hours was less severe than that of the knitting mill. In summer she had a Saturday half-holiday. There was a system of fines for lateness; but on the rare occasions of her own tardiness it had not been enforced. The company was also generous in granting five-o’clock passes, which permitted a girl to leave at five in the afternoon, with no deduction from her wage for the free hour. She had been with this establishment for six years, earning \$6 a week; and she had given up hope of advancing.

Miss Carr said that her work in the shoe department was exhausting, because of the stooping, the frequent sitting down and rising, and the effort of pulling shoes on and off. In the summer preceding the fall when she told of her experience in the store, she had, in reaching for a box of shoes, strained her heart in some way, so that she lost consciousness immediately, and was ill for seven weeks. She failed to recuperate as rapidly as she should have done, because she was so completely devitalized by overwork.

The firm was very good to her at this time, sending a doctor daily until she was in condition to go to the country. It then paid her expenses for two weeks in a country home of the Young Women’s Christian Association, and during the three remaining weeks of her stay paid her full wage. Miss Carr praised this company’s general care of the employees. A doctor and nurse were available without charge if a girl were ill in the store. A social secretary was employed.

Miss Carr lived in a furnished room with two other women, each paying a dollar a week rent. She cared nothing for her fellow-lodgers; her only reason for spending her time with them in such close quarters was her need of living cheaply. She cooked her breakfast and supper in the crowded room, at an expense of \$1.95 a week. She said that her “hearty” meal was a noon dinner, for which she paid in a restaurant 15 cents a day.

After her experience in the summer, she realized that she should assure herself of income in case of illness. She joined a benefit society, to which she paid 50 cents a month. This promised a weekly benefit of \$4 a week for thirteen weeks, and \$200 at death. She paid also 10 cents a week for insurance in another company.

The room was within walking distance of the store, so that she spent nothing for carfare. The services and social life of a church were her chief happiness. Besides her contributions to its support, she had spent only \$1 a year on “good times.” She did her own washing.



Her outlay in health in these years had been extreme. She was very worn, thin, and wrinkled with hard work, severe economies, and anxiety, although she was still in what should have been the prime of life.

Her weekly budget was: lodging, \$1; board, \$1.95; luncheons, \$1.05; insurance, 21 cents; clothing, contributions to church, occasional carfare, and other expenses, \$1.79; total, \$6.

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Miss Carr said that her firm was generous in many of its policies, but she felt it profoundly discouraging not to advance to a wage that would permit decent living.

In connection with Miss Carr's budget the benefit system of New York stores should be mentioned. In many of the large department stores, monthly dues, varying with the wage of the employee, are deducted from the pay of each, although in many cases she does not know what the return for the dues is to be. These dues assure to her, while she remains in the store's employ, a weekly benefit in case of illness, and a death benefit. But if she leaves the store, or is discharged, the management retains the amount she has been forced to pay to it, and gives no return whatever in case of her subsequent sickness or death. While she is in the store's employ, the sick benefit varies from one-half the girl's wage to a regular payment of \$5 a week for from five to thirteen weeks, according to the particular rules in each store. The employee must be ill five days or a week in order to draw it. Otherwise she is docked for absence.

The Mutual Benefit Fund of the New York Association of Working Girls' Societies has in this respect a better policy than the stores. Members of the clubs pay 55 cents a month for a benefit of \$5 for six weeks in any one year, and 20 cents a month for a benefit of \$3. Cessation of membership in a club does not terminate connection with the benefit fund, unless the reason for leaving is unsatisfactory to the board. Women not members of clubs may, under certain conditions, join the benefit fund as associate members, and pay 50 cents a month for a benefit of \$5 a week, 30 cents for a benefit of \$3 a week, or 80 cents for a benefit of \$8 a week. These amounts are severally payable for six weeks in any one year.

A number of the stores have trained nurses and doctors in their employ, to whom the girls may go if they are ill. Several of the stores have recreation rooms; several have summer homes; several have employees' restaurants, where a really nourishing meal can be obtained for 15 cents.

Miss Carr, struggling against overwhelming odds, lived within \$6 without charitable aid. With her experience may be compared those of two other older saleswomen, who were wholly self-supporting.

Mrs. Green, a shrewd-appearing woman of thirty-five, had been wage-earning only two years. She began work in Philadelphia in a commission house as a saleswoman and corset fitter. Here she was able to save from her salary. She also saved very carefully the wardrobe she had before she entered business. With these reserves, she came to New York to work in department stores for the purpose of gaining experience in salesmanship and a more thorough knowledge of corsets. She expected to be able to command a high salary as soon as she had thus increased her competence. She went at first to a new and attractive Sixth Avenue store, where, working eight hours and a quarter a day, she earned \$10 a week. Laid off at the end of five months, she was idle a month before finding employment at another Sixth Avenue store.

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In applying here she told the employer that she would not work for less than \$12 a week. He offered her \$9, and a commission on all sales beyond \$400 a week. She refused, and the firm finally gave her what she asked.

It proved that her choice was wise, for she found that in her very busiest week, when she was exhausted from the day's rush, her sales never reached \$400 a week, so that she would have received no income at all from the proffered commission.

She had a small room alone in an attractive hotel for working girls. For this and breakfasts and dinners she paid \$5.10 a week. Luncheons cost, in addition, about \$1.50 a week. She paid 50 cents a week for washing, besides doing some herself. Riding to and from work nearly every day increased her weekly expense 50 cents. This left her \$4.40 a week for clothing and sundries.

Mrs. Green seemed extravagantly dressed; she said, however, that she contrived to have effective waists and hats by making and trimming them herself, and by purchasing materials with care at sales. In dressing economically without sacrificing effect she was aided palpably by skill and deftness.

She was in good health; and, though she did not save, she had not spent, even in her idle month, any of the reserve fund she had accumulated before she began to work.

Another self-supporting saleswoman aided by her experience in domestic economy was Zetta Weyman, a young woman of twenty-eight, who had begun to work for wages at the age of eleven; at this time she still attended school, but did housework out of school hours. When she was older, she was employed as a maid in the house of a very kind and responsive couple, who gave her free access to their interesting library, where she read eagerly. A trip to Europe had been especially stimulating. Her employer was considerate, and tried to make it possible for her to benefit by the experience.

Throughout this period she had been observant of dress and manner among the cultured people she saw, and had applied what she learned to her own dress and conduct. At twenty-six, wishing for larger opportunities than those she could have in personal service, she obtained work in a department store at \$7 a week. Here she soon advanced to \$10 in a department requiring more than average intelligence. At the end of two years she was very much interested in her work. It made demands upon her judgment, and offered opportunity for increasing knowledge and heightening her value to the company. She expected soon to receive a larger wage, as she considered her work worth at least \$15 a week. Aside from underpay, she thought she was fairly treated. She greatly appreciated two weeks' vacation with full wages.

Zetta gave \$2.50 a week for a furnished hall bedroom and the use of a bath-room. The warmth from the single gas-jet was the sole heat. She made coffee in her room for

breakfast; a light luncheon sufficed; and dinner in a restaurant cost 25 to 35 cents a day. She was often entertained at dinner, by friends.

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She usually rode to work, and walked home, eight blocks, spending thus 30 cents a week carfare. All living expenses for the week came to about \$6. She paid for six years \$24 a year on an insurance policy which promised her \$15 a week in case of illness, and was cumulative, making a return during the life of the holder; \$290 would be due from it in about a year.

Zetta said that she was extravagant in her expense for clothing, but she considered that her social position depended upon her appearance. She was very attractive looking. Her manner had quiet and grace, and there was something touching, even moving, in the dignity of her pure, clear English, acquired in the teeth of a fortune that forced her to be a little scullion and cook at the age of eleven. She was dressed with taste and care at the time of the interview. Through watching sales and through information obtained from heads of departments, she contrived to buy clothing of excellent quality, silk stockings, and well-cut suits comparatively cheaply. By waiting until the end of the season, she had paid \$35, the winter before, for a suit originally costing \$70; \$35 was more than she had intended to spend, but the suit was becoming and she could not resist the purchase. She managed to have pretty and well-designed hats for from \$2 to \$5, because a friend trimmed them.

She spent her vacation with relatives on a farm in the country. Railroad fares and the occasional purchase of a magazine were her only expenditures for pleasure. But she had many "good times" going to the beaches in the summer with friends who paid her way.

She considered that with careful planning a girl could live in fair comfort for \$10 a week. But she saved nothing.

The drawback she mentioned in her own arrangements—the best she could obtain for her present wage—was not the cold of her hall bedroom, warmed only by the gas-jet, but that she had no suitable place for receiving men friends. She was obliged to turn to trolley rides and walks and various kinds of excursions,—literally to the streets,—for hospitality, when she received a man's visit. She spoke frequently of one man with whom she had many "good times." She could not take him to her room. Trolley rides, and walks in winter, would pall. She hated park benches as a resort for quiet conversation. Where, then, was she to see him? Although she disapproved of it, she and another girl who had a larger and more attractive room than her own had received men there.

Zetta's income for the year had been \$520. She had spent \$130 for rent; \$105 for dinners; \$55 for breakfasts, luncheons, and washing; \$195 for clothing, summer railway fares, and incidentals; \$15 for carfare; and \$20 for insurance.

IV

Zetta's interest in her daily occupation is somewhat unusual in the trade chronicles of the shop-girls. One frequently hears complaint of the inefficiency and inattention of New York saleswomen and their rudeness to plainly dressed customers. While this criticism contains a certain truth, it is, of course, unreasonable to expect excellence from service frequently ill paid, often unevenly and unfairly promoted, and, except with respect to dress, quite unstandardized.

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Further, it must be remembered that the world in which the shop-girl follows her occupation is a world of externals. The fortunes, talents, tastes, eager human effort spent in shop-window displays on Fifth Avenue, the shimmer and sparkle of beautiful silks and jewels, the prestige of “carriage trade,” the distinction of presence of some of the customers and their wealth and their freedom in buying—all the worldliness of the most moneyed city of the United States here perpetually passes before the eyes of Zettas in their \$1.20 muslin waists so carefully scrubbed the midnight before, and of Alices who have had breakfasts for 10 cents. Is it surprising that they should adopt the New York shop-window-display ideal of life manifested everywhere around them?

The saleswomen themselves are the worst victims of their unstandardized employment; and the fact that they spend long years of youth in work involving a serious outlay of their strength, without training them in concentration or individual responsibility or resourcefulness, but apparently dissipating these powers, seems one of the gravest aspects of their occupation.

A proud and very pretty pink-cheeked little English shop-girl, with clear hazel eyes, laid special stress upon unevenness of promotion, in telling of her fortunes in this country.

She was sitting, as she spoke, in the parlor of a Christian “home,” which, like that of many others where shop-girls live, was light and clean, but had that unmistakably excellent and chilling air so subtly imparted by the altruistic act of furnishing for others—the air that characterizes spare rooms, hotel parlors, and great numbers of settlement receiving rooms.

“I had always wanted to come to America,” she said in her quick English enunciation. “And I saved something and borrowed ten pounds of my brother, and came. Oh, it was hard the first part of the time I was here. I remember, when I first came in at the door of this house, and registered, one of the other shop-girls here was standing at the desk. I had on a heavy winter coat, just a plain, rough-looking coat, but it’s warm. That girl gave me such a look, a sort of sneering look—oh, it made me hot! But that’s the way American shop-girls are. I never have spoken to that girl.

“I got down to 50 cents before I had a job. There was one store I didn’t want to go to. It was cheap, and had a mean name. One afternoon, when it was cold and dark, I walked up to it at last; and it looked so horrid I couldn’t go in. There was another cheap store just beyond it, and another. All the shoppers were hurrying along. Oh, it was a terrible time that afternoon, terrible, standing there, looking at those big, cheap New York stores all around me.



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“But at last I went in, and they took me on. It wasn’t so bad, after all. In about two months I had a chance to go to a better store. I like it pretty well. But I can’t save anything. I had \$8 a week. Now I have \$9. I pay \$4.50 a week here for board and lodging, but I always live up to my salary, spending it for clothes and washing. Oh, I worry and worry about money. But I’ve paid back my \$50. I have a nice silk dress now, and a new hat. And now I’ve got them,” she added, with a laugh, “I haven’t got anywhere to wear them to. I look forward to Sunday through the week days; but when Sunday comes, I like Monday best.

“Though I think it doesn’t make much difference how you do in the store about being promoted. A girl next me who doesn’t sell half as much as I do gets \$12 where I have \$9; and the commission we have on sales in Christmas week wasn’t given to me fairly. The store is kind in many ways, and lets the girls sit down every minute when customers aren’t there, and has evening classes and club-rooms. But yet the girls are discouraged about not having promotions fairly and not having commissions straight. Right is right.”[4]

The charmlessness of existence noticeable in most of the working girls’ homes was emphasized by a saleswoman in the china department of a Broadway department store, Kate McCray, a pretty young Irishwoman of about twenty-three, who was visited in a hotel she said she didn’t like to mention to people, for fear they would think it was queer. “You see, it’s a boat, a liner that a gentleman that has a large plantation gave for a hotel for working girls. It seems peculiar to some people for a girl to be living on the river.”

Miss McCray paid \$3.50 a week board at the Maverick Deep-Sea Hotel. Her salary was \$8 a week. She had been in the same department for four years, and considered it wrong that she received no promotion. She could save nothing, as she did none of her own washing on account of its inroads of fatigue, and she was obliged to dress well. She was, however, in excellent health and especially praised the store’s policy of advising the girls to sit down and to rest whenever no customers were present.

It was misty and raining on the occasion of my visit to the Maverick Deep-Sea Hotel, a liner anchored in the East River; and Miss McCray conducted me into the cabin to a large party of boys, elderly women, and children, most of them visitors like myself, and all listening to a powerful-wristed youth happily playing, “You’ll Come Back and Hang Around,” with heavily accented rag-time, on an upright piano.

“About seventy girls board on this boat. That young lady going into the pantry now is a stenographer—such a bright girl.”

Absorbed in the spectacle of a hotel freedom which permitted a guest to go to a pantry at will, whatever the force of her brightness, I followed Miss McCray about the boat. It was as if the hotel belonged to the girls, while in the Christian homes it had been as if

everything belonged, not to the girls, but to benevolent though carefully possessive Christians. Miss McCray praised highly the manager and his wife.



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“About twenty men and boys stay on a yacht anchored right out here. They board on this boat, and go to their own boat when the whistle blows at ten o’clock,” she continued, leading me to the smoking-room, where she introduced a number of very young gentlemen reading magazines and knocking about gutturally together. They, too, seemed proud of their position as boarders, proud of the Maverick Deep-Sea Hotel. They were nice, boyish young fellows, who might have been young mechanics.

She showed me the top deck with especial satisfaction as we came out into the fresh, rainy air. The East River shipping and an empty recreation pier rose black on one side, with the water sparkling in jetted reflection between; and on the other quivered all the violet and silver lights of the city. There were perhaps half a dozen tents pitched on deck.

“Some of the girls sleep outdoors up here,” said Miss McCray in her gentle voice. “They like it so, they do it all winter long. Have plenty of cover, and just sleep here in the tents. Oh, we all like it! Some of the men that were here first have married; and they like it so well, they keep coming back here with their wives to see us. It’s so friendly,” said the girl, quietly; “and no matter how tired I am when I come here in the evening, I sit out on the deck, and I look at the water and the lights, and it seems as if all my cares float away.”

The good humor of the Maverick Deep-Sea Hotel, its rag-time, its boarders from the yacht, the charm of the row of tents with the girls in them sleeping their healthful sleep out in the midst of the river wind, the masts, the chimneys, stars, and city lights, all served to deepen the impression of the lack of normal pleasure in most of the shop-girls’ lives.

This starvation in pleasure, as well as low wages and overwork, subjects the women in the stores to a temptation readily conceivable.

The girls in the stores are importuned, not only by men from without these establishments, but also, to the shame of the managements, by men employed within the stores.

The constant close presence of this gulf has more than one painful aspect. On account of it, not only the poor girls who fall suffer, but also the girls who have the constant sense of being “on guard,” and find it wise, for fear of the worst suspicion, to forego all sorts of normal delights and gayeties and youthful pleasures. Many girls said, “I keep myself to myself”; “I don’t make friends in the stores very fast, because you can’t be sure what any one is like.” This fear of friendship among contemporaries sharing the same fortune, fear, indeed, of the whole world, seemed the most cruel comment possible on the atmosphere of the girls’ lives in their occupation.

Another kind of meanness in human relations was abundantly witnessed by Miss Johnson, the League's inquirer, who worked in one of the stores during the week of Christmas good-will.

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The “rush” had begun when Miss Johnson was transferred in this Christmas week from the neckwear to the muffler department on the first floor of one of the cheaper stores. All the girls stood all day long—from eight to twelve and from one to eight at night on the first days; from one at noon to ten and eleven at night, as the season progressed; and, on the last dreadful nights, from noon to the following midnight. The girls had 35 cents supper money. Except for that, all this extra labor was unpaid for.

The work was incessant. The girls were nervous, hateful, spiteful with one another. The manager, a beautiful and extremely rough girl of nineteen, swore constantly at all of them. The customers were grabbing, insistent, unreasonable from morning to evening, from evening to midnight. Behind the counter, with the advance of the day, the place became an inferno of nervous exhaustion and exasperation. In the two weeks of Miss Johnson’s service one customer once thanked her; and one tipped her 5 cents for the rapid return of a parcel. Both these acts of consideration took place in the morning. Miss Johnson said that this was fortunate for her, as, at one word of ordinary consideration toward the end of her long day’s work, she thought she must have burst into tears.

There was a little bundler in the department, Catriona Malatesta, a white, hungry-looking little North Italian of fourteen with a thin chin and a dark-shadowed, worried face. She had an adored sick sister of four, besides six other younger brothers and sisters, and a worshipped mother, to whom she gave every cent of her wages of three dollars and a half a week. An older brother, a day laborer, paid the rent and provided food for all of them. Every other family expense was met by Catriona’s three dollars and a half, so that she was in the habit of spending only five cents for her own lunch, and, on the nights of overtime, five cents for her own dinner, in order to take home the extra thirty cents; and every day she looked whiter and older.

At the beginning of the week before Christmas, the store raised Catriona’s wage to four dollars. Her mother told her she might have the extra half dollar for herself for Christmas. Though Catriona had worked for some months, this was the first money of her own she had ever had. With pride she told the department how it was to be spent. She was going to surprise her mother with a new waist for Christmas, a waist Catriona had seen in the store marked down to forty-nine cents. A ten per cent discount was allowed to employees, so that the waist would cost forty-five cents. With the remaining five cents Catriona would buy her sick Rosa a doll. All her life Rosa had wanted a doll. Now, at last, she could have one.

On the day when she received the money, Catriona kept it close at hand, in a little worn black leather purse, in a shabby bag hanging from her arm, and not out of sight for an instant.

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Her purchases were to be made in the three-quarters of an hour allowed for supper. The time Catriona consumed in eating her five-cent meal was never long, so that, even allowing for prolonged purchasing, her absence of an hour was strange.

“D—— your soul, where in hell have you been all this time, Catie?” the manager screamed at her, angrily, without glancing at her, when she came back at last.

Catriona looked more anxious and white than ever before. Her face was stained with weeping. “I lost my purse,” she said in a dazed, unsteady voice. “It was gone when I opened my bag in the lunch-room. I’ve looked for it everywhere.”

There was a sudden breathless change in the air of the department. You could have heard a pin drop.

“Better go down to the basement and wash your face,” said the manager, awkwardly, with unbelievable gentleness.

“Well,” she continued suddenly, the minute Catriona was out of ear-shot, “I’m not so poor but I can help to make *that* up.” She took a dollar bill from her pocket-book. Every one contributed something, though several girls went without their supper for this purpose, and one girl walked home four miles after midnight. Altogether they could give nearly ten dollars.

The manager sidled awkwardly toward Catriona, when she came back from washing her face. “Here, kid,” she muttered sheepishly, pushing the money into the little girl’s hand. Catriona, pale and dazed, looked up at her—looked at the money, with a shy excitement and happiness dawning in her eyes. Then she cried again with excitement and joy, and every one laughed, and sent her off again to wash her face.

That night everything was different in the department. There had been a real miracle of transfiguration. The whole air of intercourse was changed. All the girls were gentle and dignified with each other. Catriona’s eyes sparkled with pleasure. Her careworn air was gone. She was a child again. She had never had any physical loveliness before; but on that night hundreds of passing shoppers looked with attention at the delight and beauty of her face.

On the next day everything went on as before. The girls snapped at each other and jostled each other. The beautiful manager swore. One girl came, looking so ill that Miss Johnson was terrified.

“Can’t you stop, Kitty? You look so sick. For heaven’s sake, go home and rest.”

“I can’t afford to go home.”



Cross and snappish as the girls were, they managed to spare Kitty, and to stand in front of her to conceal her idleness from the floor-walker, and give her a few minutes' occasional rest sitting down. She went through the first hours of the morning as best she might, though clearly under pressure of sharp suffering. But at about ten the floor-walker, for whom it must be said that he was responsible for the sales and general presentability of the department, saw her sitting down. "Why aren't you busy?" he called. "Get up."



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At midnight on Christmas eve, as the still crowd of girls walked wanly out of the great store into the brilliant New York street, some one said, "How are you, Kitty?"

She made no reply for a minute. Then she said wretchedly, "Oh—I hope I'll be dead before the next Christmas."

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The sheer and causeless misery this girl endured was, of course, attributable, not only to the long hours and to the standing demanded by her occupation, but to the fact that this occupation was continued at a period when the normal health of great numbers of women demands reasonable quiet and rest.

With a few honorable exceptions[5] it may be said to be the immemorial custom of department stores in this country to treat women employees, in so far as ability to stand and to stand at all seasons goes, exactly as if they were men.

The expert testimony collected by the publication secretary of the National Consumers' League, Miss Josephine Goldmark, for the brief which obtained the Illinois Ten-Hour Law, gives the clearest possible record of the outlay of communal strength involved in these long hours of standing for women.

Report of "Lancet" Sanitary Commission on Sanitation in the Shop. 1892

Without entering upon the vexed question of women's rights, we may nevertheless urge it as an indisputable physiological fact that, when compelled to stand for long hours, women, especially young women, are exposed to greater injury and greater suffering than men.

British Sessional Papers. Vol. XII. 1886. Report from Select Committee on Shop Hours Regulation Bill

Witness, W. Abbott, M.D.

"Does their employment injuriously affect them, as child-bearing women in after years?"

"According to all scientific facts, it would do so."

"And you, as a medical man of a considerable number of years' experience, would not look to girls who have been worked so many hours in one position as the bearers of healthy, strong children?"

“I should not.”

“Then it naturally follows, does it not, that this is a very serious matter in the interest of the nation as a whole, apart from the immediate injury to the person concerned?”

“Yes. As regards the physical condition of the future race.”

British Sessional Papers. Vol. XII, 1895. Report from the Select Committee on Shops. Early Closing Bill

Witness, Dr. Percy Kidd, M.D., of the University of Oxford, Fellow of the College of Physicians and Member of the College of Surgeons, attached to London Hospital and Brompton, Hospital. “Would this be a fair way of putting it: It is not the actual work of people in shops, but having to be there and standing about in bad air; it is the long hours which is the injurious part of it?”

“Quite so; the prolonged tension.”



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Official Information from the Reports of the [German] Factory Inspectors. Berlin, Bruer, 1898

The inspector in Hesse regards a reduction of working hours to ten for women in textile mills as “absolutely imperative,” as the continuous standing is very injurious to the female organism.

Fourteenth International Congress of Hygiene and Demography. Berlin, September, 1907. Vol. II, Sec. IV. Fatigue Resulting from Occupation. Berlin, Hirschwald, 1908

Doctor Emil Roth:

“My experience and observations do not permit me to feel any uncertainty in believing that the injury to health inflicted upon even fully capable workers by the special demands of a periodically heightened rush of work is never compensated for. Under this head we may consider the demands of all seasonal work, ... as also the special rush season in shops before Christmas.”

Night Work of Women in Industry. Reports on its Importance and Legal Regulation. Preface by Etienne Bauer. Night Work of Women in Industry in Austria. Ilse Von Arlt. Jena, Fischer, 1903

The suitable limits of working time vary with individuals, but it is acknowledged that not only is a regularly long day of work injurious, but also that a single isolated instance of overstrain may be harmful to a woman all the rest of her life.

Proceedings of the French Senate, July 7, 1891. Report on the Industrial Employment of Children, Young Girls, and Women.

When I ask, when we ask, for a lessening of the daily toil of women, it is not only of the women that we think, it is not principally of the women, it is of the whole human race. It is of the father, it is of the child, it is of society, which we wish to reestablish on its foundation, from which we believe it has perhaps swerved a little.

In New York State, the hours of labor of adult women (women over twenty-one) in mercantile establishments are not limited in any way by law.

The law concerning seats in stores is as follows:—

Seats for Women in Mercantile Establishments

Chairs, stools, or other suitable seats shall be maintained in mercantile establishments for the use of female employees therein, to the number of at least one seat for every

three females employed, and the use thereof by such employees shall be allowed at such times and to such extent as may be necessary for the preservation of their health.

The enforcement of this law is very difficult. The mercantile inspectors can compel the requisite number of seats. They have successfully issued one hundred and fourteen orders on this point[6] to the stores within the year 1909. But the use of these seats to such extent as may be necessary for the preservation of the health of the women employees is another matter. For fear of being blacklisted by the merchants, the saleswomen will not testify in court in those cases where employers practically forbid the use of seats, by requesting the employees to do something requiring a standing position whenever they sit down. So that in these cases the inspectors cannot bring prosecution successfully, on account of lack of sufficient evidence.

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Further, in one store the management especially advises the saleswomen to be seated at every moment when the presence of a customer does not require her to stand. But the saleswoman's inability to attract possible customers while she is seated still keeps her standing, in order not to diminish her sales.

Curiously enough, it would seem that the shopping public of a nation professedly democratic will not buy so much as a spool of thread from a seated woman. There is, of course, much work for women^[7]—such as ironing for instance—in which standing is generally considered absolutely necessary. Salesmanship is not work of this character. It is primarily custom that demands the constant standing seen in the stores; and, until shoppers establish a habit of buying of shop-girls who are seated, and the stores provide enough seats for all saleswomen and permit them to sell when seated, the present system of undermining the normal health of women clerks will continue unchecked.

The New York State law in regard to the work of the younger women (minors)—in mercantile establishments is as follows:—

Hours of Labor of Minors^[8]

No female employee between sixteen and twenty-one years of age shall be required, permitted, or suffered to work in or in connection with any mercantile establishment more than sixty hours in any one week; or more than ten hours in any one day, unless for the purpose of making a shorter work day of some one day of the week; or before seven o'clock in the morning or after ten o'clock in the evening of any day. *This section does not apply to the employment of persons sixteen years of age or upward, between the eighteenth day of December and the following twenty-fourth day of December, both inclusive.*^[9]

That is to say, that, for the holiday season, the time of all others when it might seem wise and natural to protect the health of the younger women working in the great metropolitan markets, for that season, of all others, the State specifically provides that the strength of its youth is to have no legal safeguard and may be subjected to labor without limit.

Substantially, all the present legal protection for workers in the stores was obtained in 1896, after the investigation of mercantile establishments conducted in 1895 by the Rinehart Commission.^[10] Ever since, an annual attempt has been made to perfect the present law and to secure its enforcement, which had been left in the hands of the local Boards of Health, and was practically inoperative until 1908. Enforcement was then transferred to the Labor Commissioner, and has since that time been actively maintained.



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The hearings on the law relative to mercantile establishments are held in Albany in a small room in the Capitol before the Judiciary Committee of the Senate and the Assembly Commission on Labor. These hearings are very fiery. The Support is represented by Attorney Mornay Williams, and Mrs. Nathan, Mrs. Kelley, Miss Stokes, Miss Sanford, and Miss Goldmark of the New York and National Consumers' Leagues, and delegates from the Child Labor Committee, the Working-Girls' Clubs, and the Woman's Trade-Union League. Both men and women speak for the amendment.[11] The Support's effort for legislation limiting hours has regularly been opposed by the Retail Dry-Goods Merchants' Association, which yearly sends an influential delegation to Albany.

"These ladies have been coming here for sixteen years," said one of the merchants, resentfully, last spring. Looking around, and observing changes in the faces watching him among adherents of the Support, he added: "Well, perhaps not the *same* ladies. But they have come."

"These ladies are professional agitators," said another merchant at another hearing. "Why, they even misled Mr. Roosevelt, when he was Governor, into recommending the passage of their bill."

Such are some of the reasons offered by the opposition for not limiting women's hours of labor in mercantile establishments.

Among the several common features of the experiences of these New York saleswomen, low wages, casual employment, heavy required expense in laundry and dress, semidependence, uneven promotion, lack of training, absence of normal pleasure, long hours of standing, and an excess of seasonal work, the consideration of this last common condition is placed last because its consequences seem the most far-reaching.

Looking back at these common features in the lives of these average American working girls, one has a sudden sense that the phenomenon of the New York department stores represents a painful failure in democracy. What will the aspect of the New York department stores be in the future? For New York doubtless will long remain a port of merchandise, one of the most picturesque and most frequented harbors of the Seven Seas. Doubtless many women still will work in its markets. What will their chances in life be?

First, it may be trusted that the State law will not forever refuse to protect these women and their future, which is also the future of the community, from the danger of unlimited hours of labor. Then, the fact that in a store in Cincinnati the efficiency of the saleswomen has been standardized and their wages raised, the fact that in a store in Boston the employees have become responsible factors in the business, and the fact that a school of salesmanship has been opened in New York seem to indicate the



possibility of a day when salesmanship will become standardized and professional, as nursing has within the last century. Further, it may be believed that saleswomen will not forever acquiesce in pursuing their trade in utterly machinal activity, without any common expression of their common position.

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Very arresting is the fact that, year after year, the Union women go to Albany to struggle for better chances in life for the shop-women who cannot at present wisely make this struggle for themselves. The fact that the Union women fail is of less moment than that they continue to go.

But what have the organized women workers, the factory girls who so steadfastly make this stand for justice for the shop-girls, attained for themselves in their fortunes by their Union? It was for an answer to this question that we turned to the New York shirt-waist makers, whose income and outlay will be next considered in this little chronicle of women's wages.

FOOTNOTES:

[Footnote 1: In the last six months further accounts from working women in the trades mentioned in New York have been received by Miss Edith Wyatt, Vice-President of the Consumers' League of Illinois. Aside from the facts ascertained through the schedules filled by the workers, and through Mrs. Clark's and Miss Wyatt's visits to them, information has been obtained through Miss Helen Marot, Secretary of the New York Woman's Trade-Union League, Miss Marion MacLean, Director of the Sociological Investigation Committee of the Young Women's Christian Association of the United States, Miss May Matthews, Head Worker of Hartley House, Miss Hall, Head Worker of the Riverside Association, Miss Rosenfeld, Head Worker of the Clara de Hirsch Home, the Clinton Street Headquarters of the Union, the St. George Working Girls' Clubs, the Consumers' League of the City of New York, and the offices or files of the *Survey*, the *Independent*, the *Call*, and the *International Socialist Review*.]

[Footnote 2: It remains to be said that there are both among saleswomen and among women in business for the department stores, buyers, assistant buyers, receivers of special orders, advertisers, and heads of departments, earning salaries of from twenty dollars to two hundred dollars a week. But this experience does not represent the average fortune the League was interested in learning.]

[Footnote 3: Here are the estimates made by the St. George's Working Girls' Club of the smallest practicable expenditure for self-supporting girls in New York: General expense per week: room, \$2; meals, \$3; clothes, \$1.25; washing, 75 cents; carfare, 60 cents; pleasures, 25 cents; church, 10 cents; club, 5 cents: total \$8. Itemized account of clothing for the year at \$1.25 a week, or \$65 a year: 2 pair of shoes at \$2, and mending at \$1.50, \$5.50; 2 hats at \$2.50, \$5; 8 pair of stockings at 12-1/2 cents, \$1; 2 combination suits at 50 cents, \$1; 4 shirts at 12-1/2 cents, 50 cents; 4 pairs of drawers at 25 cents, \$1; 4 corset covers at 25 cents, \$1; 1 flannel petticoat, 25 cents; 2 white petticoats at 75 cents, \$1.50; 5 shirt-waists at \$1.20, \$6; 1 net waist, \$2.50; 2 corsets at \$1, \$2; gloves, \$2; 2 pairs rubbers at 65 cents, \$1.30; 1 dozen handkerchiefs at 5 cents,



60 cents; 3 nightgowns at 50 cents, \$1.50; 1 sweater, \$2; 2 suits at \$15, \$30: total, \$65.65.]



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[Footnote 4: This worker later, however, in the winter of 1911, considered she had been paid and promoted fairly.]

[Footnote 5: Macy and Company of New York give to those of their permanent women employees who desire it a monthly day of rest with pay. The Daniels and Fisher Company of Denver refund to any woman employee who requests it the amount deducted for a monthly day of absence for illness. This excellent rule is, however, said to represent here rather a privilege than a practice, and not to be generally taken advantage of, because not generally understood. The present writer has not been able to learn of other exceptions.]

[Footnote 6: Ninth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor, p. 127.]

[Footnote 7: See page 16 (foot-note), "Scientific Management as applied to Women's Work."]

[Footnote 8: This statement does not include the excellent New York Child Labor Law for children under sixteen, which allows of no exception at Christmas time.]

[Footnote 9: Italics ours.]

[Footnote 10: A New York State Commission, appointed for this purpose in the year 1895, through the efforts of the Consumers' League of the city of New York.]

[Footnote 11: For fear of a permanent loss of position the saleswomen themselves have never been urged to appear in support of this legislation, nor, except in a few instances where this difficulty has been nullified, have they been present at these hearings.]

CHAPTER II

THE SHIRT-WAIST MAKERS' STRIKE

I

Among the active members of the Ladies Waist Makers' Union in New York, there is a young Russian Jewess of sixteen, who may be called Natalya Urusova. She is little, looking hardly more than twelve years old, with a pale, sensitive face, clear dark eyes, very soft, smooth black hair, parted and twisted in braids at the nape of her neck, and the gentlest voice in the world, a voice still thrilled with the light inflections of a child.

She is the daughter of a Russian teacher of Hebrew, who lived about three years ago in a beech-wooded village on the steppes of Central Russia. Here a neighbor of Natalya's



family, a Jewish farmer, misunderstanding that manifesto of the Czar which proclaimed free speech, and misunderstanding socialism, had printed and scattered through the neighborhood an edition of hand-bills stating that the Czar had proclaimed socialism, and that the populace must rise and divide among themselves a rich farm two miles away.

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Almost instantly on the appearance of these bills, this unhappy man and a young Jewish friend who chanced to be with him at the time of his arrest were seized and murdered by the government officers—the friend drowned, the farmer struck dead with the blow of a cudgel. A Christian mob formed, and the officers and the mob ravaged every Jewish house in the little town. Thirty innocent Jews were clubbed to death, and then literally cut to pieces. Natalya and her family, who occupied the last house on the street, crept unnoticed to the shack of a Roman Catholic friend, a woman who hid sixteen Jewish people under the straw of the hut in the fields where she lived, in one room, with eight children and some pigs and chickens. Hastily taking from a drawer a little bright-painted plaster image of a wounded saint, this woman placed it over the door as a means of averting suspicion. Her ruse was successful. “Are there Jews here?” the officer called to her, half an hour afterward, as the mob came over the fields to her house.

“No,” said the woman.

“Open the door and let me see.”

The woman flung open the door. But, as he was quite unsuspecting, the officer glanced in only very casually; and it was in utter ignorance that the rage of the mob went on over the fields, past the jammed little room of breathless Jews.

As soon as the army withdrew from the town, Natalya and her family made their way to America, where, they had been told, one had the right of free belief and of free speech. Here they settled on the sixth floor of a tenement on Monroe Street, on the East Side of New York. Nothing more different from the open, silent country of the steppes could be conceived than the place around them.

The vista of the New York street is flanked by high rows of dingy brick tenements, fringed with jutting white iron fire-escapes, and hung with bulging feather-beds and pillows, puffing from the windows. By day and by night the sidewalks and roads are crowded with people,—bearded old men with caps, bare-headed wiggled women, beautiful young girls, half-dressed babies swarming in the gutters, playing jacks. Push carts, lit at night with flaring torches, line the pavements and make the whole thronged, talking place an open market, stuck with signs and filled with merchandise and barter. Everybody stays out of doors as much as possible. In summer-time the children sleep on the steps, and on covered chicken coops along the sidewalk; for, inside, the rooms are too often small and stifling, some on inner courts close-hung with washing, some of them practically closets, without any opening whatever to the outer air.

Many, many of Natalya’s neighbors here are occupied in the garment trade. According to the United States census of 1900, the men’s clothing made in factories in New York City amounted to nearly three times as much as that manufactured in any other city in the United States. The women’s clothing made in factories in New York City amounted

to more than ten times that made in any other city; the manufacture of women's ready-made clothing in this country is, indeed, almost completely in the hands of New York's immense Jewish population.[12]



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As soon after her arrival as her age permitted, Natalya entered the employment of a shirt-waist factory as an unskilled worker, at a salary of \$6 a week. Mounting the stairs of the waist factory, one is aware of heavy vibrations. The roar and whir of the machines increase as the door opens, and one sees in a long loft, which is usually fairly light and clean, though sometimes neither, rows and rows of girls with heads bent and eyes intent upon the flashing needles. They are all intensely absorbed; for if they be paid by the piece, they hurry from ambition, and if they be paid by the week, they are “speeded up” by the foreman to a pace set by the swiftest workers.

In the Broadway establishment, which may be called the Bruch Shirt-waist Factory, where Natalya worked, there were four hundred girls—six hundred in the busy season. The hours were long—from eight till half past twelve, a half hour for lunch, and then from one till half past six.

Sometimes the girls worked until half past eight, until nine. There were only two elevators in the building, which contained other factories. There were two thousand working people to be accommodated by these elevators, all of whom began work at eight o'clock in the morning; so that, even if Natalya reached the foot of the shaft at half past seven, it was sometimes half past eight before she reached the shirt-waist factory on the twelfth floor. She was docked for this inevitable tardiness so often that frequently she had only five dollars a week instead of six. This injustice, and the fact that sometimes the foreman kept them waiting needlessly for several hours before telling them that he had no work for them, was particularly wearing to the girls.

Natalya was a “trimmer” in the factory. She cut the threads of the waists after they were finished—a task requiring very little skill. But the work of shirt-waist workers is of many grades. The earnings of makers of “imported” lingerie waists sometimes rise as high as \$25 a week. Such a wage, however, is very exceptional, and, even so, is less high than might appear, on account of the seasonal character of the work.

The average skilled waist worker, when very busy, sometimes earns from \$12 to \$15 a week. Here are the yearly budgets of some of the better paid workers, more skilled than Natalya—operatives receiving from \$10 to \$15 a week.

Rachael, a shirt-waist operative of eighteen, had been at work three years. She had begun at \$5 a week and her skill had increased until in a very busy week she could earn from \$14 to \$15 by piece-work. “But,” she said, “I was earning too much, so I was put back at week’s work, at \$11 a week. The foreman is a bad, driving man. Ugh! he makes us work fast—especially the young beginners.”

Rachael, too, had been driven out of Russia by Christian persecution. Her little sister had been killed in a massacre. Her parents had gone in one direction, and she and her two other sisters had fled in another to America.

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Here in New York she lived in a tenement, sharing a room with two other girls, and, besides working in the shirt-waist factory, did her own washing, made her own waists, and went to night school.

Her income was seriously depleted by the seasonal character of her work. Out of the twelve months of the year, for one month she was idle, for four months she had only three or four days' work a week, for three months she had five days' work a week, and for four months only did she have work for all six days. Unhappily, during these months she developed a severe cough, which lost her seven weeks of work, and gave her during these weeks the expense of medicine, a doctor, and another boarding place, as she could not in her illness sleep with her two friends.

Her income for the year had been \$348.25. Her expenses had been as follows: rent for one-third of room at \$3.50 a month, \$42; suppers with landlady at 20 cents each, \$63; other meals, approximately, \$90; board while ill, seven weeks at \$7, \$49; doctor and medicine (about) \$15; clothing, \$51.85; club, 5 cents a week, \$2.60; total, \$313.45, thus leaving a balance of \$34.80.

Shoes alone consumed over one-half of the money used for clothing. They wore out with such amazing rapidity that she had needed a new pair once a month. At \$2 each, except a best pair, costing \$2.60, their price in a year amounted to \$24.60.[13]

In regard to Rachael's expenditure and conservation in strength, she had drawn heavily upon her health and energy. Her cough continued to exhaust her. She was worn and frail, and at eighteen her health was breaking.

Anna Klotin, another older skilled worker, an able and clever Russian girl of twenty-one, an operative and trimmer, earned \$12 a week. She had been idle twelve weeks on account of slack work. For four weeks she had night work for three nights a week, and payment for this extra time had brought her income up to \$480 for the year. Of this sum she paid \$312 (\$6 a week) for board and lodging alone in a large, pleasant room with a friendly family on the East Side. To her family in Russia she had sent \$120, and she had somehow contrived, by doing her own washing, making her own waists and skirts, and repairing garments left from the previous year, to buy shoes and to pay carfare and all her other expenses from the remaining \$48. She had bought five pairs of shoes at \$2 each, and a suit for \$15.

Fanny Wardoff, a shirt-waist worker of twenty, who had been in the United States only a year, helped her family by supporting her younger brother.

For some time after her arrival in this country the ill effects of her steerage voyage had left her too miserable to work. She then obtained employment as a finisher in a skirt factory, where her best wage was \$7. But her earnings in this place had been so fluctuating that she was uncertain what her total income had been before the last

thirteen weeks. At the beginning of this time she had left the skirt factory and become a finisher in a waist factory, where she earned from \$10 to \$12 a week, working nine and a half hours a day.

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Her place to sleep, and breakfast and dinner, in a tenement, cost \$2.50 a week. She paid the same for her younger brother, who still attended school. The weekly expense was palpably increased by 60 cents a week for luncheon and 30 cents for carfare to ride to work. She walked home, fifteen blocks.

Her clothing, during the eight months of work, had cost about \$40. Of this, \$8 had been spent for four pairs of shoes. Two ready-made skirts had cost \$9, and a jacket \$10. Her expense for waists was only the cost of material, as she had made them herself.

She spent 35 cents a week for the theatre, and economized by doing her own washing.

Here are the budgets of some shirt-waist operatives earning from \$7 to \$10 a week, less skilled than the workers described above, but more skilled than Natalya.

Irena Kovalova, a girl of sixteen, supported herself and three other people, her mother and her younger brother and sister, on her slight wage of \$9 a week. She was a very beautiful girl, short, but heavily built, with grave dark eyes, a square face, and a manner more mature and responsible than that of many women of forty. Irena Kovalova had not been out of work for one whole week in the year she described. She had never done night work; but she had almost always worked half a day on Sunday—except in slack weeks. She was not certain how many of these there had been; but there had been enough slack time to reduce her income for her family for the year to \$450. They had paid \$207 rent for four rooms on the East Side, and had lived on the remaining \$243, all of which Irena had given to her mother.

Her mother helped her with her washing, and she had worn the clothes she had the year before, with the exception of shoes. She had been forced to buy four pairs of these at \$2 a pair. They all realized that if Irena could spend a little more for her shoes they would wear longer. “But for shoes,” she said, with a little laugh, “two dollars—it is the most I ever could pay.”

She was a girl of unusual health and strength, and though sometimes very weary at night and troubled with eye strain from watching the needle, it was a different drain of her vitality that she mentioned as alarming. She was obliged to work at a time of the month when she normally needed rest, and endured anguish at her machine at this season. She had thought, she said gravely, that if she ever had any money ahead, she would try to use it to have a little rest then.

Molly Zaplasky, a little Russian shirt-waist worker of fifteen, operated a machine for fifty-six hours a week, did her own washing, and even went to evening school. She had worked for five months, earning \$9 a week for five weeks of this time, and sometimes \$6, sometimes \$7, for the remainder. She and her sister Dora, of seventeen, also a shirt-waist maker, had a room with a cousin's family on the East Side.

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Dora had worked a year and a half. She, too, earned \$9 a week in full weeks. But there had been only twenty-two such weeks in that period. For seventeen weeks she had earned \$6 a week. For four weeks she had been idle because of slackness of work, and for nine weeks recently she had been too ill to work, having developed tuberculosis. Dora, too, did her own washing. She made her own waists, and went to evening school. She had paid \$2.75 a week for partial board and for lodging. The food, not included in her board, cost about \$1 a week. The little Molly had paid for Dora's board and lodging in her nine weeks' illness. Dora, who had worked so valiantly, was quietly expecting just as valiantly her turn in the long waiting list of applicants for the Montefiore Home for consumptives. She knew that the chance of her return to Molly was very slight.

Her expenditure for food, shelter, and clothing for the year had been as follows: room and board (exclusive of nine weeks' illness), \$161.25; clothing, \$41.85; total, \$203.10. As her income for the year had been \$297.50, this left a balance of \$94.40 for all other expenses. Items for clothing had been: suit, \$12; jacket, \$4.50; a hat, \$2.50; shoes (two pairs), \$4.25; stockings (two pairs a week at 15 cents), \$15.60; underwear, \$3; total, \$41.85.

One point should be accentuated in this budget—the striking cost of stockings, due to the daily walk to and from work and the ill little worker's lack of strength and time for darning. The outlay for footwear in all the budgets of the operators is heavy, in spite of the fact that much of their work is done sitting.

Here are the budgets of some of the shirt-waist makers who were earning Natalya's wage of \$6 a week, or less than this wage.

Rea Lupatkin, a shirt-waist maker of nineteen, had been in New York only ten months, and was at first a finisher in a cloak factory. Afterward, obtaining work as operator in a waist factory, she could get \$4 in fifty-six hours on a time basis. She had been in this factory six weeks.

Rea was paying \$4 a month for lodging in two rooms of a tenement-house with a man and his wife and baby and little boy. She saved carfare by a walk of three-quarters of an hour, adding daily one and a half hours to the nine and a half already spent in operating. Her food cost \$2.25 a week so that, with 93 cents a week for lodging, her regular weekly cost of living was \$3.18, leaving her 82 cents for every other expense. In spite of this, and although she had been forced to spend \$3 for examination of her eyes and for eyeglasses, Rea contrived to send an occasional \$2 back to her family in Europe.

Ida Bergeson, a little girl of fifteen, was visited at half past eight o'clock one evening, in a tenement on the lower East Side. The gas was burning brightly in the room; several people were talking; and this frail-looking little Ida lay on a couch in their midst,

sleeping, in all the noise and light, in complete exhaustion. Her sister said that every night the child returned from the factory utterly worn out, she was obliged to work so hard and so fast.



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Ida received the same wage as Natalya—\$6 a week. She worked fifty-six hours a week—eight more than the law allows for minors. She paid \$4 a week for board and a room shared with the anxious older sister, who told about her experience. Ida needed all the rest of her \$2 for her clothing. She did her own washing. As the inquirer came away, leaving the worn little girl sleeping in her utter fatigue, she wondered with what strength Ida could enter upon her possible marriage and motherhood—whether, indeed, she would struggle through to maturity.

Katia Halperian, a shirt-waist worker of fifteen, had been in New York only six months. During twenty-one weeks of this time she was employed in a Wooster Street factory, earning for a week of nine-and-a-half-hour days only \$3.50. Katia, like Natalya, was a “trimmer.”

After paying \$3 a week board to an aunt, she had a surplus of 50 cents for all clothing, recreation, doctor’s bills, and incidentals.

To save carfare she walked to her work—about forty minutes’ distance. Her aunt lived on the fourth floor of a tenement. After working nine and a half hours and walking an hour and twenty minutes daily, Katia climbed four flights of stairs and then helped with the housework.

Sonia Lavretsky, a girl of twenty, had been self-supporting for four years. She lived in a most wretched, ill-kept tenement, with a family who made artificial flowers. She had been totally unable to find work for the last five months, but this family, though very poor, had kept her with them without payment through all this time.

She had been three months an operative, putting cuffs on waists. Working on a time basis, she earned \$3 the first week and \$4 the second. She was then put on piece-work, and in fifty-four hours and a half could earn only \$3. Laid off, she found employment at felling cloaks, earning from \$3 to \$6 a week. But after twelve weeks, trade in this place also had grown dull.

During her idle time she became “run down” and was ill three weeks. Fortunately, a brother was able to pay her doctor’s bills, until he also was laid off during part of her idle time.

When Sonia had any money she gave her landlady, for part of a room in the poor tenement with the flower-makers, \$3.50 a month, and about \$2.50 a week for food. Before her dull season and slack work began, she had paid 20 cents a week dues to a self-education society and social club.

Her brother had given her all the clothing she had. The burden of her support evidently fell heavily upon him and upon the poverty-stricken family of her hostess. And Sonia



was in deep discouragement. She was about to go away from New York in hopes of finding work in Syracuse.

Getta Bursova, an attractive Russian girl of twenty, had worked for eight years—ever since she was twelve. She had been employed as a waist operative for six years in London and for two in New York.



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Here she worked nine and a half hours daily in a factory on Nineteenth Street, earning \$5 to \$6 a week. Of this wage she paid her sister \$4 a week for food and lodging in an inside tenement room in very poor East Side quarters, so far from her work that she was obliged to spend 60 cents a week for carfare. In her busy weeks she had never more than \$1.40 a week left, and often only 60 cents, for her clothing and every other expense.

Getta had been idle, moreover, for nearly six months. During this time she had been supported by her sister's family.

In spite of this defeat in her fortunes, her presence had a lovely brightness and initiative, and her inexpensive dress had a certain daintiness. She was eager for knowledge, and through all her busy weeks had paid 10 cents dues to a self-education society.

Nevertheless, her long dull season was a harassing burden and disappointment both for herself and her sister's struggling family.

Betty Lukin, a shirt-waist maker of twenty, had been making sleeves for two years. For nine months of the year she earned from \$6 to \$10 a week; for the remaining three months only \$2 a week. Her average weekly wage for the year would be about \$6. Of this she spent \$3 a week for suppers and a place in a tenement to sleep, and about 50 cents a week for breakfast and luncheon—a roll and a bit of fruit or candy from a push cart. Her father was in New York, doing little to support himself, so that many weeks she deprived herself to give him \$3 or \$4.

She spent 50 cents a week to go to the theatre and 10 cents for club dues. She had, of course, very little left for dress. She looked ill clad, and she was, naturally, improperly nourished and very delicate.

Two points in Betty's little account are suggestive: one is that she could always help her father. In listening to the account of an organizer of the Shirt-waist Makers' Union, a man who had known some 40,000 garment workers, I exclaimed on the hardships of the trade for the number of married men it contained, and was about to make a note of this item when he eagerly stopped me. "Wait, wait, please," he cried generously. "When you put it down, then put this down, too. It is just the same for the girls. The most of them are married to a family. They, too, take care of others."

To this truth, Betty's expense of \$3 to \$4 for her father from her average wage of \$6, and little Molly's item of nine weeks' board and lodging for her sister, bear eloquent testimony. On the girls' part they were mentioned merely as "all in the day's work," and with the tacit simplicity of that common mortal responsibility which is heroic.

The other fact to be remarked in Betty's account is that she spent 60 cents a week for club dues and the theatre, and only 50 cents for all her casual sidewalk breakfasts and



luncheons from the push carts. Such an eager hunger for complete change of scene and thought, such a desire for beauty and romance as these two comparative items show, appear in themselves a true romance. Nearly all the Russian shirt-waist makers visit the theatre and attend clubs and night classes, whatever their wage or their hours of labor. Most of them contribute to the support of a family.



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These shirt-waist makers, all self-supporting, whose income and outlay are described above, were all—with the exception of Irena Kovalova, who supported a family of four—living away from home. Natalya lived with her mother and father.

She did not do her own washing, though she made her own waists and those of her sister and mother. But her story is given because in other ways—in casual employment, long hours, unfair and undignified treatment from her employers, and in the conditions of her peaceable effort to obtain juster and better terms of living—her experience has seemed characteristic of the trade fortunes of many of the forty thousand shirt-waist makers employed in New York for the last two years.

In conditions such as described above, Natalya and other shirt-waist makers were working last fall, when one day she saw a girl, a piece-worker, shaking her head and objecting sadly to the low price the foreman was offering her for making a waist. “If you don’t like it,” said the foreman, with a laugh, “why don’t you join your old ‘sisters’ out on the street, then?”

Natalya wondered with interest who these “sisters” were. On making inquiry, she found that the workers in other shirt-waist factories had struck, for various reasons of dissatisfaction with the terms of their trade.

The factories had continued work with strike breakers. Some of the companies had stationed women of the street and their cadets in front of the shops to insult and attack the Union members whenever they came to speak to their fellow-workers and to try to dissuade them from selling their work on unfair terms. Some had employed special police protection and thugs against the pickets.

There is, of course, no law against picketing. Every one in the United States has as clear a legal right to address another person peaceably on the subject of his belief in selling his work as on the subject of his belief in the tariff. But on the 19th of October ten girls belonging to the Union, who had been talking peaceably on the day before with some of the strike breakers, were suddenly arrested as they were walking quietly along the street, were charged with disorderly conduct, arraigned in the Jefferson Market Court, and fined \$1 each. The chairman of the strikers from one shop was set upon by a gang of thugs while he was collecting funds, and beaten and maimed so that he was confined to his bed for weeks.

A girl of nineteen, one of the strikers, as she was walking home one afternoon was attacked in the open daylight by a thug, who struck her in the side and broke one of her ribs. She was in bed for four weeks, and will always be somewhat disabled by her injury. These and other illegal oppressions visited on the strikers roused a number of members of the Woman’s Trade-Union League to assist the girls in peaceful picketing.



Early in November, a policeman arrested Miss Mary E. Dreier, the President of the Woman's Trade-Union League, because she entered into a quiet conversation with one of the strike breakers. Miss Dreier is a woman of large independent means, socially well known throughout New York and Brooklyn. When the sergeant recognized her as she came into the station, he at once discharged her case, reprimanded the officer, and assured Miss Dreier that she would never have been arrested if they had known who she was.

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This flat instance of discrimination inspired the officers of the Woman's Trade-Union League to protest to Police Commissioner Baker against the arbitrary oppression of the strikers by the policemen. He was asked to investigate the action of the police. He replied that the pickets would in future receive as much consideration as other people. The attitude of the police did not, however, change.

It was to these events, as Natalya Urusova found, that the foreman of the Bruch factory had referred when he asked the girls, with a sneer, why they didn't join their "sisters." Going to the Union headquarters on Clinton Street, she learned all she could about the Union. Afterward, in the Bruch factory, whenever any complaints arose, she would say casually, in pretended helplessness, "But what can we do? Is there any way to change this?" Vague suggestions of the Union headquarters would arise, and she would inquire into this eagerly and would pretend to allow herself to be led to Clinton Street. So, little by little, as the long hours and low wages and impudence from the foreman continued, she induced about sixty girls to understand about organization and to consider it favorably.

On the evening of the 22d of November, Natalya, and how many others from the factory she could not tell, attended a mass meeting at Cooper Union, of which they had been informed by hand-bills. It was called for the purpose of discussing a general strike of shirt-waist workers in New York City. The hall was packed. Overflow meetings were held at Beethoven Hall, Manhattan Lyceum, and Astoria Hall. In the Cooper Union addresses were delivered by Samuel Gompers, by Miss Dreier, and by many others. Finally, a girl of eighteen asked the chairman for the privilege of the floor. She said: "I have listened to all the speeches. I am one who thinks and feels from the things they describe. I, too, have worked and suffered. I am tired of the talking. I move that we go on a general strike."

The meeting broke into wild applause. The motion was unanimously indorsed. The chairman, Mr. Feigenbaum, a Union officer, rapped on the table. "Do you mean faith?" he called to the workers. "Will you take the old Jewish oath?" Thousands of right hands were held up and the whole audience repeated in Yiddish:[14] "If I turn traitor to the cause I now pledge, may this hand wither from the arm I now raise."

This was the beginning of the general shirt-waist strike. A committee of fifteen girls and one boy was appointed at the Cooper Union meeting, and went from one to the other of the overflow meetings, where the same motion was offered and unanimously indorsed.

II



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“But I did not know how many workers in my shop had taken that oath at that meeting. I could not tell how many would go on strike in our factory the next day,” said Natalya, afterward. “When we came back the next morning to the factory, though, no one went to the dressing-room. We all sat at the machines with our hats and coats beside us, ready to leave. The foreman had no work for us when we got there. But, just as always, he did not tell when there would be any, or if there would be any at all that day. And there was whispering and talking softly all around the room among the machines: ‘Shall we wait like this?’ ‘There is a general strike,’ ‘Who will get up first?’ ‘It would be better to be the last to get up, and then the company might remember it of you afterward, and do well for you,’ But I told them,” observed Natalya, with a little shrug, “‘What difference does it make which one is first and which one is last?’ Well, so we stayed whispering, and no one knowing what the other would do, not making up our minds, for two hours. Then I started to get up.” Her lips trembled. “And at just the same minute all—we all got up together, in one second. No one after the other; no one before. And when I saw it—that time—oh, it excites me so yet, I can hardly talk about it. So we all stood up, and all walked out together. And already out on the sidewalk in front the policemen stood with the clubs. One of them said, ‘If you don’t behave, you’ll get this on your head.’ And he shook his club at me.

“We hardly knew where to go—what to do next. But one of the American girls, who knew how to telephone, called up the Woman’s Trade-Union League, and they told us all to come to a big hall a few blocks away. After we were there, we wrote out on paper what terms we wanted: not any night work, except as it would be arranged for in some special need for it for the trade; and shorter hours; and to have wages arranged by a committee to arbitrate the price for every one fairly; and to have better treatment from the bosses.

“Then a leader spoke to us and told us about picketing quietly, and the law.[15]

“Our factory had begun to work with a few Italian strike breakers.[16] The next day we went back to the factory, and saw five Italian girls taken in to work, and then taken away afterward in an automobile. I was with an older girl from our shop, Anna Lunska. The next morning in front of the factory, Anna Lunska and I met a tall Italian man going into the factory with some girls. So I said to her: ‘These girls fear us in some way. They do not understand, and I will speak to them, and ask them why they work, and tell them we are not going to harm them at all—only to speak about our work.’

“I moved toward them to say this to them. Then the tall man struck Anna Lunska in the breast so hard, he nearly knocked her down. She couldn’t get her breath. And I went to a policeman standing right there and said, ‘Why do you not arrest this man for striking my friend? Why do you let him do it? Look at her. She cannot speak; she is crying. She did nothing at all,’ Then he arrested the man; and he said, ‘But you must come, too, to make a charge against him.’ The tall Italian called a man out of the factory, and went with me and Anna Lunska and the three girls to the court.”



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But when Natalya and Anna reached the court, and had made their charge against the tall Italian, to their bewilderment not only he, but they, too, were conducted downstairs to the cells. He had charged them with attacking the girls he was escorting into the factory.

“They made me go into a cell,” said Natalya, “and suddenly they locked us in. Then I was frightened, and I said to the policeman there, ‘Why do you do this? I have done nothing at all. The man struck my friend. I must send for somebody.’”

“He said, ‘You cannot send for any one at all. You are a prisoner.’”

“We cried then. We were frightened. We did not know what to do.”

“After about an hour and a half he came and said some one was asking for us. We looked out. It was Miss Violet Pike. A boy I knew had seen us go into the prison with the Italian, and not come out, and so he thought something was wrong and he had gone to the League and told them.

“So Miss Pike had come from the League; and she bailed us out; and she came back with us on the next day for our trial.”

On the next morning the case against the tall Italian was rapidly examined, and the Italian discharged. He was then summoned back in rebuttal, and Natalya and Anna’s case was called. Four witnesses, one of them being the proprietor of the factory, were produced against them, and stated that Natalya and Anna had struck one of the girls the Italian was escorting. At the close of the case against Natalya and Anna, Judge Cornell said:[17] “I find the girls guilty. It would be perfectly futile for me to fine them. Some charitable women would pay their fines or they could get a bond. I am going to commit them to the workhouse under the Cumulative Sentence Act, and there they will have an opportunity of thinking over what they have done.”

“Miss Violet Pike came forward then,” said Natalya, “and said, ‘Cannot this sentence be mollified?’”

“And he said it could not be mollified.”

“They took us away in a patrol to the Tombs.”

“We waited in the waiting-room there. The matron looked at us and said, ‘You are not bad girls. I will not send you down to the cells. You can do some sewing for me here.’ But I could not sew. I felt so bad, because I could not eat the food they gave us at noon for dinner in the long hall with all the other prisoners. It was coffee with molasses in it, and oatmeal and bread so bad that after one taste we could not swallow it down. Then, for supper, we had the same, but soup, too, with some meat bones in it. And even before you sat down at the table these bones smelled so it made you very sick. But



they forced you to sit down at the table before it, whether you ate or drank anything or not. And the prisoners walked by in a long line afterward and put their spoons in a pail of hot water, just the same whether they had eaten anything with the spoons or not.



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“Then we walked to our cells. It was night, and it was dark—oh, so dark in there it was dreadful! There were three other women in the cell—some of them were horrid women that came off the street. The beds were one over the other, like on the boats—iron beds, with a quilt and a blanket. But it was so cold you had to put both over you; and the iron springs underneath were bare, and they were dreadful to lie on. There was no air; you could hardly breathe. The horrid women laughed and screamed and said terrible words.

“Anna Lunska felt so sick and was so very faint, I thought what should we do if she was so much worse in the night in this terrible darkness, where you could see nothing at all. Then I called through the little grating to a woman who was a sentinel that went by in the hall all through the night, ‘My friend is sick. Can you get me something if I call you in the night?’

“The woman just laughed and said, ‘Where do you think you are? But if you pay me, I will come and see what I can do.’

“In a few minutes she came back with a candle, and shuffled some cards under the candlelight, and called to us, ‘Here, put your hand through the grate and give me a quarter and I’ll tell you who your fellows are by the cards.’ Then Anna Lunska said, ‘We do not care to hear talk like that,’ and the woman went away.

“All that night it was dreadful. In the morning we could not eat any of the breakfast. They took us in a wagon like a prison with a little grating, and then in a boat like a prison with a little grating. As we got on to it, there was another girl, not like the rest of the women prisoners. She cried and cried. And I saw she was a working girl. I managed to speak to her and say, ‘Who are you?’ She said, ‘I am a striker. I cannot speak any English.’ That was all. They did not wish me to speak to her, and I had to go on.

“From the boat they made us go into the prison they call Blackwell’s Island. Here they made us put on other clothes. All the clothes they had were much, much too large for me, and they were dirty. They had dresses in one piece of very heavy, coarse material, with stripes all around, and the skirts are gathered, and so heavy for the women. They almost drag you down to the ground. Everything was so very much too big for me, the sleeves trailed over my hands so far and the skirts on the ground so far, they had to pin and pin them up with safety-pins.

“Then we had the same kind of food I could not eat; and they put us to work sewing gloves. But I could not sew, I was so faint and sick. At night there was the same kind of food I could not eat, and all the time I wondered about that shirt-waist striker that could not speak one word of English, and she was all alone and had the same we had in other ways. When we walked by the matron to go to our cells at night, at first she started to send Anna Lunska and me to different cells. She would have made me go alone with one of the terrible women from the street. But I was so dreadfully frightened, and cried

so, and begged her so to let Anna Lunska and me stay together, that at last she said we could.



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“Just after that I saw that other girl, away down the line, so white, she must have cried and cried, and looking so frightened. I thought, ‘Oh, I ought to ask for her to come with us, too’ But I did not dare. I thought, ‘I will make that matron so mad that she will not even let Anna Lunska and me stay together,’ So I got almost to our cell before I went out of the line and across the hall and went back to the matron and said: ‘Oh, there is another Russian girl here. She is all alone. She cannot speak one word of English. Please, please couldn’t that girl come with my friend and me?’

“She said, ‘Well, for goodness’ sake! So you want to band all the strikers together here, do you? How long have you known her?’

“I said, ‘I never saw her until to-day.’

“The matron said, ‘For the land’s sake, what do you expect here?’ but she did not say anything else. So I went off, just as though she wasn’t going to let that girl come with us; for I knew she would not want to seem as though she would do it, at any rate.

“But, after we were in the cell with an Irish woman and another woman, the door opened, and that Russian girl came in with us. Oh, she was so glad!

“After that it was the same as the night before, except that we could see the light of the boats passing. But it was dark and cold, and we had to put both the quilt and the blanket over us and lie on the springs, and you must keep all of your clothes on to try to be warm. But the air and the smells are so bad. I think if it were any warmer, you would almost faint there. I could not sleep.

“The next day they made me scrub. But I did not know how to scrub. And, for Anna Lunska, she wet herself all over from head to foot. So they said, very cross, ‘It seems to us you do not know how to scrub a bit. You can go back to the sewing department.’ On the way I went through a room filled with negresses, and they called out, ‘Look, look at the little kid,’ And they took hold of me, and turned me around, and all laughed and sang and danced all around me. These women, they do not seem to mind at all that they are in prison.

“In the sewing room the next two days I was so sick I could hardly sew. The women often said horrid things to each other, and I sat on the bench with them. There was one woman over us at sewing that argued with me so much, and told me how much better it was for me here than in Russian prisons, and how grateful I should be.

“I said, ‘How is that, then? Isn’t there the same kind of food in those prisons and in these prisons? And I think there is just as much liberty.’”

On the last day of Natalya’s sentence, after she was dressed in her own little jacket and hat again and just ready to go, one of the most repellent women of the street said to her,



“I am staying in here and you’re going out. Give me a kiss for good-by.” Natalya said that this woman was a horror to her. “But I thought it was not very nice to refuse this; so I kissed her a good-by kiss and came away.”

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The officers guarded the girls to the prison boat for their return to New York. There, at the ferry, stood a delegation of the members of the Woman's Trade-Union League and the Union waiting to receive them.

Such is the account of one of the seven hundred arrests made during the shirt-waist strike, the chronicle of a peaceful striker.

As the weeks went on, however, in spite of the advice of the Union officers, there were a few instances of violence on the part of the Union members. Among thirty thousand girls it could not be expected that every single person should maintain the struggle in justice and temperance with perfect self-control. In two or three cases the Union members struck back when they were attacked. In a few cases they became excited and attacked strike breakers. In one factory, although there was no violence, the workers conducted their negotiations in an unfair and unfortunate manner. They had felt that all their conditions except the amount of wages were just, and they admired and were even remarkably proud of the management, a firm of young and well-intentioned manufacturers. Early in the general strike, however, they went out without a word to the management, without even signifying to it in any way the point they considered unjust. The management did not send to inquire. After a few days it resumed work with strike breakers. The former employees began picketing. The management sent word to them that it would not employ against them, so long as they were peaceful and within the law, any of the means of intimidation that numbers of the other firms were using—special police and thugs. The girls sent word back that they would picket peacefully and quietly. But afterward, on their own admission, which was most disarming in its candor, they became careless and “too gay.” They went picketing in too large numbers and were too noisy. Instantly the firm employed police. Before this, however, the girls had begun to discuss and to realize the unintelligence of their behavior in failing to send a committee to the management to describe their position clearly and to obtain terms. They now appointed and instructed such a committee, came rapidly to terms with the management, and have been working for them in friendly relations ever since.

While in general the strike was both peaceful in conduct and just in demand and methods of demand on the part of the strikers, these exceptions must, of course, be mentioned in the interests of truth. Further, it would convey a false impression to imply that every striker arrested had as much sense and force of character as Natalya Urusova. Natalya was especially protected in her ordeal by a vital love of observation and a sense of humor, charmingly frequent in the present writer's experience of young Russian girls and women. With these qualities she could spend night after night locked up with the women of the street, in her funny, enormous prison clothes, and remain as



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uninfluenced by her companions as if she had been some blossoming geranium or mignonette set inside a filthy cellar as a convenience for a few minutes, and then carried out again to her native fresh air. But such qualities as hers cannot be demanded of all very young and unprotected girls, and to place them wantonly with women of the streets has in general an outrageous irresponsibility and folly quite insufficiently implied by the experience of a girl of Natalya's individual penetration and self-reliance.

III

In the period since the strike began many factories had been settling upon Union terms. But many factories were still on strike, and picketing on the part of the Union was continuing, as well as unwarranted arrests, like Natalya's, on the part of the employers and the police. The few exceptions to the general rule of peaceful picketing have been stated. Over two hundred arrests were made within three days early in December. On the 3d of December a procession of ten thousand women marched to the City Hall, accompanying delegates from the Union and the Woman's Trade-Union League, and visited Mayor McClellan in his office and gave him this letter:—

HONORABLE GEORGE B. MCCLELLAN,
Mayor of the City of New York.

We, the members of the Ladies' Shirt-waist Makers' Union, a body of thirty thousand women, appeal to you to put an immediate stop to the insults and intimidations and to the abuses to which the police have subjected us while we have been picketing. This is our lawful right.

We protest to you against the flagrant discrimination of the Police Department in favor of the employers, who are using every method to incite us to violence.

We appeal to you directly in this instance, instead of to your Police Commissioner.

We do this because our requests during the past six months have had no effect in decreasing the outrages perpetrated upon our members, nor have our requests been granted a fair hearing.

Yours respectfully,
S. SHINDLER, Secretary.

The Mayor thanked the committee for bringing the matter to his attention, and promised to take up the complaint with the Police Commissioner.

But the arrests and violence of the police continued unchecked.

On the 5th of December the Political Equality League, at the instigation of Mrs. O.H.P. Belmont, held a packed meeting for the benefit of the Shirt-waist Makers' Union. Many imprisoned girls were present, and gave to the public clear, straightforward stories of the treatment they had received at the hands of the city. The committee of the meeting had offered the Mayor and other city officials a box, but they refused to be present.

Again the arrests and violence continued without protection for the workers. Nevertheless their cause was constantly gaining, and although all attempts at general arbitration were unsuccessful, more and more employers settled with the operatives. They continued to settle during December and January until the middle of February. All but thirteen of the shops in New York had then made satisfactory terms with the Union workers. It was officially declared that the strike was over.



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Natalya's shop had settled with the operatives on the 23d of January, and she went back to work on the next day.

She had an increase of \$2 a week in wages—\$8 a week instead of \$6. Her hours were now fifty-two a week instead of sixty—that is to say, nine and one-half hours a day, with a Saturday half-holiday. But she has since then been obliged to enter another factory on account of slack work.

Among the more skilled workers than Natalya in New York to-day, Irena Kovalova, who supports her mother and her younger brother and sister, has \$11 a week instead of \$9. She is not obliged to work on Sunday, and her factory closes at five o'clock instead of six on Saturday. "I have four hours less a week," she said with satisfaction. The family have felt able to afford for her a new dress costing \$11, and material for a suit, costing \$6. A friend, a neighbor, made this for Irena as a present.

Among the older workers of more skill than Irena, Anna Klotin, who sent \$120 home to her family last year, has now, however, only \$6, \$7, and \$8 a week, and very poor and uncertain work, instead of her former \$12 a week. Hers was one of the thirteen factories that did not settle. Of their one hundred and fifty girls, they wished about twenty of their more skilled operators to return to them under Union conditions, leaving the rest under the old long hours of overtime and indeterminate, unregulated wages. Anna was one of the workers the firm wished to retain on Union terms, but she felt she could not separate her chances in her trade from the fortunes of her one hundred and thirty companions. She refused to return under conditions so unjust for them. She has stayed on in her boarding place, as her landlady, realizing Anna's responsible character, is always willing to wait for money when work is slack. She has bought this year only two pairs of shoes, a hat for 50 cents, and one or two muslin waists, which she made herself. She has lived on such work as she could find from time to time in different factories. Anna did not grudge in any way her sacrifice for the less skilled workers. "In time," she said, "we will have things better for all of us." And the chief regret she mentioned was that she had been unable to send any money home since the strike.

The staunchest allies of the shirt-waist makers in their attempt to obtain wiser trade conditions were the members and officers of the Woman's Trade-Union League, whose response and generosity were constant from the beginning to the end of the strike. The chronicle of the largest woman's strike in this country is not yet complete. A suit is now pending against the Woman's Trade-Union League and the Union for conspiracy in restraint of trade, brought by the Sittomer Shirt-waist Co. A test suit is pending against Judge Cornell for false imprisonment, brought by one of the shirt-waist strikers.

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The whole outcome of the strike in its effect on women's wages in the shirt-waist trade, their income and outlay in their work, both financially and in vitality, cannot, of course, yet be fully known. The statement that there has been a general rise of wages must be modified in other ways than that suggested by the depletion of Anna Klotin's income in the year since the strike. In factories where price on piece-work is subject to arbitration between a Union committee of the workers and the firm, the committee is not always able to obtain a fair price for labor. One of the largest factories made a verbal agreement to observe Union conditions, but it signed no written contract, and has since broken its word. It discriminates against Union members, and it insists on Sunday work and on night work for more than two nights a week. Further, during the seventeen weeks of the strike many shirt-waist orders ordinarily filled in New York were placed with New Jersey and Pennsylvania firms. The present New York season has been unusually dull, and now, on this writing, early in August, many girls are discouraged on account of the slight amounts they earn through slack work.

"But that is not the fault of the employers," said one of the workers. "You must be reasonable for them. You cannot ask them for work they are not able to obtain to give you." Her remark is quoted both from its wisdom and for another purpose. She was the girl who will always be disabled by the attack of her employer's thug. Her quiet and instinctive mention of the need of justice in considering conditions for employers had for the listener who heard her a most significant, unconscious generosity and nobility.

Looking back upon the shirt-waist strike nearly a year afterward, its profoundest common value would appear to an unprejudiced onlooker to be its spirit. Something larger than a class spirit, something fairer than a mob spirit, something which may perhaps be called a mass spirit, manifested itself in the shirt-waist makers' effort for better terms of life.

"The most remarkable feature of the strike," says a writer in the *Call*, [18] "is the absence of leaders. All the girls seem to be imbued with a spirit of activity that by far surpasses all former industrial uprisings. One like all are ready to take the chairmanship, secretaryship, do picket duty, be arrested, and go to prison."

There has never before been a strike quite like the shirt-waist makers' strike. Perhaps there never will be another quite like it again. When every fair criticism of its conduct has been faced, and its errors have all been admitted, the fact remains that the New York strike said, "All for one and one for all," with a magnetic candor new and stirring in the voice of the greatest and the richest city of our country—perhaps new in the voice of the world. Wonderful it is to know that in that world to-day, unseen, unheard, are forces like those of that ghetto girl who, in the

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meanest quarter of New York, on stinted food, in scanty clothes, drained with faint health and overwork, could yet walk through her life, giving away half of her wage by day to some one else, enjoying the theatre at night, and, in the poorest circumstances, pouring her slight strength out richly like a song for pleasure and devotion. Wonderful it is to know that when Natalya Urusova was in darkness, hunger, fright, and cold on Blackwell's Island, she still could be responsibly concerned for the fortunes of a stranger and had something she could offer to her nobly. Wonderful to know that, after her very bones had been broken by the violence of a thug of an employer, one of these girls could still speak for perfect fairness for him with an instinct for justice truly large and thrilling. Such women as that ennoble life and give to the world a richer and altered conception of justice—a justice of imagination and the heart, concerned not at all with vengeance, but simply with the beauty of the perfect truth for the fortunes of all mortal creatures.

Besides the value to the workers of the spirit of the shirt-waist strike, they gained another advantage. This was of graver moment even than an advance in wages and of deeper consequences for their future. They gained shorter hours.

What, then, are the trade fortunes of some of those thousands of other women, other machine operatives whose hours and wages are now as the shirt-waist makers' were before the shirt-waist strike? What do some of these other women factory workers, unorganized and entirely dependent upon legislation for conserving their strength by shorter working hours, give in their industry? What do they get from it? For an answer to these questions, we turn to some of the white goods sewers, belt makers, and stitchers on children's dresses, for the annals of their income and outlay in their work away from home in New York.

FOOTNOTES:

[Footnote 12: *Union Label Bulletin*, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 1.]

[Footnote 13: This expense would at this date probably be heavier, as the working girls at one of the St. George's Working Girls' Clubs estimated early this summer that shoes of a quality purchasable two years ago at \$2 would now cost \$2.50.]

[Footnote 14: Constance Leupp, in the *Survey*.]

[Footnote 15: The circular of advice issued a little later by the Union reads as follows:

—

RULES FOR PICKETS



Don't walk in groups of more than two or three.

Don't stand in front of the shop; walk up and down the block.

Don't stop the person you wish to talk to; walk along side of him.

Don't get excited and shout when you are talking.

Don't put your hand on the person you are speaking to. Don't touch his sleeve or button. This may be construed as a "technical assault."

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Don't call any one "scab" or use abusive language of any kind.
Plead, persuade, appeal, but do not threaten.

If a policeman arrest you and you are sure that you have committed
no offense, take down his number and give it to your Union
officers.]

[Footnote 16: In the factories where the Russian and Italian girls worked side by side, their feeling for each other seems generally to have been friendly. After the beginning of the strike an attempt was made to antagonize them against each other by religious and nationalistic appeals. It met with little success. Italian headquarters for Italian workers wishing organizations were soon established. Little by little the Italian garment workers are entering the Union.]

[Footnote 17: Extract from the court stenographer's minutes of the proceedings in the Per trial.]

[Footnote 18: Therese Malkiel, December 22.]

CHAPTER III

THE INCOME AND OUTLAY OF SOME NEW YORK FACTORY WORKERS

[Unskilled and Seasonal Factory Work]

I

Besides the accounts of the waist makers, the National Consumers' League received in its inquiry specific chronicles from skilled and from unskilled factory workers, both hand workers and machine operatives—among others, packers of drugs, biscuits, and olives, cigarette rollers, box makers, umbrella makers, hat makers, glove makers, fur sewers, hand embroiderers, white goods workers, skirt makers, workers on men's coats, and workers on children's dresses.

As will be seen, the situation occupied and described by any individual girl may in a year or five years be no longer hers, but that of some other worker. So that the synthesis of these chronicles is presented, not as a composite photograph of the industrial experiences in any one trade, but rather as an accurate kinoscope view of the yearly life of chance passing factory workers.



For the purposes of record these annals may be loosely divided into those of unskilled and seasonal factory workers, and those whose narratives expressed the effects of monotony and fatigue, from speeding at their tasks. This division must remain loose to convey a truthful impression. For the same self-supporting girl has often been a skilled and an unskilled worker, by hand, at a machine, and in several industries.

Discouragement at the lack of opportunity to advance was expressed by almost all the narrators of their histories who were engaged in unskilled factory work. Among them, Emily Clement, an American girl, was one of the first workers who gave the League an account of her experience.

Emily was tending an envelope machine, at a wage of \$6 a week. She was about twenty years old; and before her employment at the envelope machine she had worked, at the age of fourteen, for a year in a carpet mill; then for two years in a tobacco factory; and then for two years had kept house for a sister and an aunt living in an East Side tenement.

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She still lived with them, sharing a room with her sister, and paying \$3 a week for her lodging, with board and part of her washing. She did the rest of her washing, and made some of her sister's clothes and all of her own. This skill had enabled her to have for \$5.20, the cost of the material, the pretty spring suit she wore—a coat, skirt, and jumper, of cloth much too thin to protect her from the chill of the weather, but stylishly cut and becoming.

In idle times she had done a little sewing for friends, for her income had been quite inadequate. During the twenty-two weeks she had been in the factory she had had full work for eleven and one-half weeks, at \$6; half-time for eight and one-half weeks, at \$3; and two weeks of slack work, in each of which she earned only \$1.50.

She had no money at all to spend for recreation; and, in her hopelessness of the future and her natural thirst for pleasure, she sometimes accepted it from chance men acquaintances met on the street.

Another unskilled worker of twenty, Sarina Bashkitseff, intended to escape from her monotonous work and low wage by educating herself in a private evening school.

For this she contrived to save \$4 a month out of her income of \$4 a week. Sarina packed powders in a drug factory from eight to six o'clock, with three-quarters of an hour for lunch. She was a beautiful and brilliant girl, who used to come to work in the winter dressed in her summer coat, with a little woollen under-jacket to protect her from the cold, and a plain cheap felt hat, much mocked at by the American girls. Sarina scorned the mental scope of these girls; scorned to spend for dress, money with which she could learn to read "Othello" and "King Lear" in the original; and scorned to spend in giggling the lunch hour, in which she might read in Yiddish newspapers the latest tidings of the struggle in Russia.

In the drug factory, and in her East Side hall bedroom, she lived in a world of her own—a splendid, generous world of the English tragedies she studied at night school, and of the thrilling hopes and disappointments of the Russian revolution.

She had been in New York a year. In this time she had worked in an artificial flower factory, earning from \$2 to \$2.25 a week; then as a cutter in a box factory, where she had \$3 a week at first, and then \$5, for ten hours' work a day. She left this place because the employer was very lax about payment, and sometimes cheated her out of small amounts. She then tried finishing men's coats; but working from seven-thirty to twelve and from one to six daily brought her only \$3 a week and severe exhaustion.[19]

From her present wage of \$4 she spent 60 cents a week for carfare and \$4.25 a month for her share of a tenement hall bedroom. Although she did not live with them, her mother and father were in New York, and she had her dinners with them, free of cost.

Her luncheon cost her from 7 to 10 cents a day, and her breakfast consisted of 1-1/2 cents' worth of rolls.

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All that made Sarina Bashkitseff's starved and drudging days endurable for her was her clear determination to escape from them by educating herself. Her fate might be expressed in Whitman's words, "Henceforth I ask not good fortune, I myself am good fortune."

Whatever her circumstances, few persons in the world could ever be in a position to pity her.

Marta Neumann, another unskilled factory worker, an Austrian girl of nineteen, was also trying to escape from her present position by educating herself at night school, but was drained by cruel homesickness.

Marta had spent all her youth, since her childhood, at home,—four years in New York, —in factory work, without the slightest prospect of advancement. Her work was of the least skilled kind—cutting off the ends of threads from men's suspenders, and folding and placing them in boxes. She earned at first \$3 a week, and had been advanced to \$5 by a 50-cent rise at every one of the last four Christmases since she had left her mother and father. But she knew she would not be advanced beyond this last price, and feared to undertake heavier work, as, though she had kept her health, she was not at all strong.

She worked from eight to six, with half an hour at noon. On Saturday the factory closed at five in winter and at one in summer. Her income for the year had been \$237.50. She had spent \$28.50 for carfare; \$13 for a suit; \$2 for a hat; and \$2 for a pair of shoes she had worn for ten months. Her board and lodging with a married sister had cost her \$2.50 a week, less in one way than with strangers. But she slept with part of her sister's family, did her own washing and her sister's, scrubbed the floor, and rose every day at half past five to help with the work and prepare her luncheon before starting for the factory at seven.

Marta could earn so little that she had never been able to save enough to make her deeply desired journey back to Austria to see her mother and father. Although both their children were in the new country, her mother and father would not be admitted under the immigration law, because her father was blind.

The lack of opportunity to rise, among older unskilled factory workers, may be illustrated by the experience of Mrs. Hallett, an American woman of forty, a slight, gentle-voiced little widow, who had been packing candies and tying and labelling boxes for sixteen years. In this time she had advanced from a wage of \$4 a week to a wage of \$6, earned by a week of nine-hour days, with a Saturday half-holiday.

However, as with Marta, this had represented payment from the company for length of service, and not an advance to more skilled or responsible labor with more outlook. In Mrs. Hallett's case this was partly because the next step would have been to become a

clerk in one of the company's retail stores, and she was not strong enough to endure the all-day standing which this would require. Mrs. Hallett liked this company. The foreman was considerate, and a week's vacation with pay was given to the employees.



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Mrs. Hallett lived in an excessively small, unheated hall bedroom, on the fourth floor of an enormous old house filled with the clatter of the elevated railroad. On the night of the inquirer's call, she was pathetically concerned lest her visitor should catch cold because "she wasn't used to it." She lighted a small candle to show her the room, furnished with one straight hard chair, a cot, and a wash-stand with a broken pitcher, but with barely space besides for Mrs. Clark and her kind, public-spirited little hostess. They sat, drowned at times in the noise of the elevated, in almost complete darkness, as Mrs. Hallett insisted on making a vain effort to extract some heat for her guest from the single gas-jet, by attaching to it an extremely small gas-stove.

For this room, which was within walking distance of the candy factory, Mrs. Hallett paid \$1.75 a week. Her breakfast of coffee and rolls in a bakery near by cost her 10 cents daily. She apportioned 15 or 25 cents each for her luncheon or dinner at restaurants. In her hungriest and most extravagant moments she lunched for 30 cents. Her allowance for food had to be meagre, because, as she had no laundry facilities, she was obliged to have her washing done outside. Sometimes she contrived to save a dollar a week toward buying clothing. But this meant living less tidily by having less washing done, or going hungrier. During the last year her expense for clothing had been a little more than \$23: summer hat, \$1; winter hat, \$1.98; best hat, \$2; shoes (2 pairs at \$2.98, 2 pairs rubbers), \$7.16; wrap (long coat), \$2.98; skirt (a best black brilliantine, worn two years), at \$5.50, \$2.75; underskirt (black sateen), 98 cents; shirtwaist (black cotton, worn every day in the year), 98 cents; black tights, 98 cents; 2 union suits at \$1.25 (one every other year), \$1.25; 6 pairs stockings at 25 cents, \$1.50; total, \$23.56.

She said with deprecation that she sometimes went to the theatre with some young girl friends, paying 25 cents for a seat, "because I like a good time now and then."

These trade fortunes represent as clearly as possible the usual industrial experience of the women workers in unskilled factory labor who gave accounts of their income and outlay in their work away from home in New York.

II

The chronicles printed below, taken from establishments of different kinds and grades, express as clearly as possible the several features most common to the trade fortunes the workers described—uncertain and seasonal employment, small exploitations, monotony in occupation, and fatigue from speeding.

Because of uncertain and seasonal employment, machine operatives in the New York sewing industries frequently change from one trade to another. This had been the experience of Yeddie Bruker, a young Hungarian white-goods worker living in the Bronx.

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The tenements of the Bronx appear as crowded as those of the longer-settled neighborhoods of Manhattan, the lower East Side, Harlem, Chelsea, and the cross streets off the Bowery, where so many self-supporting factory workers live. These newer-built lodgings, too, have close, stifling halls, and inner courts hung thick with washing. Here, too, you see, through the windows, flower makers and human hair workers at their tasks; and in the entries, hung with Hungarian and German signs, the children sit crowded among large women with many puffs of hair and a striking preference for frail light pink and blue princess dresses. These blocks of Rumanian and Hungarian tenement districts, their fire-escapes hung with feather beds and old carpets, and looking like great overflowing waste-baskets, are scattered in among little bluff ledges, scraggy with walnut brush, some great rocks still unblasted, and several patches of Indian corn in sloping hillside empty lots—small, strange heights of old New York country, still unsubmerged by the wide tide of Slav and Austrian immigration.

In this curious and bizarre neighborhood, Yeddie Bruker and her sister lived in a filthy tenement building, in one room of an extremely clean little flat owned by a family of their own nationality.

Yeddie was a spirited, handsome girl of twenty-one, though rather worn looking and white. At work for six years in New York, she had at first been a machine operative in a large pencil factory, where she fastened to the ends of the pencils the little corrugated tin bands to which erasers are attached. Then she had been a belt maker, then a stitcher on men's collars, and during the last four years a white-goods worker.

In the pencil factory of her first employment there was constant danger of catching her fingers in the machinery; the air was bad; the forewoman was harsh and nagging, and perpetually hurrying the workers. The jar of the wheels, the darkness, and the frequent illnesses of workers from breathing the particles of the pencil-wood shavings and the lead dust flying in the air all frightened and preyed upon her. She earned only \$4 a week for nine and one-half hours' work a day, and was exhausting herself when she left the place, hastened by the accident of a girl near her, who sustained hideous injuries from catching her hair in the machinery.

In the collar factory she again earned \$4 a week, stitching between five and six dozen collars a day. The stitch on men's collars is extremely small, almost invisible. It strained her eyes so painfully that she was obliged to change her occupation again.

As an operative on neckwear, and afterward on belts, she was thrown out of work by the trade seasons. These still leave her idle, in her present occupation as a white-goods worker, for more than three months in every year.

In the remaining nine months, working with a one-needle machine on petticoats and wash dresses, in a small factory on the lower East Side, she has had employment for about four days in the week for three months, employment for all the working days in

the week for another three months, and employment with overtime three nights in a week and an occasional half day on Sunday, for between two and three months. Legal holidays and a few days of illness made up the year.

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In full weeks her wage is \$8. Her income for the year had been \$366, and she had been able to save nothing. She had paid \$208 for her board and lodging, at the rate of \$4 a week; a little more than \$100 for clothing; \$38 for carfare, necessitated by living in the Bronx; \$3 for a doctor; \$2.60 to a benefit association, which assures her \$3 a week in case of illness; \$5 for the theatre; and \$6 for Union dues.

Her work was very exhausting. Evenly spaced machine ruffling on petticoats is difficult, and she had a great deal of this work to do. She sewed with a one-needle machine, which carried, however, five cottons and was hard to thread. It may be said here that the number of needles does not necessarily determine the difficulty of working on sewing-machines; two-needle machines are sometimes harder to run than five or even twelve-needle machines, because they are more cheaply and clumsily constructed and the material is held less firmly by the metal guide under the needle-point. It was not her eyes, Yeddie said, that were tired by the stitching, but her shoulders and her back, from the jar of the machines. Every month she suffered cruelly, but, because she needed every cent she made, she never remained at home, when the factory was open.

One of the most trying aspects of machine-speeding, in the sewing trades, is the perpetual goading and insistence of the foremen and forewomen, frequently mentioned by other workers besides Yeddie. Two years ago, in a waist and dress factory where 400 operatives—more than 300 girls and about 20 men—were employed for the company by a well-known subcontractor, Jake Klein, a foreman asked Mr. Klein to beset some of the girls for a degree of speed he said he was unwilling to demand. The manager discharged him. He asked to speak to the girls before he went away. The manager refused his request. As Mr. Klein turned to the girls, his superior summoned the elevator man, who seized Klein's collar, overpowered him, and started to drag him over the floor toward the stairs. "Brothers and sisters," Klein called to the operatives, "will you sit by and see a fellow-workman used like this?" In one impulse of clear justice, every worker arose, walked out of the shop with Jake Klein, and stayed out till the company made overtures of peace. This adventure, widely related on the East Side, serves to show the latent fire, kindled by the accumulation of small overbearing oppressions, which smolders in many sewing shops.

The uncertainty of employment characterizing the sewing trades fell heavily on Sarah Silberman, a delicate little Austrian Jewish girl of seventeen, who finished and felled women's cloaks.

She had always lived in poverty. She had worked in a stocking factory in Austria when she was a little thing of nine, and had been self-supporting ever since she was fourteen, machine-sewing in Vienna and London and New York.



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She had been in New York for about a year, lodging, or rather sleeping at night, in the tenement kitchen of some distant cousins of hers, practically strangers. The kitchen opened on an air-shaft, and it was used, not only as a kitchen, but as a dining room and living-room. For the first four months after her arrival Sarah earned about \$5 a week, working from nine and one-half to ten hours a day as a finisher of boys' trousers. From this wage she paid \$3 a week for her kitchen sleeping space and breakfast and supper. Luncheon cost her 7 cents a day. She had been able to buy so very little clothing that she had kept no account of it. She did her own washing, and walked to work.

She had never had any education until she came to America, and she now attended a night school, in which she was keenly interested. She was living in this way when her factory closed.

She then searched desperately for employment for two weeks, finding it at last in a cloak factory^[20] where she was employed from half past seven in the morning until half past six or seven in the evening, with a respite of only a few minutes at noon for a hasty luncheon. Her wage was \$3 a week. Working her hardest, she could not keep the wolf from the door, and was obliged to go hungry at luncheon time or fail to pay the full rent for her place to sleep in the kitchen.

Sarah was very naturally unstrung and nervous in this hardness of circumstance and her terror of destitution. As she told her story, she sobbed and wrung her hands. In the next six months she had better occupation, however, in spasmodically busy shops, where the hours were shorter than in the cloak factory, and she managed to earn an average wage of \$6 a week. She was then more serene; she said she had "made out good."

During her six weeks of better pay at \$6 a week, however, which so few people would consider "making out good," she had suffered an especially mean exploitation.

She applied at an underwear factory which constantly advertises, in an East Side Jewish paper, for operatives. The management told her they would teach her to operate if she would work for them two weeks for nothing and would give them a dollar. She gave them the dollar; but on the first day in the place, as she received no instructions, and learned through another worker that after her two weeks of work for nothing were over she would not be employed, she came away, losing the dollar she had given to the firm.

Another worker who was distressed by the dull season, and had witnessed unjust impositions, was Katia Markelov, a young operative on corsets. She was a tiny, grave-looking girl of nineteen, very frail, with smooth black hair, a lovely refinement of manner, and a very sweet smile. Like many other operatives, she wore glasses. Katia was a good manager, and an industrious and clever student, a constant attendant at night school.



In the factory where she was employed she earned about \$10 a week as a week worker, a skilled worker making an entire corset, after it was cut and before it was trimmed. But she had only twelve full weeks' work in the year; for two and a half months she was entirely idle, and for the remaining six and a half months she worked from two to five days a week. Her income for the year had been about \$346.

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Katia worked with a one-needle machine in a small factory off lower Broadway. Before that she had been employed as a week worker in a Fifth Avenue corset factory, which may be called Madame Cora's. Shortly before Katia left this establishment, Madame Cora changed her basis of payment from week work to piece-work. The girls' speed increased. Some of the more rapid workers who had before made \$10 were able to make \$12. On discovering this, Madame Cora cut their wages, not by frankly returning to the old basis, but by suddenly beginning to charge the girls for thread and needles. She made them pay her 2 cents for every needle. Thread on a five-needle machine, sometimes with two eyes in each of the needles, stitches up very rapidly. The girls were frequently obliged to pay from a dollar and a half to two dollars a week for the thread sewed into Madame Cora's corsets, and for needles. They rebelled when Madame Cora refused to pay for these materials herself. From among the three hundred girls, thirty girls struck, went to Union headquarters, and asked to be organized. But Madame Cora simply filled their places with other girls who were willing to supply her with thread for her corsets, and refused to take them back. Katia did not respect Madame Cora's methods, and had left before the strike.

Katia spent \$2.50 a week for breakfast and dinner and for her share of a room with a congenial friend, another Russian girl, in Harlem. The room was close and opened on an air-shaft, but was quiet and rather pleasant. She paid from \$1.25 to \$1.50 for luncheons, and, out of the odd hundred dollars left from her income, had contrived, by doing her own washing and making her own waists, to buy all her clothing, and to spend \$5 for books and magazines, \$7 for grand opera, which she deeply loved, and \$30 for an outing. On account of her cleverness Katia was less at the mercy of unjust persons than some of the less skilful and younger girls.

Among these, Molly Davousta, another young machine operative, was struggling to make payments to an extortionate ticket seller, who had swindled her in the purchase of a steamboat ticket.

When Molly was thirteen, her mother and father, who had five younger children, had sent her abroad out of Russia, with the remarkable intention of having her prepare and provide a home for all of them in some other country.

Like Dick Whittington, the little girl went to London, though to seek, not only her own fortune, but that of seven other people. After she had been in London for four years, her father died. She and her next younger sister, Bertha, working in Russia, became the sole support of the family; and now, learning that wages were better in America, Molly, like Whittington, turned again and came to New York.

Here she found work on men's coats, at a wage fluctuating from \$5 to \$9 a week. She lived in part of a tenement room for a rent of \$3 a month. For supper and Saturday meals she paid \$1.50 a week. Other food she bought from groceries and push carts, at a cost of about \$2 a week. As she did her own washing, and walked to work, she had



no other fixed expenses, except for shoes. Once in every two months these wore to pieces and she was forced to buy new ones; and, till she had saved enough to pay for them, she went without her push cart luncheon and breakfast.

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In this way she lived in New York for a year, during which time she managed to send \$90 home, for the others.

Her sister Bertha, next younger than herself, had then come to New York, and obtained work at sewing for a little less than \$6 a week. Between them, in the following six months, the two girls managed to buy a passage ticket from Russia to New York for \$42, and to send home \$30. This, with the passage ticket and two other tickets, which they purchased on the instalment plan from a dealer, at a profit to him of \$20, brought all the rest of the family into New York harbor—the girls' mother, their three younger sisters of fifteen, fourteen, and eight, and a little brother of seven.

Five months afterward Molly and Bertha were still making payments for these extortionate tickets.

In New York, the sister of fifteen found employment in running ribbons into corset covers, earning from \$1 to \$1.50 a week. The fourteen-year-old girl was learning operating on waists. The family of seven lived in two rooms, paying for them \$13.50 a month; their food cost \$9 or \$10 a week; shoes came to at least \$1 a week; the girls made most of their own clothing, and for this purpose they were paying \$1 a month for a sewing-machine; and they gave \$1 a month for the little brother's Hebrew schooling.

Molly was seen in the course of a coat makers' strike. She wept because the family's rent was due and she had no means of paying it. She said she suffered from headache and from backache. Every month she lost a day's work through illness.

She was only nineteen years old. By working every hour she could make a fair wage, but, owing to the uncertain and spasmodic nature of the work, she was unable to depend upon earning enough to maintain even a fair standard of living.

A point that should be accentuated in Molly Davousta's account is the price of shoes. No one item of expense among working girls is more suggestive. The cost of shoes is unescapable. A girl may make over an old hat with a bit of ribbon or a flower, or make a new dress from a dollar's worth of material, but for an ill-fitting, clumsy pair of shoes she must pay at least \$2; and no sooner has she bought them than she must begin to skimp because in a month or six weeks she will need another pair. The hour or two hours' walk each day through streets thickly spread, oftener than not, with a slimy, miry dampness literally dissolves these shoes. Long after up-town streets are dry and clean, those of the congested quarters display the muddy travesty of snow in the city. The stockings inside these cheap shoes, with their worn linings, wear out even more quickly than the shoes. It is practically impossible to mend stockings besides walking to work, making one's waists, and doing one's washing.

All Molly Davousta's cares, her anxiety about shoes and her foreboding concerning seasonal work, were increased by her position of family responsibility.



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In the same way, in the course of her seasonal work, family responsibility pressed on Rita Karpovna. She was a girl of nineteen, who had come to America a few years before with her older brother, Nikolai. Together they were to earn their own living and make enough money to bring over their widowed mother, a little brother, and a sister a year or two younger than Rita.

Soon after she arrived, she found employment in finishing men's vests, at \$6 or \$7 a week, for ten hours' work a day. Living and saving with her brother, she contrived to send home \$4 a month. Between them, Nikolai and Rita brought over their mother and the little brother. But, very soon after they were all settled together, their mother died. They were obliged to put the little brother into an institution. Then Nikolai fell from a scaffolding and incapacitated himself, so that, after his partial recovery, his wage was sufficient only for his own support, near his work.

Rita now lived alone, spending \$3.50 a month for a sleeping place in a tenement, and for suppers \$1.25 a week. Her luncheons and breakfasts, picked up anywhere at groceries or push carts, amounted, when she was working, to about 12 cents a day. At other times she often went without both meals. For in the last year her average wage had been reduced to \$4.33 a week by over four months and a half of almost complete idleness. Through nine weeks of this time she had an occasional day of work, and for nine weeks none at all.

When she was working, she paid 60 cents a week carfare, 25 cents a month to the Union, of which she was an enthusiastic member, and 10 cents a month to a "Woman's Self-Education Society." The Union and this club meant more to Rita than the breakfasts and luncheons she dispensed with, and more, apparently, than dress, for which she had spent only \$20 in a year and a half.

Some months afterward, Mrs. Clark received word that Rita had solved many of her difficulties by a happy marriage, and could hope that many of her domestic anxieties were relieved.

The chief of these, worry over the situation of her younger sister, still in Russia, had been enhanced by her observations of the unhappiness of a friend, another girl, working in the same shop—a tragedy told here because of its very serious bearing on the question of seasonal work. Rita's younger sister was in somewhat the same position as this girl, alone, without physical strength for her work, and, indeed, so delicate that it was doubtful whether her admission to the United States could be secured, even if Rita could possibly save enough for her passage money. The friend in the shop, hard pressed by the dull season, had at last become the mistress of a man who supported her until the time of the birth of their child, when he left her resourceless. Slack and dull seasons in factory work must, of course, expose the women dependent on their wage-earning powers, most of them young and many of them with great beauty, to the greatest dangers and temptations.[21] Especially at the mercy of the seasons were

some of the fur sewers, and the dressmakers, and milliners working, not independently, but in factories and workshops.

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Helena Hardman, an Austrian girl, a fur sewer, had been employed for only twenty weeks in the year. She sewed by hand on fur garments in a Twelfth Street shop, for \$7 a week, working nine hours a day, with a Saturday half-holiday. The air and odors in the fur shop were very disagreeable, but had not affected her health.

At the end of the twenty weeks she had been laid off, and had looked unsuccessfully for work for seventeen weeks, before she found employment as an operative in an apron factory. Here, however, in this unaccustomed industry, by working as an operative nine hours a day for five days a week, and six hours on Saturday, she could earn only \$3 or \$4.

She paid \$4 a week for board and a tenement room shared with another girl. She had been obliged to go in debt to her landlady for part of her long idle time, after her savings had been exhausted.

During this time she had been unable to buy any clothing, though her expense for this before had been slender: a suit, \$18; a hat, \$3; shoes, \$3; waists, \$3; and underwear, \$2.50. She looked very well, however, in spite of the struggle and low wages necessitated by learning a secondary trade.

The dull season is tided over in various ways. A few fortunate girls go home and live without expense. Many live partly at the expense of philanthropic persons, in subsidized homes. In these ways they save a little money for the dull time, and also store more energy from their more comfortable living.

On the horizon of the milliner the dull season looms black. All the world wants a new hat, gets it, and thinks no more of hats or the makers of hats. On this account a fast and feverish making and trimming of hats, an exhausting drain of the energy of milliners for a few weeks, is followed by weeks of no demand upon their skill.

Girl after girl told the investigator that the busy season more than wore her out, but that the worry and lower standard of living of the dull season were worse. The hardship is the greater because the skilled milliner has had to spend time and money for her training.

Many of these girls try to find supplementary work, as waitresses in summer hotels, or in some other trade. A great difficulty here is the overlapping of seasons. The summer hotel waitress is needed until September, at least, but the milliner must begin work in August. To obtain employment in a non-seasonal industry, it is often necessary to lie. In each new occupation it is necessary to accept a beginner's wage.

Regina Siegerson had come alone, at the age of fifteen, from Russia to New York, where she had been for seven years. The first winter was cruel. She supported herself on \$3 a week. She had been forced to live in the most miserable of tenements with



“ignorant” people. She had subsisted mainly by eating bananas, and had worn a spring jacket through the cold winter. It seemed, however, that no hardship had ever prevented

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her from attending evening school, where her persistence had taken her to the fourth year of high school. She was thinking of college at the time of the interview. Regina was a Russian revolutionist, and keenly thirsting for knowledge. She talked eagerly to the inquirer about Victor Hugo, Gorky, Tolstoy, and Bernard Shaw. With no less interest she spoke of the trade fortunes of milliners in New York, and her own last year's experience. She had worked through May, June, and July as a trimmer, making \$11 in a week of nine hours a day, with Saturday closing at five. During August and September and the first weeks in October she had only six weeks' work, as a maker in a ready-to-wear hat factory, situated on the lower West Side over a stable, where she made \$10 in a week of nine hours a day.

Regina and a girl friend had managed to furnish a two-room tenement apartment with very simple conveniences, and there they kept house. Rent was \$10.50 a month; gas for heating and cooking, \$1.80; and food for the two, about \$5 a week. As Regina did her own washing, the weekly expense for each was but \$3.67, less than many lodgers pay for very much less comfort.

The greatest pleasure the girls had in their little establishment was the opportunity it gave them for entertaining friends. Before, it had been impossible for them to see any one, except in other people's crowded living-rooms, or on the street.

Regina was engaged to a young apothecary student, whom she expected to marry in the spring. Like her, he was in New York without his family, and he took his meals at the two girls' little flat with them.

Regina's father, who was living in Russia with a second wife, had sent her \$100 when she wrote him of her intended marriage. This, and about \$40 saved in the six weeks of earning \$10, were her reserve fund in the long dull season.

The inquirer saw Regina again a few days before Thanksgiving. She was still out of work, but was learning at home to do some mechanical china decorating for the Christmas trade.

Among the milliners, several girls were studying to acquire, not only a training in a secondary trade, but the better general education which Frances Ashton, a young American girl of twenty, had obtained through better fortunes.

Her father, a professional man, had been comfortably situated. Without anticipating the necessity of supporting herself, she had studied millinery at Pratt Institute for half a year. Then, because it was rather a lark, she had gone to work in New York. Most of her wage was spent for board and recreation, her father sending her an allowance for clothes.



After a year, his sudden death made it necessary for her to live more economically, as her inheritance was not large. The expenses of an attack of typhoid one summer, and of an operation the next year, entirely consumed it.

In the year she described, she had been a copyist in one of the most exclusive shops on Fifth Avenue. The woman in charge was exceptionally considerate, keeping the girls as long as possible. She used to weep when she was obliged to dismiss them, for she realized the suffering and the temptation of the long idle period.

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However, the season had lasted only three or three and a half months at a time, from February 1 to May 15, and from August 18 to December 4. During the six busy weeks in the spring and the autumn, while the orders were piling up, work was carried on with feverish intensity. The working day lasted from eight-thirty until six, with an hour at noon for luncheon. Many employees, however, stayed until nine o'clock, receiving \$1, besides 30 cents supper money, for overtime. But by six o'clock Frances was so exhausted that she could do no more, and she always went home at that hour.

In addition to her thirty weeks in the Fifth Avenue order establishment, Frances had two weeks' work in a wholesale house, where the season began earlier; so that she had been employed for thirty-two weeks in the year, and idle for twenty. She was a piece-worker and she had earned from \$8 to \$14 a week.

The twenty idle weeks had been filled with continuous futile attempts to find anything to do. Application at department stores had been ineffectual, so had answered advertisements. She said she had lost all scruples about lying, because, the moment it was known that she wanted a place during the dull season only, she had no chance at all.

Frances lived in one of the pleasantest and most expensive subsidized homes for working girls, paying for board, and a large, delightful room shared with two other girls, \$4.50 a week. Although she walked sometimes from work, carfare usually amounted to 50 cents a week. Laundering two sets of underwear and one white waist a week cost 60 cents. Thus, for a reasonable degree of cleanliness and comfort, partly provided by philanthropic persons, she spent \$5.60 a week aside from the cost of clothing.

She dressed plainly, though everything she had was of nice quality. She said she could spend nothing for pleasure, because of her constant foreboding of the dull season, and the necessity of always saving for her apparently inevitable weeks of idleness. She was, at the time she gave her account, extremely anxious because she did not know how she was to pay another week's board.

Yet she had excellent training and skill, the advantage of living comfortably and being well nourished, and the advantage of a considerate employer, who did as well as she could for her workers, under the circumstances.

Something, then, must be said about these circumstances—this widespread precariousness in work, against which no amount of thrift or industriousness or foresight can adequately provide. Where industry acts the part of the grasshopper in the fable, it is clearly quite hopeless for workers to attempt to attain the history of the ant. Among the factory workers, the waist makers' admirable efforts for juster wages were, as far as yearly income was concerned, largely ineffectual, on account of this obstacle of slack and dull seasons, whose occurrence employers are as powerless as employees to forestall.



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These chronicles, showing the effect of seasonal work on the fortunes of some self-supporting operatives and hand workers in New York factories and workshops, concern only one corner of American industry, in which, as every observer must realize, there are many other enormous fields of seasonal work. These histories are nevertheless clear and authentic instances of a strange and widespread social waste. Neither trade organization nor State legislation for shorter hours is primarily directed toward a more general regular and foresighted distribution of work among all seasonal trades and all seasonal workers. Until some focussed, specific attempt is made to secure such a distribution, it seems impossible but that extreme seasonal want, from seasonal idleness, will be combined with exhausting seasonal work from overtime or exhausting seasonal work in speeding, in a manner apparently arranged by fortune to devastate human energy in the least intelligent manner possible.

Further effects of speeding and of monotony in this labor were described by other self-supporting factory workers whose chronicles, being also concerned with industry in mechanical establishments, will be placed next.

[Illustration: Photograph by Lewis Hine

“Inquiring, tireless, seeking what is yet unfound;—
But where is what I started for so long ago,
And why is it still unfound?”

—WALT WHITMAN.]

FOOTNOTES:

[Footnote 19: See Report on Condition of Woman and Child Wage-earners in the United States. Volume II, Men’s Ready-made Clothing, pages 141-157; 160-165; 384-395.]

[Footnote 20: The income and outlay of other cloak makers will be separately presented.]

[Footnote 21: In the first report of the New York Probation Association the statement is made that out of 300 girls committed by the courts during the year to the charge of Waverley House, 72 had been engaged in factory work. Of these many had been at one time or other employed as operatives. On questioning the probation worker, Miss Stella Miner, who had lived with them and knew their stories most fully, it was learned, however, that almost every one of these girls had gone astray while they were little children, had been remanded by courts to the House of the Good Shepherd, where they had learned machine operating, and on going out of its protection to factories had drifted back again to their old ways of life. How far their early habit and experience had



dragged these young girls in its undertow cannot of course, be known. The truth remains that factory work, when it is seasonal, must increase temptation by its economic pressure.]

CHAPTER IV

THE INCOME AND OUTLAY OF SOME NEW YORK FACTORY-WORKERS

[Monotony and Fatigue in Speeding]

One of the strangest effects of the introduction of machinery into industry is that instead of liberating the human powers and initiative of workers from mechanical drudgery, it has often tended to devitalize and warp these forces to the functions of machines.[22]

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This stupefying and wearying effect of machine-work from concentration and intensity of application and attention was frequently mentioned by the factory workers in their accounts.

Tina Levin, a young girl eighteen years old, had worked two years in an underwear factory in New York; and before her arrival in America, six years in an underwear factory in Russia. She had come from abroad to her fiance, Ivan Levin, whom she had recently married. She still worked in the underwear factory, although she was not entirely self-supporting. She and her young husband met the League's Inquirer at a Jewish Girls' Self-Education Club, where they gave between them the account of Tina's self-supporting years.

Before her marriage, Tina had worked at a machine ten hours a day for an underwear manufacturer on Canal Street. In the height of the season the shop often worked overtime until 8 o'clock, two or three nights a week. Besides this, many of the girls took hand work home, where they sewed till eleven or twelve o'clock. But Tina was so exhausted by her long day that she never did this. Working as hard as possible, she earned \$7, and sometimes \$8 a week, during the six busy months.

For part of this time she lived a full hour-and-a-half's car ride from the factory. So that with dressing, and eating two meals at her lodging, when she was at the machine twelve hours a day, she had only about six hours sleep.

At least half the year was so dull that she could earn only \$3 or \$3.50 a week; and she was so worn out that every month she was utterly unable to work for three or four days. This loss had reduced her income by \$32. She had been obliged to pay \$9 for medicine. Her income for the year had been about \$262. For board and lodging in a tenement she had paid \$3.50 a week; for carfare 60 cents a week; and she had sent \$5 home in the year; and given \$9 for medicine; \$36 for the dentist; and \$1 a month to the Jewish Girls' Self-Education Society. She had less than \$10 left for dress for the year. But her lover had helped her with many presents; and had given her many good times and pleasures, besides those obtainable at the Jewish Girls' Self-Education Society.

Tina had the advantage of a knowledge of English. This lack of opportunity to learn the tongue of the country in which she lived was poignantly regretted by another machine operative, Fanny Leysher, a white-goods operative of twenty-one who had been in America four years. She lived in one room of a tenement off the Bowery, where she boarded and lodged for \$4 a week. She worked in a factory within walking distance, earning \$7 a week in the busy season.

Fanny was a pretty, fair girl, with a graceful presence, a wistful smile, and the charm peculiar to blond Russians with long gray eyes. She looked, however, painfully frail and white. In the factory she had worked for four years, first at time work, then at piece-work. She could earn \$7 a week by stitching up and down the fronts and stitching on



the belts of 108 corset covers—9 dozen a day. This was the most she could possibly complete. The unremitting speeding and close attention this amount of stitching required left her too exhausted at six o'clock to be able to attend night school, or to learn English. She suffered greatly from headache and from backache.

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Fanny worked in this way for forty-one weeks of the year. For six weeks she worked three days in the week. For two weeks the factory closed. For three weeks she had been ill.

She was a girl of quick nervous intelligence, eager for life and with a nice sense of quality. When she talked of her inability to go to night school because of her frailness and weariness, tears flooded her eyes. Her room was very nicely kept, and she had on a shelf a novel of Sudermann's and a little book of Rosenthal's sweat shop verses. Everything she wore was put on carefully and with good taste. Her dress showed the quickest adaptability, and in correctness, and simplicity of line and color might have belonged to a college freshman "with every advantage." It was a little trim delft-blue linen frock with a white pique collar and a loose blue tie. She had tan stockings and low russet shoes. Fanny belonged to the Working-man's Circle. She said she went as often as she could possibly afford it to the theatre. And when she was asked what plays she liked, she replied with an unforgettable keenness and eagerness, "Oh, I want nothing but the best. Only what will tell me about real life."

She said she had spent too much money for dress last year; but she had been able to buy clothing of a quality which she thought would last her for a long time. The little plain gold watch in her list she had partly needed and partly had been unable to resist. One of the three summer dresses costing \$14 was her blue linen dress, for which she had given \$7. She expected to wear it for two summers with alterations.

Last year's suit cleaned \$ 3
Shoes 11
Hat 10
Dresses (1 winter, \$10; 3 summer, \$14) 24
Coat 9
Every-day hat 4.50
Muslin (for white waists and corset covers made by herself) 5
Umbrella 2
Gloves 2
Pocket-book 1
Watch 11

\$82.50

Painful as it was in some ways to see Fanny Leysher, who liked "nothing but the best," pouring her life force into stitching 108 corset covers a day, she yet seemed less helpless than some still younger workers.



Minna Waldemar, a girl of sixteen, an operative in an umbrella factory, had been in the United States for six months. For five months of this time she had been stitching the seams and hems of umbrella covers for 35 cents a hundred. Her usual output was about 200 a day. By working very fast, she could in a full day make 300, but when she did, it left her thumb very sore.

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Minna paid \$3 a month for sleeping space in a tenement; \$1.75 a week for suppers; and for breakfasts and luncheons, from 15 to 30 cents a day.

She wore a black sateen waist, which had cost \$1. A suit had cost \$8; a hat, \$3; and a pair of shoes, \$2. Working her hardest and fastest, she had not received enough money to pay for even these meagre belongings, and was obliged to have assistance from her brother, her only relative in New York.

Every line of Minna's little figure looked overworked. This was true, too, of Sadie, a little underfed, grayish Austrian girl of seventeen, who had come to New York as the advance guard of her family.

In the last year since her arrival, two and one-half years before, she had first been employed for seven months in a neckwear factory, where she earned from \$2.50 a week to \$6 and \$7 on piece-work. In two very busy weeks she had earned \$9 a week.

After the slack season, the factory closed. Hunting desperately for a way to make money, Sadie found employment as an operative on children's dresses, running a foot-power machine in a tenement work-room for \$2.50 a week. In the second week her wage was advanced to \$3 and continued at this for the next three or four months.

After this, the demand for neckwear had increased again. She had returned to the neckwear factory, and was earning \$6 a week. Her busiest days were eleven hours long, and her others nine.

She spent nothing for pleasure. She could send nothing to her family. In the course of two years and a half she had bought one hat for \$3 and a suit for \$12. She went to night school, but was generally so weary that she could learn really nothing. She did her own washing, and for \$3 a month she rented a sleeping space in the kitchen of a squalid, crowded East Side tenement. It was the living-room of her poverty-stricken landlady's family; and she had to wait until they all left it, sometimes late at night, before she dragged her bed out of an obscure corner and flung it on the floor for her long-desired sleep. Supper with the landlady cost her 20 cents a night. Sadie's breakfasts and dinners depended absolutely upon her income and her other expenses. As in the weeks when she was earning \$3 she had only 90 cents for fourteen meals a week and her clothing, and in the weeks when she earned \$2.50, only 40 cents a week for fourteen meals and her clothing, her depleted health is easily understood.

Sadie's custom of paying rent and yet dragging a pallet out of the corner and finding or waiting for a place to throw it in, like a little vagrant, is very characteristic of East Side tenements. She paid \$36 a year for lodging, and yet can scarcely be said to have received for this sum any definite space at all under a roof-tree, honestly provided for her as her own, but simply the chance of getting such a place when she could.

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If she had attempted to find a better and less expensive place for sleeping, in a less congested quarter of the city, she would have been obliged to pay, besides her rent, a sum at least half as large, for transportation. In the same way, for this really very large sum of \$15 or \$20 paid yearly to the city railroads, she would not have received in their cars any definite place at all, honestly provided for her as her own, but simply a chance of getting a foothold when she could on a cross-town car or the Bronx elevated during the rush hours. The yearly sums paid to the car companies by factory workers too exhausted to walk home are very striking in these budgets. Tina Levin had paid nearly \$30—more than she had spent for her clothing during the year. This expense of carfare and the wretched conditions in transportation which most of the car companies supply to the workers compelled to use their lines in rush hours is a difficulty scarcely less than that of New York rents and congestion, and inseparably connected with them.

Anna Flodin, a girl of eighteen, forced by illness to leave the congested quarters of New York for the Bronx, did not attempt to return to work until she was able to live again within walking distance of the factory.

Anna Flodin was a pale, quiet girl with smooth black hair and a serious, almost poignant expression. All her life had been one of poverty, a sheer struggle to keep the wolf from the door. She spoke no English, though she could understand a little.

She stitched regularly in the busy season 1568 yards of machine sewing daily in fastening belts to cheap corset covers. The forewoman gave her in the course of the day 28 bundles, each containing 28 corset covers with the belts basted to the waist lines and the loose ends of the belts basted ready to finish.

The instant Anna failed to complete this amount, or seemed to drop behind in the course of the day, the forewoman blamed her, and threatened to reduce her wage.

Anna worked in this manner ten hours a day, for \$6 a week. If she were five minutes late, she was docked for half an hour. She was docked for every needle she broke in the rapid pace she was obliged to keep, and in the first year she was obliged to pay out of her wage, which had then been only \$5 a week, for all the many hundred yards of thread she stitched into the white-goods company's output.

In order to complete 784 yards of belting a day—over 1600 yards of stitching, for she fastened both edges of the belt—she was forced, of course, to work as fast as she could feed and guide belts under the needle. She had strong eyes. But her back ached from the stooping to guide the material, and she suffered cruelly from pain in her shoulders.

There had been seventeen weeks of this work. Then there had been ten weeks of two or three days' work a week, when it seemed impossible to earn enough to live on.

Then, ten weeks when the factory closed. Then she had an illness lasting over two months, which began a few weeks after the factory closed.



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She said the doctor had told her that her illness was consumption and that he had cured it. It must have been, of course, not consumption or not arrested in that space of time. But, during it, she had paid him \$28.50 and given \$22.50 for her board and lodging, with an uncle in the Bronx, and for milk and eggs.

Almost as soon as she was declared able to return to stitching seven hundred belts a day, she hurried back to work. But within a few days the girls struck against the company's practice of making them buy thread, and were out for five weeks. At the end of this time they won their point.

Altogether her income for the year had been about \$150; and the severity and amount of labor she had given in earning it had left her cruelly spent.

She could not possibly live on this amount, as board and lodging alone had cost her \$3 a week—\$126 for the year. She had been obliged to borrow \$50 for her treatment in her illness; and she had not yet paid back this sum. Besides, her landlady had trusted her for some board bills she had not yet paid. For clothing she had spent \$26.59,—one dress for \$7; one hat for \$2; one jacket for \$6; two pairs of shoes at \$2; a pair for \$4; 36 pairs of stockings at 10 cents a pair for \$3.60; three waists at 98 cents each for \$2.94; and three suits of winter underwear for \$1.05. But she said winter underwear of this quality failed to keep her really warm.

In the evening she was too tired to leave the tenement for night school or for anything else. She did her own washing. In the course of a year her only pleasure had been a trip to the theatre for 35 cents.

Anna Flodin lived in a very poor tenement off the Bowery; and she told her experiences in her work, in spite of her muteness and struggle to express herself, with a sort of public spirit, and an almost ambassadorial dignity, which was inexpressibly touching.

That spirit—a fine freedom from personal self-consciousness and clear interest in testifying to the truth about women's work, and wages, and expenditure of strength—was evinced by countless girls. None, indeed, were pressed for any facts they did not wish to give, nor sought, unless they wished to help in the inquiry. But perhaps because it arose from such an immured depth of youth spent in foreboding poverty, the voice of Anna Flodin's chronicle was distinctively thrilling.

She told her experience in her work with great clearness, sitting in a little dark, clean room in a tenement, looking out on a filthy, ill-smelling inner court. The only brightening of her grave, young face throughout her story and our questions was her smile when she spoke of her one visit to the theatre, and another change of expression when she spoke of the other girls in the shop, in connection with the strike about thread. She was a member of the Union. In the shop there were girls not members who were willing to

continue to buy the management's thread indefinitely. Anna Flodin said quietly, with a look of quick scorn, that she would never have anything to do with such girls.

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Her mute life and mechanical days could make one understand in her with every sympathy all kinds of unreasoning prejudices and aversions.

She was very young; and it was partly her youth which deepened all the sense of dumb oppression and exhaustion her still presence and appealing eyes imparted. There is a great deal of talk about the danger and sadness of dissipation in youth. Too little is said of the fact that such an enclosing monotony and stark poverty of existence as Anna Flodin's is in youth sadness itself, as cruel to the pulses in its numb passage as the painful sense of wreck. All tragedies are not those of violence, but of depletion, too, and of starvation.

The drain and exhaustion experienced after a day of speeding at a machine was described by another worker, a girl of good health and lively mind, who afterwards found more attractive employment. She said that in her factory days she used to walk home, a distance of a mile, at nine o'clock, after her work was done, with a cousin. The cousin was another clever and spirited Russian girl of the same age. They had a hundred things to talk about, but as they left the factory, one would almost always say to the other: "Please do not speak to me on my way home. I am so tired I can scarcely answer." Instantly after supper they went to bed. In the morning they hurried through breakfast to be at the factory at eight, to go through the round of the day before.

"We only went from bed to work, and from work to bed again," one of the girls said, "and sometimes if we sat up a little while at home, we were so tired we could not speak to the rest, and we hardly knew what they were talking about. And still, although there was nothing for us but bed and machine, we could not earn enough to take care of ourselves through the slack season."

It is significant to compare with the account of these ill-paid operatives, exhausted from speeding, the chronicle of a skilled worker in a belt-factory, Theresa Luther, earning \$17 a week.

She was a young German-American Protestant woman of 27, born in New York. After her father died, she instantly helped her older brother shoulder the support of the family, as readily as though she had been a capable and adventurous boy. Strong, competent, and high-spirited, Miss Luther was a tall girl, fair-haired, with dark blue eyes, and a very beautiful direct glance.

Her father had been a wood-carver, an artist responsible for some of the most interesting work in his craft done in New York. Theresa, too, had dexterity with her hands. At the age of fifteen she entered a leather belt factory as a "trimmer." She was so quick that she earned almost immediately \$7 a week, a remarkable wage for a beginner of fifteen. Soon she was permitted to fold and pack. Not long afterwards, overhearing a forewoman lamenting the absence of machine operatives, she observed that she could run a sewing-machine at home. The forewoman, amused, placed her at

the machine. After that she had stitched belts for eleven years, though not in the same factory.



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Leather belt stitching is at once heavy and skilled work. The row of stitching is placed at the very edge of the belt. The slightest deviation from a straight line in the stitch spoils the entire piece of work. Running the needle-point through the leather is hard, and requires so much strength that the stitching through the doubled leather, necessitated by putting on the buckle, can be performed only by men. Theresa used to complete two gross of belts a day. She and other Americans in the factory were hard-pressed by some Russian girls, who could finish in a day four gross of very badly sewed belts with enormous stitches and loose threads. When the forewoman blamed Theresa for finishing less work than these girls, she freely expressed her contempt for their slovenly belts. She had a strong handicraft pride, and it was pleasant to see her instinctive scorn in quoting the forewoman's reply that "None of them (the badly made belts) ever came back"—as though their selling quality were the one test of their workmanship.

She had left the factory because of a complete breakdown from long hours of overwork. In one winter she had been at the machine seventy-one hours a week for ten weeks. After this severe experience, she had a long prostration and was depleted, exhausted, in a sort of physical torpor in which she was unable to do anything for months.

On her recovery she entered another factory, where the hours are not so excessive, the treatment is fair, and she has now an excellent position as forewoman at \$18 a week.

Theresa was a very earnest, clear-minded girl, with strong convictions concerning the bad effect of excessive hours for working women. At the time when the hearing on the New York State Labor Law was held at Albany last spring, she had been active in obtaining a petition, signed by a body of New York working girls and placed in the hands of Labor Commissioner Williams, to aid in securing a shortening of their present legal hours. Theresa had advanced beyond the drudgery of her trade to one of its better positions by extraordinary ability. Some of the skilled machine operatives, like some of the unskilled factory workers, were buoyed through the monotony of their present calling by the hope of leaving it for another occupation.

Alta Semenova, a Polish glove maker, twenty years old, worked nine hours a day at a machine for \$7 a week, and studied five evenings a week in a private evening school, for which she paid \$4 a month tuition.

She lived in a small hall bedroom with an admired girl friend. Each paid \$4.25 a month rent. Her food amounted to \$2.90 a week. Saturday evening she spent in doing her washing. She lived near enough to the factory to walk to work in five or ten minutes. She paid 25 cents a month for Union dues.

Alta was working for "counts" toward entering college or Cooper Union. In spare moments she read the modern Russians. During her year in New York she has mastered sufficient English to read Shakespeare in the original. In a few years she will

be a teacher. Alta was an eager Russian revolutionist. She had the student's passion, and her head was full of plans for a life of intellectual work.

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These chronicles of the income and outlay of some New York factory workers have described monotony and speeding in machine-work. The annals of the New York factory workers presented below describe monotony and speeding in hand-work.

Yetta Sigurdin, an Austrian girl nineteen years old, had been in New York three years, and in the last year and a half had been employed in a tobacco factory, a Union shop, as a skilled roller, on piece-work.

Her hours were eight a day. In a full day, Yetta could roll 2200 cigarettes. So her best wage was about \$12 a week. The average was, however, not more than \$8, as the factory had been idle four weeks, and very dull for five months, though busy for the remaining six.

Yetta looked very robust and happy. She seemed comfortable in her work and with her income, in spite of the extra labor of washing some of her own clothes and making her own waists. This, no doubt, was due largely to her sane and reasonable working hours, and partly to the fact that her work did not require the intensity of watching and application demanded by rapid machine-work. Indeed in some Union tobacco factories the rollers sometimes make up a sum among themselves to pay a reader by the hour to read aloud to them while they are at work.

Yetta paid \$3 a week for room, breakfast, and supper in a tenement. It was in an extremely poor neighborhood, but was fresh, pleasant, and well aired. Her dinners cost about \$1.50 a week. She did part of her washing and part was included in the charge for board. Her Union fee was 15 cents a week. The members of the Cigarette Makers' Union pay a weekly due of 5 cents for the support of a sanatorium in Colorado for tubercular tobacco workers. Yetta contributed to this sanatorium and gave a 10-cent monthly fee for Union agitation.

She estimated the cost of her clothing at about \$82 for the year. A winter suit cost \$14; a spring suit, \$15; a summer dress, \$5; and a winter dress, \$18. Six pairs of shoes cost \$15. She could not remember the items of the rest of her expenditure for dress. Part of it was for underwear and part of it for material for waists she had made herself.

In spite of the monotony and speed of Yetta's work, it did not exhaust her powers of living, because it neither required intense application nor was pursued beyond a reasonable number of hours.

Barbara Cotton, an American woman of thirty-two, a skilled hand-worker in an electrical goods factory, had been self-supporting for more than eighteen years, spending the last nine in her present employment.

In the electrical goods factory she separated layers of mica until it was split into the thinnest possible sheets. She was paid by the number she succeeded in splitting. The

constant repetition of an act of such accuracy for nine hours a day had strained her eyes excessively and made her extremely nervous.



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For six months of these nine-hour days, she earned \$8 or \$8.50 a week. During the other six months there was no work on Saturdays, and she earned about \$7 a week. She had a week's vacation with pay. She had lost during the year she described two months' work from illness, due to her run-down condition. This she said, however, was not caused by her work, but by combining with it, in an emergency, the care of the children of a sister, who had been sick.

Miss Cotton belonged to a benefit society and through her own illness she had received an allowance of \$5 a week.

Her income for the year had been about \$367, an average of \$7.06 a week.

Miss Cotton had tried living in boarding-houses and furnished rooms, and although the expense was about the same, the places were much less attractive in every way than the hotel for working girls where she was staying at the time of the interview.

For half of a room a little larger than an ordinary hall bedroom and for breakfasts and dinners, she paid \$4.50 a week. Luncheons in addition cost her \$1 a week. As she was within walking distance of work, she had no other expense but 35 cents for part of her washing. The rest she did herself.

She bought very little clothing, as out of the \$1.15 a week she had left after paying every necessary expense, she generously helped to support a sick sister and niece. After eighteen years of hard, steady work—nine years of it skilled work—she had saved nothing except in the form of benefit fees, and she had no prospect of saving.

Although she was nervously worn, and her eyesight was strained, she was less exhausted by her industrial experience than Katherine Ryan, an Irish worker of forty-five, who had been cutting and sewing trimmings for six years in an applique factory.

Eight and a quarter hours of this work a day exhausted her. She received \$7 a week. Her eyes were fast failing her from the close watch she had to keep on her scissors to guard against cutting too far.

She often went to bed at eight or half past eight o'clock, worn out by one day's task and eager to be fresh for the next, for she was hard pressed by the competition of young eyes and quick fingers.

Newer workers were given finer and more profitable work to do. In spite of her faithfulness, and straining for speed, she was laid off two months earlier in the last season than in any previous year, and newer helpers were retained. She thought the forewoman was prejudiced against her, and naturally could not understand the truth that from the standpoint of modern industry she was aged at forty-five.



She had been paying \$3 a week for board in a philanthropic home, and there she was permitted to stay and to pay for her board and lodging when she had no money by helping with the housework. Miss Ryan, however, had exhausted herself less rapidly than Elena and Gerda Nakov, two young Polish women of thirty-three and twenty-nine, skilled hand-workers on children's dresses.



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Elena had come from South Russia to seek her fortunes when she was sixteen years old. Her mother and father were dead. She had been educated by an uncle, with whom her younger sister, Gerda, remained.

According to the testimony of Elena's brother-in-law, the kind-hearted husband of a married sister living in New York, and also according to the testimony of Gerda, Elena at sixteen was a very beautiful girl. She was small, but very strong and well knit, with a fresh, glowing color, deep gray eyes, and heavy reddish gold hair, growing low upon her forehead in a widow's peak.

Elena first found work as a cigarette roller, earning \$4 a week. Here she was subjected to constant insolence and scurrilous language from the foreman and the men working with her. Her eyes turned black with contempt when she spoke of this offence—"Oh" she exclaimed, "I thought, 'I am poor, but I will never in my life be so poor as to stand things like that.'"

She left the tobacco factory and found employment as a neckwear worker. Here, too, she earned \$4, but the season grew dull, and she entered a small factory, where she worked on children's dresses, embroidering, buttonholing, faggoting, and feather-stitching. In this craft she proved to have such deftness, nicety of touch, and speed that she could do in an hour twice as much as most of the other girls and women in the factory.

She sewed from eight to six, with half an hour for lunch. She always took work home and sometimes she sewed for half of Sunday, for living expenses consumed all of her \$4 a week. Her stomach had failed her in the intensity of her occupation and from the insufficient food she was able to purchase, and she needed all the extra money she could earn for doctor's bills and medicine.

She was thin, spent, worn, and pale, when Gerda came over from Russia, four years after Elena had arrived. Gerda was a strong, attractive girl, with good health, dark curling hair, and a lovely color.

Entering the same factory with Elena, she soon became almost as able as her sister in fine sewing, and almost as ill. She earned \$3 a week.

The factory was owned by a young German widow, Mrs. Mendell, an extremely attractive, pretty, and skilful person, appearing in her office an agreeable and well-educated young woman, and able to produce the most engaging little dresses, caps, and undermuslins for children, at a high profit, by paying extremely small wages to skilled immigrant seamstresses. In her workroom, Mrs. Mendell alternately terrorized and flattered the girls. She speeded them constantly. Unless they had done as much work as she wished to accomplish through the day, she refused to speak to them. She made the younger girls put on her boots, and dress her when she changed her office



frock for the clothes in which she motored home at night. And in the morning she punished girls who had not finished as much work as she wished over night by giving them the worst paid and hardest sewing in the factory.

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One night she sent Elena and Gerda home with two great bundles of infants' bands—shoulder-straps and waistbands—to be made ready to be fastened to long skirts the next morning. They were all to be feather-stitched around the shoulder-bands and upper edges of the waist-bands, three buttons sewed on, and three buttonholes made in each. This was to be done for 2-1/2 cents a piece—a quarter a dozen.

In the morning after she had completed this work, Elena felt so nervous and ill when she went to the factory, that as she handed Mrs. Mendell back the bundle and received the quarter, she burst into tears. She told Mrs. Mendell she was sick. She could not live and work as she was working. Gerda's eyes were always strained. Their wages must be raised.

Mrs. Mendell replied with calm and self-approbation, that she herself stayed in the factory all day, but she never complained in any such way. However, she raised Elena's wages 50 cents.

At this time the two girls lived in a tiny, inner room with one window, on an air-shaft in an East Side tenement. For this they paid \$8 a month. It was scarcely more than a closet, holding one chair, one table, and a bed; and so small that Elena and Gerda could scarcely squeeze in between their meagre furnishings. They did their own washing, cooked their own breakfasts on the landlady's stove, prepared a lunch they took with them to the factory, and paid 20 cents a night apiece for dinner. Almost all the money they had left, after their lodging and board and the barest necessities for clothing were paid for, went for medicines and doctors.

Their clothing was so poor that they were ashamed to go out on Sunday—when everybody else put on "best dresses"—and would sit in their room all day. However, in the evenings they sometimes went to see relatives in the Bronx, and on one of these occasions they had a piece of good fortune of the oddest character. On the elevated road on which they happened to be riding there was an accident—a collision. They were neither of them injured; but they saw the collision, and were summoned as witnesses for the road. They were obliged to spend several mornings away from making children's dresses, waiting to give their testimony in the criminal court, which they found highly pleasant and recreative. However, after all, the road settled with the prosecutors before the girls were ever called on for their testimony, and the case never came to trial. But the railroad gave Elena and Gerda for the time they had spent on its behalf a check for \$20.

At this they determined to move to better quarters. The factory, besides, had grown and moved into larger rooms farther up-town (though its workrooms had always been well lighted and ventilated), so that the girls were obliged to spend more than they could afford for carfare. With the \$20 they furnished their room in Harlem. They were in a wild, disreputable neighborhood, of which the girls remained quite independent.

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But the rooms were airy and attractive. Having now their own furnishings, they paid only \$8 a month for all this added space and comfort, so that they could continue to live in these accommodations, but only with severe effort and industry on Elena's part. For Gerda's optic nerve was now so affected by strain, and she suffered so from indigestion, faintness, and illness, that she was unable to go to the factory. She kept the house, doing some sewing at home.

Elena's wages during the next six years, by struggle after struggle with Mrs. Mendell, were raised to \$7 a week after her thirteen years of service. But she was nearly frantic with alarm over her failing health. She was thin and frail, and eating almost nothing from gastritis.

At last a woman physician she saw told her she must stop work or she would die. Her stomach was almost completely worn out. This doctor sent her to a hospital, and visited Gerda and sent her, too, to a hospital.

This was four years ago. But both the young women are so broken down that no efforts of public or private philanthropic medical care in the state and the city have been able to restore their health. The doctors in whose charge they have been say that these young women's strength is simply worn out from these years of overwork and strain and poor and scanty food, and that they can never again be really well.

They leave the hospitals or sanatoria for a few weeks of wage-earning, six, at the most, to return again ill and unable to do any work at all. Their life is now indeed a curious modern pilgrimage among the various forms of charitable cure and the great charitable institutions of the community which is entirely unable to return to them the strength they have lost in its industries.

It may be pointed out that the exhaustion of these two workers has involved a loss and expense not only to themselves, but to the factory management, which has been obliged to employ in Elena's place two other less skilful embroiderers, and to the taxpayers and the philanthropists of New York who support charity hospitals and vacation homes.

These chronicles express as clearly as possible, in the order followed, monotony and speeding in factory work among younger and older women, operatives and hand-workers.

While one of the strangest results of the introduction of machinery into modern industry is that instead of liberating the human powers and initiative of the workers, it has often tended to devitalize and warp these forces to the functions of machines, yet this result is so strange that it cannot seem inevitable. Speeding for long hours at machines, rather



than machine labor itself, appears most widely responsible for the fatigue described by the operatives whose trade histories have been narrated. Further, speeding and long hours were responsible for the most drastic experience of exhaustion related among all the factory workers encountered—the experience of Elena and Gerda Nikov, who were employed not at machines, but in handiwork so delicate it might with more accuracy be called a handicraft.



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The exhaustion of these workers was partly attributable to their custom of pursuing their trade not only in factory hours, but outside the factory, at home. Within the last year, the most widely constructive effort to abolish sweated home labor from the needle trades ever undertaken in this country has been initiated by the New York cloak makers, to whom we next turned for an account of their industrial fortunes.

FOOTNOTES:

[Footnote 22: These testimonies are cited from the brief for the Illinois Ten-Hour Law, prepared by Louis D. Brandeis and Josephine Goldmark.

Investigations into the Conditions of Health of the Swiss Factory Workers. Dr. Fridlion Schuler, Swiss Factory Inspector, and Dr. A. E. Burckhardt, Professor of Hygiene.

“Instead of becoming wearied by personal labor, as in earlier stages of industry, it is today the unremitting, tense concentration of watching the machine, the necessary rapidity of motion, that fatigues the worker.”

Dangerous Trades. Thomas Oliver, M.A., M.D., F.R.C.P. London. 1902.

“The introduction of steam has revolutionized industry.... While machinery has, in some senses, lightened the burden of human toil it has not diminished fatigue in man. While the machinery pursues its relentless course, and insensitive to fatigue, human beings are conscious, especially towards the end of the day, that the competition is unequal, for their muscles are becoming tired and their brains jaded. Present-day factory labor is too much a competition of sensitive human nerve and muscle against insensitive iron.”

Fourteenth International Congress of Hygiene and Demography, Berlin, September, 1907. *Fatigue Resulting from Occupation.* Dr. Emil Roth, Regierungsrat, Potsdam.

“With the progressive division of labor, work has become more and more mechanical. A definite share of overfatigue and its sequels, especially neurasthenia, must be ascribed to this monotony—to the absence of spontaneity or joy in work.”

Proceedings of the First International Convention on Industrial Diseases, Milan, 1906. *Imbecility and Criminality in Relation to Certain Forms of Labor.* Professor Crisafulli.

“When only one brain-centre works, it becomes overfatigued much more easily than if the functions were alternately performed by the various centres.

“Here, then, is another factor in overfatigue due to the *monotony* of work, interrupted only at long intervals.



“This monotony is the determining cause of local disturbances and endangers the entire organism.”]

CHAPTER V

THE CLOAK MAKERS' STRIKE AND THE PREFERENTIAL UNION SHOP

Forty million dollars are invested in New York in the making of women's cloaks, skirts, and suits. One hundred and eighty million dollars' worth of these garments are produced in New York in a year.[23]



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Between sixty and seventy thousand organized men and women in the city are employed in these industries. The Union members constitute ninety-five per cent of the workers engaged in the trade, and about ten thousand of these members are women. [24]

It seems at first strange to find that the multitudinous fields of the metropolitan needle trades,—industries traditionally occupied by sewing women,—are, in fact, far more heavily crowded with sewing men. There is, however, a division of labor, the men doing practically all the cutting, machine sewing, and pressing, and in many cases working at hand-finishing; the women practically never cutting, machine sewing, or pressing, and in all cases working at hand-finishing.

A general strike involving all these men and women in the cloak making trade was declared on the 8th of July, 1910. The industry had for years burdened both its men and women workers with certain grave difficulties—an unstandardized wage, the subcontracting system, competition with home work, and long seasonal hours.

The subcontracting system bore most severely on the women in the trade, as the greater proportion of the finishers were women, and before the strike nearly every finisher was employed by a subcontractor.

The wages paid to finishers in the same shop, whether they were girls or men, were the same. But as compared with cutters, basters, and operators the finishers both before and since the strike had always been paid relatively below their deserts.

Wages were lowered, not only by the unstandardized rates prevalent through the sub-subcontracting system, but also by the practice of sending hand-finishing out of the factories and shops to be done at home. When inquiry was made of numerous self-supporting girls employed as cloak finishers, most of them said that at the end of the working day they were too exhausted to carry any sewing home. But work had been carried away by various strong girls in the trade, and by old men, and by young men to their families.

Among the women cloak finishers, Rose Halowitch, a delicate little Russian girl of seventeen, a helper in a cloak factory, who gave her account to the Consumers' League, about two years and a half ago received a wage of from \$3.50 to \$6 a week. In busy weeks she would work from eight in the morning till eight at night, with only one stop of an hour for her insufficient noon lunch, for which she could afford to spend only 6 or 7 cents.

Among the home workers Rhetta Salmonsens, a Russian woman of forty, the mother of four children, used to finish at night the cloaks brought to her by her husband, who worked through the day as an operator in a cloak factory. Between them they would earn \$12 and \$15 in busy weeks. In these weeks there were some occasions when

Mrs. Salmonsens would do the housework till her husband came home late at night. After clearing away his supper and putting the children

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to bed, she would start felling seams at midnight; and in order to complete the cloaks he had brought before he returned to the shop in the morning, she would sew until she saw the white daylight coming in at the tenement window, and it was time for her to prepare breakfast again. With all this industry, as her husband had been ill and there had been three months of either slack work or idleness, the family had fallen in debt. Rent, food, and shoes alone had cost them \$400. This left less than \$100 a year for all the other clothing and expenses of six people in New York. Against such a standard of living as this, then, cloak finishers were obliged to compete as long as they attempted to underbid the hours and prices of home work.

Among the stronger girls who had taken work home, Ermengard Freiburg, a powerful young Galician woman of twenty-eight, who had been finishing cloaks ever since she was eleven, had earned \$1 in the first week and had advanced rapidly to \$3 a week. In the last years, however, she had not carried any work home. She had sewed on piece-work from eight in the morning to six at night with an hour for lunch and no night work or overtime. She had earned from \$20 to \$25 a week in the busy weeks when the better pieces of work were more plentiful; and in the slack weeks \$6 and \$7. Ermengard had no complaint whatever to make about her own trade fortunes. All her concern and conversation were for the numbers of women cloak makers who lacked her own wonderful strength. Successful without education, she was astonishingly destitute of the wearisome fallacy of complacent self-reference characteristic of many people of uncommon ability. During the past year she had twice been discharged for organizing the workers in cloak factories where she was employed. In the first establishment subcontracting had made conditions too hard for most of the women; and in the second, wages were too low for a decent livelihood for most of the workers.

These instances serve to express in the industry and lives of women cloak workers the subcontracting system, long seasonal hours, home work, and an unstandardized wage—the features under discussion in the cloak making trade in the spring of 1910.

The whole cloak making trade of New York presents, for an outside observer, the kaleidoscopic interest of a population not static. The cutter of one decade is the employer of another decade. In the general strike of the cloakmakers in 1896 nearly all the manufacturers were German. In the strike of last summer nearly all the manufacturers were Galician and Russian.

This aspect of the New York needle trades must be borne in mind in realizing those occurrences in the last strike which led to the present joint effort of both manufacturers and workers to standardize the wage scale, to regulate seasonal hours, to abolish the subcontracting system and home work, and to establish the preferential Union shop throughout the metropolitan industry.



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Dr. Henry Moskowitz, an effective non-partisan leader in achieving the settlement of the strike, was an eye-witness and student of all its crises, and the outline of its history below is mainly drawn from his chronicle and observation.

Between the cloak makers and the manufacturers of New York a contest waged in numerous strikes had continued for twenty-five years. The agreements reached at the close of these strikes had been only temporary, because the cloak makers were never able to maintain a Union strong enough to hold the points won at the close of the struggle. The cloak makers had always proved themselves heroic strikers, but feeble Unionists, lacking sustained power. Again and again, men and women who had been sincerely ready to risk starvation for the justice of their claims during the fight would in peace become indifferent, fail to attend Union meetings, fail to pay Union dues; and the organization, strong in the time of defeat through the members' zeal, would weaken through their negligence in the critical hour of an ill-established success.

The main contestants in this struggle had been the cloak makers on one side, and on the other the manufacturers belonging to the Cloak and Suit Manufacturers' Protective Association. The majority of the manufacturers in the association are men of standing in the trade, controlling large West Side establishments, and supplying fifty per cent of the New York output, though they represent only a small percentage of the cloak houses of New York. These cloak houses altogether number between thirteen and fourteen hundred, most of them on the East Side and the lower West Side, manufacturing cheap and medium-grade clothing. Such smaller houses had frequently broken the strikes of the last twenty-five years by temporary agreements in which they afterwards proved false to the workers. Many small dealers had become rich merchants through such strike harvests.

On this account the cloak makers naturally distrusted employers' agreements. On the other hand, in many instances in the settlement of former strikes, cloak makers had made with certain dealers secret terms which enabled them to undersell their competitors. For this reason the manufacturers naturally distrusted cloak makers' agreements. With this mutual suspicion, the strike of 1910 began in June in two houses, an East Side and a West Side house. From the first house the workers went out because of the subcontracting system, and from the second practically on account of lockout.

On the 3d of July, a mass meeting of 10,000 cloakmakers gathered in Madison Square Garden. It was decided that the question of a general strike should be put to the vote of the 10,000 Union members. Balloting continued at the three polls of the three Union offices for two succeeding days. Of these 10,000, all but about 600 voted in favor of the strike, and of these 600 the majority afterward declared that they, too, were in sympathy with the action.

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The wide prevalence of the difficulties which led to the decision of the 10,000 workers assembled at Madison Square Garden was evinced by the fact that within the next week an army of over 40,000 men and women in the New York garment trade joined the Cloak and Suit Makers' Union.

These crowds poured into the three Union offices, filled the building entries, the streets before them, reached sometimes around the block—great processions of Rumanians, Hungarians, Poles, Germans, Italians, Galicians, and Russians, the last two nationalities in the greatest numbers, men and women who had been driven out of Europe by military conscription, by persecution and pillage, literally by fire and sword, bearded patriarchs, nicely dressed young girls with copies of Sudermann and Gorky under their arms, shawled, wigged women with children clinging to their skirts, handsome young Jews who might have stood as models for clothiers' advertisements—cutters, pressers, operators, finishers, subcontractors, and sub-subcontractors; for these, too, struck with all the rest. In watching these sewing men and sewing women streaming through the Union office on Tenth Street—an office hastily improvised in an old dwelling-house in a large room, evidently formerly a bedroom, and still papered with a delicate design of white and blue stripes, and a border of garlands of rosebuds—it seemed to an onlooker that almost no economic procession could ever before have comprised elements so very catholic and various. Who could lead such a body? How could the position of their great opponents, from day to day, be made known to them? As a matter of fact, no one man can be said to have led the 60,000 New York cloak makers. In the absence of such control, the corps of more prominent Union officers and their attorney, Meyer London, and through these men the multitudes of the Union members, were virtually guided by an East Side Yiddish paper, the *Vorwaerts*.

In the meantime, while these multitudes were flocking into the Union early in July, the Cloak Manufacturers' Association, representing beforehand about seventy-five houses, had by the inclusion of many smaller firms extended its membership to twelve hundred establishments.[25]

Soon after the formation of the alliance, it became apparent to the smaller firms that the larger ones were not in any haste for settlement. The latter felt that they could beat their opponents by a waiting game; while the smaller firms, with their lesser capital, scarcely more able than their workers to exist through a prolonged beleaguering of the cloak makers, felt that the present stand of the larger manufacturers involved, not only beating the Unionists, but driving themselves, the weaker manufacturers, out of the industry.

One by one, they left the association, sought the Union headquarters, and settled with the cloak makers. The profit reaped by these firms starting to work induced others to meet the workers' demands. By the end of July and the first week in August, six hundred smaller firms, employing altogether 20,000 cloakmakers, had settled.[26] In

many instances the men and women marched back to their work with bands of music playing and with flying flags and banners.

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In July two attempts were made, on behalf of the cloak makers, by the State Board of Arbitration to induce the manufacturers to meet the Union members and to arbitrate with them. These attempts failed because the Union insisted on the question of the closed shop as essential. The manufacturers refused to arbitrate the question of the closed shop.

At this juncture a public-spirited retailer of Boston, Mr. Lincoln Filene, entered the controversy. Mr. Filene resolved that, as a large consumer, he and his class had no right to shirk their responsibility by passively acquiescing in sweat-shop conditions. As an intermediary between the wholesaler and the public, the retailer had an important part in the conflict, not only because he suffered directly from the temporary paralysis of the industry, but also because his indifference to the claims of the worker for a just wage, sanitary factory conditions, abolition of home work, and for a decent working-day was equivalent to an active complicity in the guilt of the manufacturer. Through Mr. Filene's intervention, the manufacturers and the Union officials agreed to confer, and to request Mr. Louis Brandeis of Boston to act as chairman.

Mr. Brandeis had, at the outset, the confidence of both parties. Each side recognized in him that combination of wide legal learning and a social economic sense which had made him an effective participant in the development of the progressive political and industrial policies of the nation. The employers welcomed Mr. Brandeis because they had faith in his sense of fairness. The cloak makers welcomed him because of his brilliant and signal service to the entire trade-union movement and to American working women in securing from the United States Supreme Court the decision which declared constitutional the ten-hour law for the women laundry workers of Oregon.

The conference that was to have determined the industrial fortunes of more than 40,000 New York workers for the following year opened on Thursday morning, July 28, in a small room in the Metropolitan Life Building. Mr. Brandeis was in the chair. On one side of a long table sat the ten representatives of the cloak makers, including their attorney, a member of the *Vorwaerts* staff, and the Secretary of the International Garment Workers' Union, all these three men of middle age, intellectual faces, and sociological education, keenly identified with the ideas and principles of the workers; three or four rather younger representatives of the cloak makers, alert and thoroughly Americanized; and three older men, who had fought throughout the quarter-of-a-century contest, men with the sort of trade education that nothing but a working experience can give, deeply imbued with the traditions of that struggle, a hostility to "scabs," a distrust (too often well founded) of employers, and an unshaken belief in the general panacea of the closed shop—a subject which was, by agreement, to remain undiscussed

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in the conference. All these men, with the exception of their attorney, Mr. London, had cut and sewed on the benches of the garment trade. On the other side of the table sat the ten representatives of the manufacturers, some of them men of wide culture and learning, versed in philosophies, and prominent members of the Ethical Society, some of them New York financiers who had come from East Side sweat shops. Perhaps the most eager opponent of the closed shop in their body was a cosmopolitan young manufacturer, a linguist and “literary” man, interested in “style” from every point of view, who had introduced into the New York trade from abroad a considerable number of the cloak designs now widely worn throughout America. This man felt the keenest personal pride in his output. He is said at one time to have remarked, “*Le cloak c’est moi*” And, bizarre as it may seem to an outsider, a really sincere reason of his against accepting workmen on the recommendation of the Union was that the cloak manufacturer as an artist should adopt toward his workers “the attitude of Hammerstein to his orchestra.” One of the manufacturers had been a strike leader in 1896. “Your bitterest opponent of fourteen years ago sits on the same side of the table with you now,” said one of the older cloak makers, in a deep, intense voice, as the men took their places.

Mr. Brandeis opened the conference with these words: “Gentlemen, we have come together in a matter which we must all recognize is a very serious and an important business—not only to settle this strike, but to create a relation which will prevent similar strikes in the future. That work is one which, it seems to me, is approached in a spirit that makes the situation a very hopeful one, and I am sure, from my conferences with counsel of both parties[27] and with individual members whom they represent, that those who are here are all here with that desire.”

Up to a certain point in the conference, which lasted for three days, this seemed to be true. The manufacturers agreed to abolish home work, to abolish subcontracting, to give a weekly half-holiday, besides the Jewish Sabbath, during June, July, and August, and to limit overtime work to two hours and a half a day during the busy season, with no work permitted after half past eight at night, or before eight in the morning. Beyond this, the question of hours was left to arbitration. Also, the question of wages was left to arbitration.

The last subject to be dealt with at the Brandeis conference was the general method of enforcing agreements between the Manufacturers’ Association and the Union. It was in this discussion that the question of the closed shop and the open shop came before the conference.

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Though the Union leaders had agreed to eliminate the discussion of the closed shop before they entered into negotiations, it was almost impossible for them to refrain from suggesting it as a means of enforcing agreements. As one of the cloak makers, one of the old leaders of the labor movement in America, said: "This organization of cloak makers in the city of New York can only control the situation where Union people are employed. They have absolutely no control of the situation where non-union people are employed. They cannot enforce any rules, nor any discipline of any kind, shape, or description, and if we are to cooperate in any way that will be absolutely effective, then the ... Manufacturers' Association, ... it seems to me, should see that the necessary first step is that they shall run Union shops." [28]

The Union shop the speaker had in mind, the Union shop advocated by the *Vorwaerts* and desired, as it proved, by a majority of the workers, was a different matter from the closed shop, which constitutes a trade monopoly by limiting the membership of a trade to a certain comparatively small number of workers.

The institution of the closed shop is by intention autocratic and exclusive. The institution of the Union shop is by intention democratic and inclusive. With the cloak makers' organization, entrance into the Union was almost a matter of form. There were no prohibitive initiation fees, or dues, as in other unions. They offered every non-union man and woman an opportunity to join their ranks.

The manufacturers contended that they had no objection to the voluntary enlistment of non-union men in Union ranks; but they would not insist that all their workers belong to the Union.

This deadlock was reached on the third day of the conference. At this point Mr. Brandeis brought before the meeting the opinion that "an effective cooperation between the manufacturers and the Union ... would involve, ... of necessity, a strong Union." "I realize," he said, ... "from a consideration of ... general Union questions, that in the ordinary open shop, where that prevails, there is great difficulty in building up the Union. I felt, therefore, particularly in view of the fact that so many of the members of the Garment Workers' Union are recent members, that to make an effective Union it was necessary that you should be aided ... by the manufacturers, ... and that aid could be effectively ... given by providing that the manufacturers should, in the employment of labor hereafter, give preference to Union men, where the Union men were equal in efficiency to any non-union applicants.... That presented in the rough what seemed to me a proper basis for coming together.... I think, if such an arrangement as we have discussed can be accomplished, it will be the greatest advance, not only that unionism has made in this country, but it would be one of the greatest advances that has generally been made in improving the condition of the working-man, for which unionism is merely an instrument."

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This, then, was the first public presentation of the idea of the preferential shop. Mr. Brandeis, as a result of close study of labor disputes and a rich experience in settling strikes, had reached the conclusion that the position of the adherents of the closed as well as those of the open shop was economically and socially untenable. The inherent objection to the closed shop, he contends, is that it creates an uncontrolled and irresponsible monopoly of labor.

On the other hand, the so-called open shop, even if conducted with fairness and honesty on the part of the employer, is apt to result in a disintegration of the Union. It has been a frequent experience of organized labor that, even after a strike has been won, men drop out of the Union and leave the burden of Union obligation to the loyal minority, who, weakened in numbers, face not only a loss of what the strike has gained, but a retrogression of those Union standards that have been the result of past struggles and sacrifices.

By the preferential Union plan, when an employer obliges himself to prefer Union to non-union men, a Union man in good standing, that is, a Union man who has paid his dues and met his Union obligations, is insured employment to a limited extent, and the dues represent a premium paid by him for such employment.

It was not an easy task to secure assent to this idea from the manufacturers, for Mr. Brandeis made it clear that, while the plan did not oblige the manufacturers to coerce men into joining the Union, it clearly placed them on record in favor of a trade-union, and obliged them to do nothing, directly or indirectly, to injure the Union, and positively to do everything in their power, outside of coercion, to strengthen the Union.

In Mr. Brandeis' appeal to the Union representatives he referred to the history of the Cloak Makers' Union as a telling illustration of the futility of their past policy. He pointed out that the membership of the Union during a strike was no test of its strength—a Union's solidity rested upon its membership in time of peace. Were they not justified in assuming that what had occurred in the past of the Cloak Makers' Union would occur in the future, and that its membership would dwindle to a small number of the faithful? How could their organization be permanently strengthened?

Cloak making, as a seasonal trade, offered a fair field for proving the efficiency of the preferential plan, for in the slack season the manufacturers must, by its terms, prefer Union men. The industrial situation provided a test of this good faith. The Union leaders could then effectively show the non-union worker the advantage of the union membership.

The final formation of the preferential union shop as presented to both sides by Mr. Brandeis, Mr. London, and Mr. Cohen, in the Brandeis conference, was this: "The manufacturers can and will declare in appropriate terms their sympathy with the Union, their desire to aid and strengthen the Union, and their agreement that, as between

Union and non-union men of equal ability to do the job, the Union men shall be given the preference.”



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The manufacturers were willing to make this agreement. But the representatives of the Union received it with a natural suspicion bred by years of oppression. "Can the man who has ground us down year after year suddenly be held by a sentiment for the organization he has fought for a quarter of a century?" they asked. "Between Union and non-union men, will he candidly give the preference to Union men of equal ability? Will he not rather, since the question of ability is a matter of personal judgment and is left to his judgment, prefer the non-union man, and justify his preference by a pretence, in each case, that he considers the skill of the non-union man superior?"

Nevertheless, a majority of the leaders of the cloak makers were willing to try the plan.... A minority refused. This minority was influenced partly by its certain knowledge that the 40,000 cloak makers would never accept an agreement based on the idea of the preferential Union shop, and partly by its complete distrust of the good will of the manufacturers. The minority was trusted and powerful. It won. The conference broke.

The *Vorwaerts* printed a statement that the preferential shop was the "open shop with honey." The news of the Brandeis conference reached the cloak makers through the bulletins of this paper; and during its progress and after its close, frantic crowds stood before the office on the lower East Side, waiting for these bulletins, eager for the victory of the closed shop, the panacea for all industrial evils.

After the decision of the leaders, after the breaking of the conference, the cloak makers who had settled gave fifteen per cent of their wages to support those standing out for the closed shop, and volunteered to give fifty per cent. The *Vorwaerts* headed a subscription list with \$2000 for the strikers, and collected \$50,000. A furore for the closed shop arose. Young boys and bearded old men and young women came to the office and offered half their wages, three-quarters of their wages. One boy offered to give all his wages and sell papers for his living. Every day the office was besieged by committees, appointed by the men and women in the settled shops, asking to contribute to the cause more than the percentage determined by the Union. These were men and women accustomed to enduring hardships for a principle, men and women who had fought in Russia, who were revolutionists, willing to make sacrifices, eager to make sacrifices. Their blind faith was the backbone of the strike.

This furore was continuing when, in the third week in August, the loss of contracts by the manufacturers and the general stagnation of business due to the idleness of 40,000 men and women, normally wage-earners, induced a number of bankers and merchants of the East Side to bring pressure for a settlement of the strike. Louis Marshall, an attorney well known in New York in Jewish charities, assembled the lawyers of both sides. They drew up an agreement in which the preferential union shop again appeared as the basis of future operations, formulated as in the Brandeis conference.



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The *Vorwaerts* printed the result of the Marshall conference with deep concern. It maintained a neutral attitude. The editorials urged that the readers consider the whole document soberly, discuss it freely in local meetings, and vote for themselves, on their own full understanding, after mature conviction on each point.

Tremendous crowds surged around the *Vorwaerts* office. They almost mobbed the East Side leaders, with their voluble questioning about the preferential Union shop. Thousands of men and women and children called out pleas and reproaches and recriminations in an avid personal demonstration possible only to their race. "Oh, you wouldn't sell us out?" they cried desperately. "You wouldn't sell us out? You are our hope."

Imagine what these days of doubt, of an attempt to understand, meant to these multitudes, knowing no industrial faith but that of the closed shop which had failed them absolutely, wanderers from a strange country, turning wildly to their leaders, who could only tell them that they must determine their own fates, they must decide for themselves. These leaders have been blamed at once for their autocracy and for not mobilizing and informing and directing these multitudes more clearly and firmly. Their critics failed to conceive the remarkably various economic and political histories of the enormous concourse of human beings engaged in the needle trades of New York.

However that may be, when the workers and their families surged around the *Vorwaerts* office and asked the leaders if they had betrayed them, Schlesinger, the business manager, and the old strike leaders addressed them from the windows, and said to the people, with painful emotion: "You are our masters. What you decide we will report back to the association lawyers. What you decide shall be done."

Terrible was the position of these men. Well they knew that the winter was approaching; that the closed shop could not win; that the workers could not hear the truth about the preferential Union shop, and that the man who stood avowedly for the preferential shop, now the best hope of victory for the Union, would be called a traitor to the Union.

In great anxiety, the meetings assembled. The workers had all come to the same conclusion. They all rejected the Marshall agreement.

Soon after this, the tide of loyalty to the closed shop was incited to its high-water mark by the action of Judge Goff, who, as a result of a suit of one of the firms of the Manufacturers' Association, issued an injunction against peaceful picketing, on the part of the strikers, on the ground that picketing for the closed shop was an action of conspiracy in constraint of trade, and therefore unlawful.



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The manufacturers were now, naturally, more deeply distrusted than ever on the East Side.[29] The doctrine of the closed shop became almost ritualistic. Early in September, one of the Labor Day parades was headed by an aged Jew, white-bearded and fierce-eyed,—a cloak maker who knew no other words of English than those he uttered,—who waved a purple banner and shouted at regular intervals: “Closed shop! Closed shop!” That man represented the spirit of thousands of immigrants who have recently become trade-unionists in America. Impossible to say to such a man that the idea of the closed shop had been an enemy to the spread of trade-unionism in this country by its implication of monopolistic tyranny.

Impossible, indeed, to say anything to Unionists whose reply to every just representation is, “Closed shop”; or to employers whose reply to every just representation is, “We do not wish other people to run our business.” This reply the Marshall conference still had to hear for some days. It was now the first week in September. There was great suffering among the cloak makers. On the manufacturers’ side, contracts heretofore always filled by certain New York houses, in this prolonged stoppage of their factories were finally lost to them and placed with establishments in other important cloak making centres—Cleveland, Philadelphia, Chicago, and even abroad. Two or three large Union houses settled for terms, in hours and wages, which were satisfactory to every one concerned, though lower than the demands on these points listed in the cloak makers’ first letter.

Curiously enough, wages and hours had been left to arbitration, had never been thoroughly considered in the whole situation before. Neither the workers nor the employers had clearly stated what they really would stand for on these vital points. No one, not even the most wildly partisan figures on either side, supposed that the first demands as to wages and hours represented an ultimatum. The debaters in the Marshall conference now agreed on feasible terms on these points,[30] though, curiously enough, the rates for piece-work were left to the arbitration of individual shops. In spite of this fact, the majority of the workers are paid by piece-work. The former clauses of the agreement relating to the abolition of home work and of subcontracting remained practically as they had stood before.[31] As for the idea of the preferential Union shop, it had undoubtedly been gaining ground. Naturally, at first, appearing to the *Vorwaerts*’ staff and to many ardent unionists as opposed to unionism, it had now assumed a different aspect. This was the final formulation of the preferential Union shop in the Marshall agreement: “Each member of the Manufacturers’ Association is to maintain a Union shop, a ‘Union shop’ being understood to refer to a shop where Union standards as to working conditions prevail, and where, when hiring help, Union men are preferred, it being recognized that, since there are differences of skill among those employed in the trade, employers shall have freedom of selection between one Union man and another, and shall not be confined to any list nor bound to follow any prescribed order whatsoever.

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“It is further understood that all existing agreements and obligations of the employer, including those to present employees, shall be respected. The manufacturers, however, declare their belief in the Union, and that all who desire its benefits should share in its burdens.”

As will be seen, this formulation signified that the Union men available for a special kind of work in a factory must be sought before any other men. The words “non-union man,” the words arousing the antagonism of the East Side, are not mentioned. But whether the preference of Union men is or is not insisted on as strongly as in the Brandeis agreement must remain a matter of open opinion.

This formulation was referred to the strike committee. It was accepted by the strike committee, and went into force on September 8.

The *Vorwaerts* posted the news as a great Union victory. At the first bulletin, the news ran like wildfire over the East Side. Multitudes assembled; men, women, and children ran around Rutgers Square, in tumult and rejoicing. The workers seized London, the unionists’ lawyer, and carried him around the square on their shoulders, and they even made him stand on their shoulders and address the crowd from them. People sobbed and wept and laughed and cheered; and Roman Catholic Italians and Russian Jews, who had before sneered at each other as “dagoes” and “sheenies,” seized each other in their arms and called each other brother.

Now that the men and women have returned to their shops, it remains for all the people involved—the manufacturers, the workers, the retailers, and the interested public—to make a dispassionate estimate of this new arrangement. Is the preferential shop so delicate a fabric as to prove futile? Has it sustaining power? Will the final agreement prove, at last, to be a Union victory? Will both sides act in good faith—the manufacturers always honestly preferring Union men, the Union leaders always maintaining a democratic and an inclusive Union, without autocracy or bureaucratic exclusion? Undoubtedly there will be failures on both sides. But the New York cloak makers’ strike may be historical, not only for its results in the cloak industry, but for its contribution to the industrial problems of the country.

No outsider can read the statement of the terms of the manufacturers’ preference without feeling that a joint agreement committee should have been established to consider cases of alleged unfair discrimination against Union workers. On the other hand, no outsider can hear without a feeling of uneasiness such an assertion as was made to one of the writers—that strike breakers had been obliged to pay an initiation fee of one hundred dollars to enter the Cloak Makers’ Union.

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There is undoubtedly, on both sides, need of patience and a long educational process to change the attitude of hostility and bitterness engendered by over twenty years of a false policy of antagonism. But never before, in the cloak makers' history, have the men and women gone back to work after a strike holding their heads as high as they do today.[32] It can be reasonably believed that their last summer's struggle will achieve a permanent gain for the workers' industrial future. This narrative of the industrial fortunes of the women cloak makers in New York in the last year is given for its statement of the effects of the struggle for the Preferential Union Shop on their trade histories, and for its account of their gains as workers in the same trade with men.

These cloak makers' gains were local. What national gains have American working women been able to obtain? For an answer to this question we turned to the results of the National Consumers' League inquiry concerning the fortunes of women workers in laundries and its chronicle of the decision of the Federal Supreme Court on the point of their hours of labor.

FOOTNOTES:

[Footnote 23: Printed statement of the Cloak, Skirt, and Suit Manufacturers' Protective Association, July 11, 1910.]

[Footnote 24: Estimate of the Waverly Place Office of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, November 26 to 30.]

[Footnote 25: For this account of the position of different cloak manufacturers the writers wish to acknowledge the kindness of Miss Mary Brown Sumner of the *Survey*.]

[Footnote 26: These were the most important clauses of these early settlements as regards women workers:—

I. The said firm hereby engages the Union to perform all the tailoring, operating, pressing, finishing, cutting, and buttonhole-making work to be done by the firm in the cloak and suit business during one year ... from date; and the Union agrees to perform said work in a good and workmanlike manner.

II. During the continuance of this agreement, operators shall be paid in accordance with the annexed price list. The following is the scale of wages for week hands: ... skirt makers, not less than \$24 per week; skirt basters, not less than \$15 per week; skirt finishers, not less than \$12 per week; buttonhole makers, not less than \$1.10 per hundred buttonholes.

III. A working week shall consist of forty-eight hours in six working-days.

IV. No overtime work shall be permitted between the fifteenth day of November and the fifteenth day of January and during the months of June and July. During the rest of the year employees may be required to work overtime, provided all the employees of the firm, as well as all the employees of the outside contractors of the firm, are engaged to the full capacity of the factories. No overtime shall be permitted on Saturday nor on any day for more than two and a half hours, nor before 8 A.M. or after 8 P.M. For overtime work the employees shall receive double the usual pay. No contracting or subcontracting shall be permitted by the firm inside its factory, and no operator or finisher shall be permitted more than one helper.

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XIII. No work shall be given employees to be done at their homes.

XV. Only members of respective locals above named shall be employed by the firm to do the said work.]

[Footnote 27: Mr. London for the cloak makers, and Mr. Cohen for the manufacturers.]

[Footnote 28: Stenographic minutes of the Brandeis conference.]

[Footnote 29: This decision met with disapproval, not only on the East Side. The New York *Evening Post* said: "Justice Goff's decision embodies rather strange law and certainly very poor policy. One need not be a sympathizer with trade-union policy, as it reveals itself to-day, in order to see that the latest injunction, if generally upheld, would seriously cripple such defensive powers as legitimately belong to organized labor."

And the *Times*: "This is the strongest decision ever handed down against labor."]

[Footnote 30: These are the clauses of the Marshall agreement on wage scale and hours of labor which affect women workers. The term "sample makers" includes, of course, sample makers of cloaks. The week workers among the cloak makers are principally the sample makers. But the greater proportion of the workers in the cloak factories are piece-workers. This explains why there is no definite weekly wage schedule listed for cloak workers as such. Sample makers, \$22; sample skirt makers, \$22; skirt basters, \$14; skirt finishers, \$10; buttonhole makers, Class A, a minimum of \$1.20 per 100 buttonholes; Class B a minimum of 80 cents per 100 buttonholes.

As to piece-work, the price to be paid is to be agreed upon by a committee of the employees in each shop and their employer. The chairman of said price committee of the employees shall act as the representative of the employees in their dealings with the employer.

The weekly hours of labor shall consist of 50 hours in 6 working days, to wit, nine hours on all days except the sixth day, which shall consist of five hours only.

No overtime work shall be permitted between the fifteenth day of November and the fifteenth day of January, or during the months of June and July, except upon samples.

No overtime work shall be permitted on Saturdays, except to workers not working on Saturdays, nor on any day or more than two and one-half hours, nor before 8 A.M., nor after 8.30 P.M.

For overtime work all week workers shall receive double the usual pay.]

[Footnote 31: There has been practically no complaint on the part of the workers or the public concerning the sanitary conditions of the larger houses. At present the strike



settlement has established a joint board of sanitary control, composed of three representatives of the public, Dr. W.J. Scheffelin, chairman, Miss Wald of the Nurses' Settlement, and Dr. Henry Moskowitz of the Down-town Ethical Society; two representatives of the workers, Dr. George Price, Medical Sanitary Inspector of the New York Department of Health, 1895-1904, and Mr. Schlesinger, Business Manager of the *Vorwaerts*; and two representatives of the manufacturers, Mr. Max Meier and Mr. Silver. The work of this committee will be the enforcement of uniform sanitary conditions in all shops, including the more obscure and smaller establishments.]



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[Footnote 32: This statement is written in the last week of September, 1910.]

CHAPTER VI

WOMEN LAUNDRY WORKERS IN NEW YORK

(This article is composed of the reports of Miss Carola Woerishofer, Miss Elizabeth Howard Westwood, and Miss Mary Alden Hopkins, supplemented with an account of the Federal Supreme Court's decision on the constitutionality of the Oregon Ten-Hour Law for laundry workers.)

What do self-supporting women away from home in New York give in their work, and what do they get from it, when their industry involves a considerable outlay of muscular strength? For a reply to this question the National Consumers' League turned to the reports of women's work as machine ironers and hand ironers, workers at mangles, folders, and shakers of sheets and napkins from wringers in the steam laundries of New York.

For, although the labor at the machines in the laundry wash-rooms is done by men, and all work in laundries consists largely of machine tending, still women's part in the industry can be performed only by unusually strong women.[33]

In the winter of 1907-1908 the National Consumers' League had received from different parts of New York a series of letters filled with various complaints against specified laundries in this city—complaints stating that hours were long and irregular, wages unfair, the laundries dirty, and the girls seldom allowed to sit down, and containing urgent pleas to the women of the Consumers' League to help the women laundry workers.

After consulting some of the laundry women, the League determined to secure through a special inquiry a well-ascertained statement of conditions as a basis for State factory legislation for uniform improvements. A few months before, the constitutionality of the present New York legislation, as well as of almost all of the State legislation concerning the hours of work of adult women in this country, had been virtually determined by the decision of the Federal Supreme Court in regard to the ten-hour law for women laundry workers in Oregon. The opinion of the National Supreme Court, which practically confirmed the passed New York laundry laws and made future laws for fair regulation for the women workers seem practicable, will be given after the account of women's work in laundries in New York.

Miss Carola Woerishofer conducted the inquiry, which was confined to steam laundries, as hand laundries were more favorably described by many reliable authorities. Among



these, the large laundries were commercial laundries, such as we all patronize, and hotel and hospital laundries. The features chiefly observed in all these establishments were sanitation, the danger of injury, and wages and hours of labor. For the account of the hospital and hotel laundries the Consumers' League of the city of New York obtained the services of Miss Elizabeth Howard Westwood of Smith College and Miss Mary Alden Hopkins of Wellesley College. As a means of investigating commercial laundries, Miss Woerishofer, answering advertisements as they came, worked in laundries in trade employed in nearly every branch of the industry in which women are engaged throughout the borough of Manhattan. Her report follows.



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I

“Naturally, the first question which faced me was that of finding a job. For this I turned to the laundry want ‘ads’ in the newspapers. To my surprise, as my investigation was made in the summer, which is, curiously enough, by far the slackest season in New York commercial laundries, I was never without work for more than a day at a time, although I changed continually, for the sake of experience, averaging about a week in a place.

“The first establishment to which I went was known as a model laundry. It was large and well ventilated and had a dry floor. These sanitary conditions may be said to be fairly typical. In only one laundry did I find a girl who was compelled to stand in a wet place, though water overflowed sometimes into the girls’ quarters from the wash-rooms, where the men worked. In some of these wash-rooms the water is at times ankle-deep, a condition due only to bad drainage, as other wash-rooms are absolutely dry. Whatever the condition of the work-rooms, the women’s dressing-rooms frequently had insanitary plumbing, and were verminous and unhealthful. In one laundry the water supply was contaminated, smelling and tasting offensively when it came from the faucet, and worse after it had passed through the cooler. The women here at first kept bottles of soda-water. Some old women had beer. But on a series of hot days, with hours from half past seven to twelve, and from one till any time up to ten at night, 10 cents’ worth of beer or soda-water a day did not go far to alleviate thirst, and soon drank a big hole in a wage of \$5 a week. A complaint was sent to the Board of Health. After nearly three weeks, the Board of Health replied that the complaint must be sent to the Water Department. From the Water Department no reply could possibly come for several weeks more. And in the meantime, all the women workers in the laundry, impelled by intolerable thirst, drank the contaminated water.

“The work-room where I was employed had, on the whole, plenty of windows. These were left open. But when a room is large and full of machinery, artificial light is needed all day, and the outside air does not come in very far to drive away the heat and the dampness. On going out at noon from a laundry where I had dipped shirts in hot starch all the morning at a breakneck pace, I was struck by the coolness of the day. That night I discovered that the thermometer had been registering 96 deg. in the shade. A few fans should be put in each laundry. They could be run by the power that runs the machines.

“In the ‘model laundry,’ I worked at first at a mangle, running spreads and sheets and towels between two revolving cylinders. Here I found there was danger of slipping my fingers too far under the cylinders in the process of feeding. The mangle had a guard, to be sure,—a flexible metal bar about three-quarters of an inch above the feeding-apron in front of the cylinder. But I learned that this acted as a warning rather than a protection. ‘Once you get your fingers in, you never get them out,’ Jenny, the Italian girl

beside me, said repeatedly. The Italian girls Anglicized their names, and Jenny had probably been Giovanna at home.



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“At the collar machine, at which I was stationed after lunch, there was an adequate guard where the collars were slipped in. Where they came out, however, they had to be pushed in rapid succession under the farther side of a burning hot cylinder with no guard at all. To avoid touching the cylinder with my arm in this process, I was obliged either to raise it unnaturally high, or to stand on tiptoe. ‘You didn’t get burned to-day or yesterday,’ said Jenny, ‘but you sure will sometime. Everybody does on that machine.’

“In the ironing of collars and cuffs by machinery, there is continual risk of burns on hands and arms. At a sleeve-ironing machine, in another place I received some slight burn every day. And when I asked the girls if this were because I was ‘green,’ they replied that every one got burned at that machine all the time. Each burn is due to ‘carelessness,’ but if the girls were to be careful, they would have to focus their minds on self-protection instead of the proper accomplishment of their task, and would also have to work at a lower rate of speed than the usual output of the laundries demands. A graver danger than that from hot surfaces and from slightly protected gas flames is from unguarded belts and gears.

“At mangles, too, the danger is grave. What the girls call ‘millionaire work’—work that has to come out straight—in contrast with ‘boarding-house work,’ must be shoved up to within a quarter of an inch of the cylinder. Fingers once caught in such mangles are crushed. Consider, in connection with these two facts, the high rate of speed at which the girls feed the work into the machine, and the precarious character of their task will be realized. However, in many laundries, good mangles for table and bed linen are in use, which either have a stationary bar in front of the first cylinder, or else have the first roll, whether connected or not with the power, attached to a lever, and so constructed as to lift the pressure immediately from the finger, should it be slipped underneath.[34]

“For the purpose of inspecting the machinery I visited with different factory inspectors, through the courtesy extended by the Department of Labor, all, so far as I was able to determine, of the commercial steam laundries in the borough of Manhattan. Out of sixty laundries inspected, I found that twenty-six had either unguarded or inadequately guarded mangles, collar presses, and collar dampeners, or else unguarded or inadequately guarded gears and belts. In a laundry visited when the boss was out, we conferred with the engineer about one particularly bad mangle.

“‘What’s this machine for? To cut girls’ hands off?’ asked the inspector.

“‘Well,’ said the engineer, ‘it came pretty near finishing up the last girl we had here—caught her arm in an apron-string and got both hands under the roll—happened over two months ago. Fingers cut off one hand, and all twisted and useless on the other.’



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“Instead of having the machine guarded, after this mutilation, the owner had employed a man to take chances here, instead of a girl.

“This and all the illegal defects discovered were ordered remedied by the factory inspectors. But New York labor legislation, no matter how excellent, cannot be enforced, with the present number of inspectors. An inspector will arrive on one day; will discover that rules are violated; will impose a fine; will return in the next week and discover that rules are not violated; will, perforce, return to another part of the field; and after that the violation will continue as if he had never observed it.

“Further, it is difficult for the inspector to discover, through employees, violations of the State laws enacted in their interest, as they risk being discharged for complaints. In addition, moreover, to this danger, bringing a charge means that the complainant must go to court, thus losing both time and money. A union organization would be the only possible means of settling the matter. Made up of the workers themselves, it is always present to observe violations; and it offers to the workers the advantage of reporting to the State, not as individuals, but as a body. The cooperative spirit present among almost all of the laundry workers should make organization entirely feasible.[35]

“On entering a new situation I found, as a rule, cordiality and friendly interest. On several occasions it was expressed by this social form:—

“‘Say, you got a feller?’

“‘Sure. Ain’t you got one?’

“‘Sure.’

“The girls are really very kind to one another, helping one another in their work, and by loans of lunch and money.

“In one place a woman with a baby to support—a shaker earning \$4.50 a week, and heavily in debt—used to borrow weekly a few pennies apiece from all the girls around her to pay her rent. And the pennies were always forthcoming, although the girls had hardly more than she had, and knew quite well that they were seldom returned. There was a great deal of swearing among the women in almost all of the laundries, but it was of an entirely good-natured character.

“While there was a natural division of labor, there was also an artificial one, created during lunch hours. A deep-rooted feeling of antagonism and suspicion exists between the Irish and the Italians, each race clubbing together from the different departments in separate bands.

“Aside from this distinction, there is another social cleavage—the high-wage earners sitting apart from the low-wage earners, through natural snobbishness. In one laundry,



the high-wage earners, though they often treated the \$5 girls to stray sardines, cake, *etc.*, were in the habit of sending young girls to the delicatessen shop to get their lunches, and also to the saloon for beer. Then the girl had to hurry out on the street in her petticoat and little light dressing-sack that she wore for work, for they gave her no time to change. For this service the girl would get 10 cents a week from each of the women she did errands for. They did not—the boss starcher explained to me with quiet elegance—think of such a thing as drinking beer behind the boss's back, but they 'just didn't want him to know.'

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“The same difficulties in enforcing the law about protected machinery in laundries exist in the enforcing of the law requiring that adult women in laundries shall not work more than sixty hours in a week. Just as in the case of protected machinery, these difficulties might be partly removed through trade organization.

“Nearly all laundry work is performed standing, and on heavy days, when the work is steady, except at lunch time, very few women get a chance to sit down during any part of the day. The chief difference between laundry work and that of other factories is in the irregularity of the hours. A manufacturer knows more or less at the beginning of the week how much work his factory will have to do, and can usually distribute overtime, or engage or lay off extra girls, according to his knowledge. The laundryman can never estimate the amount of work to be done until the laundry bundles are actually on the premises. He can never tell when the hotels, restaurants, steamboats, and all the small ‘hand’ laundries, whose family laundries he rough-dries, and whose collars and table and bed linen he finishes, will want their washing back. Hard as this is for the employer, it is still harder for the workers. The small hand laundry can seldom keep customers waiting longer than from Monday till Saturday. On this account, the steam laundry will be obliged to rush all of its work for the ‘hand’ laundry through in one or two days. I found some steam laundries in which no work at all is done on Monday or Saturday, but in the busy season the place keeps running regularly on the other four days from seven in the morning till half past eleven and twelve at night. Very seldom is there any compensation for these long hours. Few of the laundries pay overtime. Of these, some dock the girls proportionately for every hour less than sixty a week they work. No laundries in which I worked, except one, give supper money. A piece-worker at least gets some advantage to counterbalance long hours. But the week worker not only lacks recompense for actual labor, but is often put to greater expense.

“She does not know when her long day is coming, so she must buy her supper, when supper is waiting for her at home. She is often so tired that she must spend 5 cents for carfare, instead of walking. Seven cents is a fair average spent upon supper—2 cents for bread and 5 cents for sausage, cheese, or meat. If overtime is worked three nights a week, the girl is out of pocket 36 cents—not a small item in wages of \$4.50 and \$5 a week, where every penny counts. Often, also, she either has not extra money or she forgets to bring it. Then she has to share some one else’s lunch. The girls are always willing to divide, however slight their own provisions. I once saw a 1-cent piece of cake shared by four girls.



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“There are two kinds of long hours: those due to bad systematizing of laundry work, creating long waits between lots; and those due to very heavy work. In regard to the first kind, it must be said that the shirt starchers, who are the main sufferers from waiting for work, are the best paid, and hence are not as indignant at frequent overtime as the week workers are. Besides, though obliged to stay in the work-room, they are frequently seated throughout their waiting time, which sometimes lasts for four or five hours. I saw one woman about to be confined, who sometimes starched shirts until two in the morning, after arriving at the laundry at half past seven on the morning before.

“The other kind of long hours involves constant standing, and is most apt to occur in laundries where only mangle work is done. These laundries do not tend to work late at night, but they more frequently violate the sixty-hour law than the others do. Work is almost absolutely steady. The women stand on their feet ten and twelve hours, with just half an hour or an hour for lunch, and work with extreme speed.

“If your job is shaking the wrinkles out of towels and sheets, this in itself is violent exercise. The air is hot and damp because you stand near the washers. You are hurried at a furious rate. When you finish one lot, you have to roll heavy baskets, and dump them upon your table, and then go on shaking and shaking again, only to do more heavy loading and dumping. One girl always had a headache late in the afternoon. After standing ten or twelve hours, there are few whose feet or backs do not ache. The effect on the feet is perhaps the chief ground of complaint. Some merely wear rags about their feet, others put on old shoes or slippers, which they slit up in front and at the sides. The girls who press skirts by machine and those who do the body ironing have to press down on pedals in order to accomplish their tasks, and find this, as a rule, harder than standing still. An occasional worker, however, pronounces it a relief. But several I met had serious internal trouble which they claimed began after they had started laundry work. Few laundries give holidays with pay. Some give half a day on the legal holidays. In the others, ‘shaking’ and ‘body ironing’ and all the hard, heavy processes of laundry work continue straight through Christmas day, straight through New Year’s day, straight through the Fourth of July, just as at other times.

“In recompense for these long hours of standing, the piece-worker often has fairly high payment financially. But the opposite is true of the week worker. In the down-town laundries, where the wage scale runs lower, the amount is usually inadequate for the barest need.

“The payment in laundries is extremely varied. The wages of the majority of women I talked to in laundries amounted to between \$8 and \$4.50 a week. But wages ranged from the highest exceptional instances in piece-work, in hand starching and in hand ironing, at \$25 a week, for a few weeks in the year, down to \$3 a week.



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“High wages generally involved long hours. For instance, in one laundry, young American women between twenty and thirty were employed as hand starchers at piece-work. They made \$10 a week, when times were slack, by working once or twice a week, from seven in the morning until eleven at night. In busy times they sometimes made \$22 a week by working occasionally from seven o'clock one morn till two o'clock the following morning.[36]

“Although Italians, Russians, Irish, Polish, Germans, Americans, and Swedes are employed in New York laundries, the greater part of the work is done by Irish and Italians. The Irish receive the higher prices, the Italians the lower prices. The best-paid work, the hand starching of shirts and collars and the hand ironing, is done by Irish women, by colored women, and by Italian and Jewish men. The actual process of hand starching may be learned in less than one hour. Speed in the work may be acquired in about ten days. On the other hand, to learn the nicer processes of the ill-paid work of feeding and folding at the mangle—the passing of towels and napkins through the machine without turning in or wrinkling the edges, the passing of table-covers between cylinders in such a way that the work will never come out in a shape other than square—to learn these nicer processes requires from thirteen to fifteen days. The reason for the low wages listed for mangle work seems to lie only in nationality. Mangle work, as a rule, is done by Italians. In two laundries I found, working side by side with American and Irish girls, Italians, who were doing exactly the same work, and were paid less, solely because they were Italians. The employer said he never paid the Italians more than \$4 a week.

“In the next best-paid work after hand starching, the work of hand ironing, paying roughly from \$8 to \$18 a week, Italian women are practically never employed.

“The worst part of mangle work, the shaking, is done by young girls and by incapable older women of many nationalities. One of the ill-paid girls, who had \$4.50 a week, gave \$3.50 a week board to an aunt, who never let her delay payment a day. She had only \$1 a week left for every other expense. This girl was ‘keeping company’ with a longshoreman, who had as much as \$25 in good weeks. She had been engaged to him, and had broken her engagement because he drank—‘he got so terribly drunk.’ But when I saw her she was in such despair with her low wage, her hard hours of standing, and only \$5 a week ahead of her, that she was considering whether she should not swallow her well-founded terror of the misery his dissipation might bring upon them, and marry him, after all.

“The shakers are the worst paid and the hardest worked employees. The young girls expect to become folders and feeders. The older women are widows with children, or women with husbands sick or out of work or in some way incapacitated. Indeed, many of all these laundry workers, probably a larger proportion than in any other trade, are widows with children to support. ‘The laundry is the place,’ said one of the women, ‘for



women with bum husbands, sick, drunk, or lazy.' The lower the pay and the damper and darker the laundry, the older and worse off these women seem to be.



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“The low wages and long hours of the great majority of the women workers, the gradual breaking and loss of the normal health of many lives through undernourishment and physical strain, are, in my judgment, the most serious danger in the laundries. The loss of a finger, the maiming of a hand, even the mutilation of the poor girl who lost the use of both of her hands—the occasional casualties for a few girls in the laundries—are, though so much more salient, far less grave than the exhaustion and underpayment of the many.

“This, then, is the situation in general for women workers in the commercial laundries. With respect to sanitation, the heat is excessive wherever ironing is done by machinery. Many of the rooms are full of steam. Some of the laundries have insanitary toilet and cloak rooms. With respect to danger of injury, in a large proportion of places there is unguarded or inadequately guarded machinery. In respect to hours of labor, these often extend over the sixty-hour limit in rush seasons. The hours are not only long, but irregular. A twelve to fourteen-hour working-day is not infrequent. In a few places closing on Mondays and Saturdays, or open for short hours on Mondays, the working-day runs up on occasions to seventeen hours. Almost all the laundry work is done standing. Wages for the majority of the workers are low.”

The League’s conclusions in regard to legislation will be placed at the close of the following accounts of the laundries of the large New York hospitals and hotels, the first report being written by Miss Elizabeth Howard Westwood, the second report by Miss Mary Alden Hopkins.

II

“By a decision of the District Attorney, hotel and hospital laundries, provided they do no outside work, do not come under the jurisdiction of the Department of Labor. Women may work far beyond the sixty-hour limit on seven days of the week without any interference on the part of the government. Nor is there any authority that can force hospitals and hotel keepers to guard their machinery.

“While the hospitals did not, as a rule, exceed legal hours, were excellent as a rule in point of sanitation, and paid better wages than the commercial laundries to all but the more skilled workers, the machinery was adequately guarded in only one of the eight hospital laundries where I worked.

“In some, the belt that transfers the power was left unscreened, to the danger of passing workers. In others the mangle guard was insufficient. In all the hospitals I heard of casualties. Fingers had been mashed. A hand had been mashed. An arm had been dragged out. Unguarded machinery was, of course, a striking inconsistency, more inexcusable in the hospitals than in hotels or in commercial laundries. For hospitals are not engaged in a gainful pursuit, regardless of all humanitarian considerations. On the

contrary, they are not only avowedly philanthropic in aim, but are carried on solely in the cause of health.



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“The living-in system prevails in the hospitals, and wages are paid partly in board and lodging. The laundry workers share the dormitories and dining rooms of the other hospital employees. The dormitories were in every case furnished with comfortable beds, and chiffonniers or bureaus and adequate closet space were provided. Miss Hopkins and I did not sleep in, but had our beds assigned us, and used our dormitory rights merely for a cloak room. Here we lingered after hours to gossip, and here we often retired at noon to stretch out for a few minutes’ relaxation of our aching muscles. The dormitories varied in size. Each hospital had several large and several small ones. In most cases these dormitories were on upper floors. In one they occupied the basement. Here, however, a wide sunken alley skirted the house wall and gave the windows a fairly good access to the air.

“In all but two hospitals the food was excellent and the meals decently served. There were eggs and milk in abundance. The soups were delicious, the meats of fair quality and well cooked. There were plenty of vegetables, and the desserts were appetizing. We sat, as a rule, at long tables accommodating from ten to twenty. Sometimes we had table-cloths and napkins; sometimes a white oil-cloth sufficed. We were waited on by maids.

“In most of the hospitals there is a fifteen or twenty-minute rest in the morning and in the afternoon, when milk, tea, and bread and butter are served. These oases of rest and nourishment were of extraordinary value to us in resisting fatigue. Their efficiency in keeping workers in condition is a humane and practical feature of the laundries which should be sharply emphasized.

“There was little variation in wages between the different grades of workers. As a rule, only two prices obtained—one for all the mangers and plain ironers, another for the starchers and shirt and fancy ironers. In one laundry the wage fell as low as \$10 a month. In the others it was \$14 and \$15 for the lower grade of work, and \$16 and \$20 for the higher. One of the laundries gave board, but no room, and here the universal price was \$20 a month.

“As to hours, three of the hospitals had an eight-hour day; four had a nine-and-a-half-hour day. In one of these there was no work on Saturday afternoon, so that the weekly hours were forty-four. Another hospital worked seventy-two hours a week, with no recompense in the form of overtime pay. Generally the catchers at the mangles sat at their work. In one hospital the feeders also sat, using high stools. We wondered why this was not more often the custom. The difference in vigor in our own cases when we worked sitting was marked. Sitting, we escaped unwearied; standing all day left us numb with fatigue. In only one hospital was artificial light necessary in the work-room. The rooms, as a rule, were well ventilated and the air fresh when one came into them.



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“We often noticed that the workers in the hospital laundries were far less contented than those in the other classes of laundries. It was not surprising that they lacked enthusiasm for their work, for laundering is not an interesting task; but, with conditions far beyond any other type of laundry, it was strange that the hospital workers should be the most shifting, faultfinding, and dispirited laundresses we encountered. Part of this we attributed to the depressing effect of an atmosphere of sickness, part to the fact that workers living out are doubtless stimulated by the diversion of having a change of scene—of seeing at least two sets of people, and, above all, generally by some special sympathy and concern for their individual fortunes. In the last hospital laundry where we worked, one conducted by the Sisters of Charity, though the hours were long and the wages were only \$10 a month, there was an exceptional air of cheerfulness and interest among the workers. This was due to no special privileges of theirs, but to the contagious spirit of personal interest and kindness inherent in all the Sisters in charge.

“The bitterness that characterized workers living in the hospitals was observed by Miss Hopkins among the laundry workers living in the hotels.”

III

“The twenty-one hotels where we conducted our inquiry were extremely varied, ranging from a yellow brick house near the Haymarket, with red and blue ingrain carpets and old-fashioned bells that rang a gong when one twisted a knob, to the mosaic floors and the pale, shaded electric lights of the most costly establishments in New York.

“As to the sanitation of the twenty hotels visited, only six had their laundries above ground. All the others were in basements or in cellars. In most of these the ventilation was faulty and the air at times intolerably hot. It is a striking fact—showing what intelligent modern regulation can accomplish—that one laundry two stories underground in New York was so high-ceiled and the summer cold-air apparatus so complete that it was comfortable even in the hot months. In most of the hotel laundries there were seats for the takers-off. Only three of the laundries had wet floors; only three were dirty; only one had an insanitary lavatory and toilet room.

“In regard to the danger of injury, of the nineteen mangles that I inspected for dangerous conditions, six were insufficiently protected. It is the custom in most hotels, when an article winds around the cylinder of the mangle, to pluck it off while the mangle is in motion. The women sometimes climb up on the mangle and reach over, in imminent danger of becoming entangled either by their dresses catching or by pitching forward. The machinery of hotel laundries is even less carefully guarded than is that of a commercial laundry, and in some establishments is, besides, dangerously crowded. This was the



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case in one laundry in a hotel cellar. I worked here at the ironing-table on a consignment of suits from the navy-yard. As work came in from outside the hotel, the establishment should have been under the State inspection. The rooms were narrow. There was a ventilating fan, placed very low, near where the girls hung their wraps, and as soon as I came in, they warned me that it caught up in its blades and destroyed anything that came near it. The belting of the machines was unboxed. A blue flame used sometimes to blow out four inches beyond the body-ironer, directly into the narrow space where the girls had to pass before it. In connection with the danger from machinery, danger from employees' elevators should be noted. In one hotel I rode forty-four times on an elevator where the guard door was closed only once, though the car was often crowded, and twice I saw girls narrowly escape injury from catching their skirts on the landing doors and the latches. In another hotel, inexperienced elevator boys were broken in on dangerous cars containing signs that read: 'This elevator shall not carry more than fifteen persons.' The cars were used, not only for people, but for trunks and heavy trucks of soiled linen. On one trip a car carried one of these enormous trucks, two trunks, and twelve girls; on another trip there were twenty-two people.

"At eight of the hotels wages were paid partly in board and lodging. The money wages are given below:—

WORKERS LIVING IN PER MONTH

Ironers on flannels, stockings, and plain work	\$22
Ironers—skilled workers on family wash	25-30
Shakers	14-16
All beginners	14-16

WORKERS LIVING OUT PER WEEK

Ironers \$7 and upward
Shakers 6 and upward
Feeders 6 and upward
Folders 6 and upward
Starchers (shirt), piece-work wages, average. 8
Starchers (collars and cuffs) 15 and upward

"The eight hotels varied widely in living conditions. The food was reasonably well cooked, but, like most hotel fare, monotonous, and destitute of fresh vegetables and of sweets. One of the results of this is that the women spend a large part of their wages

for fruit and other food to supplement their unsatisfactory meals. Only two hotels planned meals intelligently.

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“The dining rooms were usually below the street-level, and varied in ventilation, crowding, and disorder. In one the waiters were Greek immigrants, who were in their shirt-sleeves, wore ticking aprons and no collars, and were frequently dirty and unshaved. In the fourteen meals I had there, I sat down only once to a clean table. The coffee boilers along the side of the room would be boiling over and sending streams of water over the charwomen. The dirty dishes would be piled into large tin tubs with a clatter, and pulled out rasping over the floor. The charwomen would beg the waiters to clear the tables, which looked as if garbage-cans had been emptied upon them. The steward could not enforce his authority. There was constant noise and disorder in the room. In another dining room, that of a pleasant, ramshackle old hotel near the river, where a breeze came into our laundry through sixteen windows, the employees were seated in one of the restaurant dining rooms after the noon rush hour was over, served by the regular waiters, and given attractive and varied fare and meat from the same cuts as the guests. ‘They have respect for the help here,’ said one of the women.

“The dormitories were, with one exception, on upper stories. One room in an expensive modern hotel, where there were twenty-seven beds, in tiers, was aired only by three windows on an inner court. The room looked fresh and pleasant because of its white paint and blue bedspreads; but it was badly ventilated, both by condition and because the girls would keep the windows closed for warmth. This was a frequent cause of poor ventilation in other dormitories and in work-rooms.

“The hours of work were irregular, and varied in different places. In one large laundry I worked over ten hours for seven days in the week—more than seventy-two hours. About nine and a half hours seemed to be the usual day. Four hotels gave fifteen-minute rest pauses for tea, morning and afternoon; two gave them once a day. These rests are of incalculable relief. One hotel gave twenty-minute pauses, so that the hours were: 7.20 to 9; 9.20 to 11.25; 12.30 to 2; 2.20 to closing time. This arrangement gave very short work periods, but during them the women were able to work vigorously; and they accomplished an astounding amount.

“However, in most of the hotel laundries the women were tired all the time. They dragged themselves out of bed at the last possible minute. They lay in their beds at noon; they crawled into them again as soon as the work was over in the evening. Some did not go out into the air for days at a time. The greatest suffering from any one physical cause came from feet. ‘Feet’ was the constant subject of conversation. But the women had no idea what was the trouble with their feet, and, in many cases, accepted as inevitable discomfort that could have been alleviated by foot-baths, care, plates, and proper shoes. Colds hung on endlessly. Sore throats were common. A girl who fed doilies into a mangle complained that constantly watching a moving apron made her eyes ‘sore,’ so that she could not see distinctly and sometimes fed in several doilies at a time without noticing it. The lack of air undoubtedly had a profound influence on the women’s vigor. In the old hotel near the river, where the laundry had sixteen windows, the women were in capital health.



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“In general, the older hotels, in spite of their more insanitary dressing-rooms and less well-guarded machines, were more considerate of their workers. But in one of the newer, more expensive hotels a sick girl is attended by the hotel physician, and is provided with soup, milk, etc. Her pay is not docked. She is treated with genuine sympathy. Here I once overheard a woman telling the boss that she was ill and asking permission to go to the dormitory. He gave the permission without question. None of the women ever abused his kindness. The women here were in fairly good shape, except, it must be admitted, for the extreme fatigue which seems to sweep over almost all the laundry women, and which arises from their hours of standing.

“I used to notice one girl who was as light on her feet as a kitten, and who seemed tireless; but every noon, as soon as she had finished her lunch, she would wrap herself up in a blanket and lie motionless for the whole period. One evening a woman stumbled into a dormitory, sat down on a trunk, pulled off her shoes and stockings, and, as she rubbed her swollen foot, cursed long and methodically all her circumstances—cursed the other workers who had held back work by their slowness; cursed the manager, who had asked of her extra work; cursed the dormitory and the laundry; cursed the whole world. At the first word of sympathy I offered her, she paused, and said with quiet truth, ‘Dear heart, we’re all tired.’

“Here are my notes for one day:—

When I went into the dormitory a little before half past seven, several of the girls were dragging themselves out of bed to dress. These went to work without breakfast, needing an extra half hour of rest more than they craved food. Two stayed in bed. One had an ulcerated tooth extracted the night before. I asked the other if she were sick. She groaned. “I’ll get up just as soon as the pains are gone out of my stomach.” Within an hour she was in the laundry, carrying armfuls of men’s working-suits to the drying-closet. She worked until half past eight that night.

All the morning I stood beside Old Sallie, who kept asking, “What time is it now, dear?” because she could not see the clock.

At noon, as we sat or lay on the beds in the dormitory, one of the girls said, “My God! I wish I could stay in bed this afternoon.”

In the afternoon I stood beside Theresa, who kept repeating: “It is so long to work until half past five! If I could only go to bed at half past five!”



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I walked out to supper with a girl named Kate, who had sprained her ankle a week ago. I said, "Hasn't the doctor seen it?" She turned on me. "My God! when do I get time to see a doctor?" She has a bad humor on her face, which is scarlet, and sometimes, in the morning, covered with fine white scale. She obtains relief by wiping her cheeks with the damp napkins she shakes. After supper I went up to the dormitory for a minute. Here I found a cousin of Theresa's giving her some tea in bed, where I urged her to stay. The cousin shook her head. "Ah, na," she said, "she must na' give up; she's new yet at the job—they wou'na like her to be sick." Theresa arose and crawled back to the shaking-table, to work until seven o'clock.

Throughout the evening I stood beside a girl, whose foot, when she walked, hurt her "way to the top of her head." She said, "I've been on it ever since half past seven."

On my way back to the dormitory at half past eight, one of the girls told me how her arms ached and her legs ached. In the dormitory, the girl who had been in bed all day was sobbing and feverish. She had a sore throat, and was spitting blood. She had been lying there all day, with no care, except to have tea and toast brought to her by a maid.

In looking back on this past week, it seems impossible it could have been true. Watching these women has been like seeing animals tortured.

"Such a day of long hours as this generally follows some large festivity. The Hudson-Fulton celebration, or the automobile show, or a great charity ball, or the dinner of an excellent sociological society are the occasions of increased hotel entertainment and a lavish use of beautiful table linen, to be dried and mangled and folded next day by the laundry girls underground.

"All this pressure of extra work in the hotels here is produced, not by ill-willed persons who are consciously oppressive,—indeed, as will be seen, much of it was produced by sheer social good will and persons of most progressive intent,—but simply by the unregulated conditions of the laundries."

IV

Such, then, is the account of what women workers give and what they receive in their industry in the commercial, hotel, and hospital laundries of New York.

It cannot be said that the unfortunate features of the laundry conditions observed are due to the greed of employers. These features seem to be due rather to lack of system and regulation. Financial failures in the New York laundry business are frequent. Even



in the short time elapsing between the Department of Labor's inspection of laundry machinery, early in February, and a reinspection of the twenty-six establishments that had improperly guarded machinery, made in August by Miss Westwood, two out of these twenty-six firms had collapsed. Miss Westwood found some of the same unfortunate features that characterized commercial and hotel laundries in existence in hospital laundries, which are quite outside trade.



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After the New York City Consumers' League had received the inquirers' report, it determined that the wisest and most effective course it could take for securing fairer terms for the laundry workers would be an effort for the passage of the following legislation:[37]—

First: That an appropriation be made for additional factory inspectors.

Second: That no woman be employed in any mechanical establishment, or factory, or laundry in this State for more than ten hours during any one day.

Third: That the laundries of hotels and hospitals be placed under the jurisdiction of the Department of Labor.

A New York State law now exists providing for proper sanitation and plumbing and clean drinking water for employees in factories and laundries.[38] A law exists requiring that work-rooms where steam is generated be so ventilated as to render the steam harmless, so far as is practicable.[39]

A law exists requiring the provision of suitable seats for the use of female employees in factories and laundries; and this law should cover the installation of seats for great numbers of workers now standing.[40]

The establishment of juster wages, as well as the observance of all these laws, and of the sixty-hour-a-week law, might be most practically furthered by the existence of a trade-union in the laundries, backed by stronger governmental provision for inspection.

V

It has been said that the unfortunate features observed in the laundry business in New York seemed to be due primarily to lack of general regulation. In February 1911, the Laundrymen's Association of New York State (President, Mr. J.A. Beatty), the Manhattan Laundrymen's Association (President, Mr. J.A. Wallach), and the Brooklyn Laundrymen's Association (President, Mr. Thomas Locken) conferred with the Consumers' League, and asked to cooperate with it in obtaining additional factory inspection, the legal establishment of a ten-hour day in the trade, and the placing of hotel and hospital laundries under the jurisdiction of the State Labor laws.

The League agreed to print on a published white list the names of the laundries conforming within a year to a common standard determined on at the conference. These are the main points agreed upon and endorsed.

WHITE LIST STANDARD FOR LAUNDRIES



Physical Conditions

1. Wash rooms are either separated from other work-rooms or else adequately ventilated so that the presence of steam throughout the laundry is prevented.
2. Work, lunch, and retiring rooms are apart from each other and conform in all respects to the present sanitary laws.
3. All machinery is guarded.
4. Proper drains under washing and starching machines, so that there are no wet floors.



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5. Seats adjusted to the machines are provided for at the

a. Collar ironer feeder. b. Collar ironer catcher. c. Collar dampener feeder. d. Collar dampener catcher. e. Collar straightener. f. Collar starcher feeder. g. Collar starcher catcher. h. Handkerchief flat-work feeder and catcher. i. Folders on small work. j. Collar shaper. k. Collar seam-dampener. l. Straight collar shaper.

6. The ordinances of the city and laws of the State are obeyed in all particulars.

Wages

1. Equal pay is given for equal work irrespective of sex, and no woman who is eighteen years of age or over and who has had one year's experience receives less than \$6 a week. This standard includes piece-workers.

Hours

1. The normal working week does not exceed 54 hours, and on no day shall work continue after 9 P.M.

2. When work is continued after 7 P.M. 20 minutes is allowed for supper and supper money is given.

3. Half holidays in each week during two summer months.

4. A vacation of not less than one week with pay is given during the summer season.

5. All overtime work, beyond the 54 hours a week standard, is paid for.

6. Wages paid and premises closed on the six legal holidays, viz: Thanksgiving Day, Christmas and New Year's Day, the Fourth of July, Decoration Day and Labor Day.

The Laundrymen's Association of New York State appeared with the Consumers' League at Albany at the last legislative session, and repeatedly sent counsel to the capitol in support of a bill defining as a factory any place where laundry work is done by mechanical power. The association's support was able and determined. The bill has now passed both houses.

Such responsible action as this on the part of the commercial laundry employers of the State of New York, Brooklyn, and Manhattan is in striking contrast with the stand taken



by the Oregon commercial laundry employers in the matter of laundry employees' legal hours of industry.

VI

The constitutionality of the present New York law concerning the hours of labor of adult women in factories, laundries, and mechanical establishments was virtually determined by the Federal decision in regard to the Oregon Ten-Hour Day Law for working-women.

About three years ago the State of Oregon enacted a law of practically the same bearing as the New York law on the same subject, though superior in that it limited the hours of labor of adult women in mechanical establishments, factories, and laundries to ten hours during the twenty-four hours of any one day, where the New York law, of the same provision in other respects, limits the hours of labor of adult women to sixty in a week.

The laundries and the State of Oregon agreed to carry a test case to the Federal Supreme Court to determine the new law's constitutionality.

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Mr. Curt Muller of Oregon employed a working woman in his laundry for more than ten hours. Information was filed against him by an inspector. Mr. Muller's trial resulted in a verdict against him, and a sentence of a ten-dollar fine. He appealed the case to the State Supreme Court of Oregon, which affirmed his conviction. Mr. Muller then appealed the case to the Federal Supreme Court.

In the defence of the law before the Federal Supreme Court, the National Consumers' League had the good fortune to obtain, in cooperation with the State of Oregon, the services of Louis D. Brandeis, the most distinguished services that could have been received, generously rendered as a gift. This fact alone may serve to indicate the vital character of the case, and the importance, for industrial justice in the future, of securing a favorable verdict for the laundry workers.

The argument of Mr. Muller was that the Oregon Ten-Hour Law was unconstitutional: First, because the statute attempted to prevent persons from making their own contracts, and thus violated the provisions of the Fourteenth Amendment.[41] Next, because the statute did not apply equally to all persons similarly situated and was class legislation. And, finally, because the statute was not a valid exercise of the police power; that is to say, there was no necessary or reasonable connection between the limitations described by the act and the public health and welfare.

Mr. Brandeis' brief replied that, first, the guaranty of freedom of contract was legally subject to such reasonable restraint of action as the State may impose in the exercise of the police power for the protection of the general health and welfare. It submitted that certain facts of common knowledge established conclusively that there was reasonable ground for holding that to permit women in Oregon to work in a mechanical establishment or factory or laundry more than ten hours in one day was dangerous to public welfare.

These facts of common knowledge, collected by Miss Josephine Goldmark, the Publication Secretary of the National Consumers' League, were considered under two heads: first, that of American and foreign legislation restricting the hours of labor for women; and, second, the world's experience, upon which the legislation limiting the hours of labor for women is based.

These facts comprised the governmental restrictions of the number of hours employers may require women to labor, from twenty States of the United States, and from Great Britain, France, Switzerland, Austria, Holland, Italy, and Germany. The laws were followed by authoritative statements from over ninety reports of committees, bureaus of statistics, commissioners of hygiene, and government inspectors, both in this country and in all the civilized countries of Europe, asseverating that long hours of labor are dangerous for women, primarily because of their special physical organization.

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In reply to the second allegation,—that the act in question was class legislation, as it did not apply equally to all persons similarly situated,—the plaintiff answered that the specific prohibition of more than ten hours' work in a laundry was not an arbitrary discrimination against that trade; because the present character of the business and its special dangers of long hours afford strong reasons for providing a legal limitation of the hours of work in that industry as well as in manufacturing and mechanical establishments. Statements from industrial and medical authorities described conclusively the present character of the laundry business.

Mr. Brandeis finally submitted that, in view of all these facts, the present Oregon statute was within Oregon's police power, as its public health and welfare did require a legal limitation of the hours of women's work in manufacturing and mechanical establishments and in laundries.

Justice Brewer delivered the opinion of the Supreme Court of the United States. The case was won. Here are, in part, the words of the decision:—

It may not be amiss in the present case, before examining the constitutional question, to notice the course of legislation as well as expressions of opinion from other judicial sources. In the brief filed by Mr. Brandeis ... is a copious collection of all these matters. The ... legislation and opinions referred to ... are significant of a widespread belief that woman's physical structure and the special functions she performs in consequence thereof, justify special legislation restricting or qualifying the conditions under which she should be permitted to toil. Constitutional questions, it is true, are not settled by even a consensus of present public opinion.... At the same time, when a question of fact is debated and debatable, and the extent to which a special constitutional limitation goes is affected by the truth in respect to the fact, a widespread and long-continued belief concerning it is worthy of consideration. We take judicial cognizance of all matters of general knowledge.... That woman's physical structure and the performance of maternal functions place her at a disadvantage in the struggle for subsistence is obvious. This is especially true when the burdens of motherhood are upon her. Even when they are not, by abundant testimony of the medical fraternity, continuance for a long time on her feet at work, repeating this from day to day, tends to injurious effects upon her body, and as healthy mothers are essential to vigorous offspring, the physical well-being of woman becomes an object of public interest and care in order to preserve the strength and vigor of the race.

Nobody knowing the actual strain upon women laundry workers, no one who had seen them lying motionless and numb with fatigue at the end of a long day, or foregoing food itself for the sake of rest, could listen unmoved to these thrilling words of the greatest court of our country.



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The most eloquent characteristic of the Supreme Court's affirmation was the fact that it was essentially founded simply upon clear, human truth, firmly and widely ascertained, founded on a respect, not only for the past, but for the future of the whole nation.

Too often does one hear that "law has nothing to do with equity," till one might believe that law was made for law's sake, and not as a means of deliverance from injustice. "The end of litigation is justice. We believe that truth and justice are more sacred than any personal consideration." Such was the conception of the office of the law expressed by Justice Brewer twenty years before, on his appointment to the Supreme Bench. It was this conception of law that made the determination of the Oregon case a great decision in our country's history.

From time immemorial, women as well as men have been workers of the world. The vital feature of the statement that six million women are now gainfully employed in this country is not the "entrance" of multitudinous women into industry, but the fact that their industry, being now carried on in public instead of private, has been acknowledged and paid. This acknowledgment has led to the establishment of juster terms for women's labor by the Federal Supreme Court. Such an establishment, as the opinion of the court affirmed, is surely a distinct gain, not only for women, but for children, for men, for the race.

When the preparation of food and clothing, the traditional household labor of women, passed in large measure from household fires and spinning-wheels into the canning factories and garment trades with the invention of machinery, women simply continued their traditional labor outside their houses instead of inside them.[42] The accounts of the laundry, the shirt-waist and the cloak making trades in New York seem to show that, where men and women engage in the same field of activity, their work is, by a natural division, not competitive or antagonistic, but complementary. Indeed, so little is it antagonistic that the very first spark that lit the fire of the largest strike of women that ever occurred in this country, the shirt-waist makers' strike, was kindled by an offensive injustice to a man.

The chronicles of what self-supporting women have given and received in their work in wage and in vitality, these working girls' budgets obtained by the Consumers' League, will not have told their story truly unless they have evoked with their narrative the presence of that impersonal sense of right instinctive in the factory girls who go year after year to Albany to fight against the long Christmas season hours for the shop-girls, in the cloak makers in their effort to stop sweated home work, in the responsible common-sense of countless working women. So that the fact that six million women are now gainfully employed in this country may finally tend to secure wiser adjustments and fairer returns for the labor, not only of women, but of all the workers of the world.

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FOOTNOTES:

[Footnote 33: Its severity may be indicated by an account of the work a machine ironer in Illinois regularly performed before the passage of the Illinois Ten-Hour Law, when conditions in that State were as they now are in the hotel and hospital laundries of New York. Miss Radway used to iron five hundred shirt bosoms a day. Holding the loose part of the shirt up above her head to prevent the muslin from being caught in the iron, she pressed the bosom in a machine manipulated by three heavy treads—by bearing all of her weight on her right foot stamping down on a pedal to the right; then by bearing all her weight on her left foot, stamping down a pedal to the left; then by pressing down both pedals with a jump. To iron five hundred shirt bosoms required three thousand treads a day.]

[Footnote 34: State Labor Law, paragraph 81.—Protection of Employees Operating Machinery: "... If a machine or any part thereof is in a dangerous condition or is not properly guarded, the use thereof may be prohibited by the Commissioner of Labor, and a notice to that effect shall be attached thereto. Such notice shall not be removed until the machine is made safe and the required safeguards are provided, and in the meantime such unsafe or dangerous machinery shall not be used."]

[Footnote 35: Here is a letter from the Secretary of the Women's Trade-Union League, stating the results of organization in the West in the laundry trade: "The laundry workers in San Francisco eight years ago were competing with the Chinese laundries. The girls working in the laundries there received about \$10 a month, with the privilege of 'living in.' Three days in the week they began work at 6 A.M. and worked until 2 A.M. the next morning. The other three days they worked from 7 A.M. to 8 P.M. Since organization, they have established the nine-hour day and the minimum wage of \$7. They have extended their organization almost the entire length of the Pacific Coast."]

[Footnote 36: Perhaps a better survey of the standard of wages for all departments of laundry work in which women are employed can be given by the table below. By the word "standard" I mean the usual wage of a worker of average skill who has been at work in a laundry for a period of at least one year.

Hand starching (shirts)	\$12
Hand ironing	10
Hand starching (collars)	9
Hand washing	8
Machine ironing	7
Feeders	6
Folders	6
Catchers	5



Machine starching (shirts)	5
Collar ironing	5
Machine starching (collars)	4.50
Shakers	4.50]

[Footnote 37: One of the suggestions the inquirers had made, in regard to danger of injury, was the recommendation of the passage of the State Compensation Act, drafted by the joint conference of the Central Labor Bodies of the city of New York. This act became a law in September, 1910, but has since then (July 22, 1911) been declared unconstitutional.]



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[Footnote 38: Laws of New York, Chapter 229, section 1, paragraph 88. Became a law May 6, 1910.]

[Footnote 39: Laws of New York, Chapter 31 of the Consolidated Laws, as amended to July 1, 1909, paragraph 86. Inquirers' suggestion: This law would be simpler to enforce if an amending clause required that, in laundries, washing be done in a separate room from the rest of the work.]

[Footnote 40: Laws of New York, Chapter 3 of the Consolidated Laws, as amended to July 1, 1909, paragraph 86.]

[Footnote 41: "No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States: nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law, nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."]

[Footnote 42: Jane Addams, "Democracy and Social Ethics."]

CHAPTER VII

SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT AS APPLIED TO WOMEN'S WORK

Within the last thirty years a new method of conducting work, called Scientific Management, has been established in various businesses in the United States, including "machine shops and factories, steel work and paper mills, cotton mills and shoe shops, in bleacheries and dye works, in printing and bookbinding, in lithographing establishments, in the manufacture of type-writers and optical instruments, in constructing and engineering work—and to some extent—the manufacturing departments of the Army and Navy." [43]

Three of the enterprises to a greater or less degree reorganized by this new system in this country employ women workers. These establishments are a New Jersey cotton mill, a bleachery in Delaware, and a cloth finishing factory in New England. The reduction of costs for the owning firms inaugurating Scientific Management has already received a wide publicity. It is the object of this account to present as clear a chronicle as has been obtainable of the effect the methods of Scientific Management have had on the fortunes of the workers—more especially on the hours, the wages, and the general health of the women workers in these houses who have so far experienced its training. [44]

What, then, are the new principles of management which have been inaugurated? What is Scientific Management? The expression may perhaps best be defined to lay readers by a lay writer by means of an outline of the growth of its working principles in



this company—an outline traced as far as possible in the words of the engineers creating the system, whose courtesy in the matter is here gratefully acknowledged.

I

In 1881, Mr. Frederick W. Taylor, the widely revered author of “The Art of Cutting Metals” and of “Shop Management,” then a young man of 21, closed, in grave discouragement, a long, hard, and victorious contest of his conducted as gang boss of the machinists of the Midvale Steel Company in Pennsylvania. In the course of the last three years, as he narrates in his book “Academic and Industrial Efficiency”:[45]—



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By discharging workers, lowering the wages of the more stubborn men who refused to make any improvement, lowering the piece-work rate, and by other such methods, he (the writer) succeeded in very materially increasing the output of the machines, in some cases doubling the output, and had been promoted from one gang boss-ship to another until he became the foreman of the shop.... For any right-minded man, however, this success is in no sense a recompense for the bitter relations which he is forced to maintain with all those around him. Life which is one continuous struggle with other men is hardly worth living.... Soon after being made foreman, therefore, he decided to make a determined effort in some way to change the system of management so that the interests of the workmen and the management should become the same instead of antagonistic.... He therefore obtained the permission from Mr. William Sellers, the President of the Midvale Steel Company, to spend some money in a careful scientific study of the time required to do various kinds of work. Lack of information on the part of both workers and the management as to the quickest time in which a piece of work can be done constitutes what has been the most formidable obstacle in the path of all progress toward improved industrial conditions.... Every wasteful operation, every mistake, every useless move has to be paid for by somebody, and in the long run both the employer and the employee have to bear a proportionate share.... For each job there is the quickest time in which it can be done by a first-class man; this time may be called the "Standard Time," for the job.... Under all the ordinary systems this quickest time is more or less completely shrouded in mist.

Through a period of about twelve years the simplest operations in the shop were now timed, observed, and studied by graduates from science courses, different university men, engaged by Mr. Taylor, until a general law had been discovered regarding the exertion of physical energy a first-class worker could employ "and thrive under." It was found that the worker's resistance of fatigue in lifting and carrying the load depended, not on the amount of strength in terms of horse-power which he was obliged to exert to elevate and sustain the load, but on the proportion of his day spent in rest. For instance, a pig-iron handler, lifting and carrying pigs weighing 92 pounds each, could lift and carry 47 tons of iron in a day without undue fatigue if fifty-seven per cent of his working hours were spent in rest, and forty-three per cent were spent in work. If he lifted and put in place a number of pigs amounting to half that tonnage, he might work without undue fatigue for a greater part of the day. Under a certain far lighter load he could work without fatigue all day long, with no rest whatever.

With accurate time-study as a basis, the "quickest time" for each job is at all times in plain sight of both employers and workmen, and is reached with accuracy, precision, and speed.[46]



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OPERATION—WHEELBARROW EXCAVATION. Date, March 10, 189__

KEY:

- A: Op.
- B: Time
- C: Av.
- D: No. Shov.
- E: Total time min.
- F: Total picking min.
- G: Total shoveling and wheeling min.
- H: Times per barrow min.
- I: No obs
- J: Times per barrow min.
- K: Time per pc. per shovel min.
- L: No. shovels per barrow min.
- M: Time wheeling 100 ft. min.

A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D	A	B	C			
-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----																	
--+-+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----																	
Department--																	
Construction	a	1.37	1.37	15	a	1.12		1.12		12	a'	1.86		11			
Men--Mike Flaherty	b	1.56	0.19		b	1.39		0.27			a'	1.81		13			
	c	1.82	0.26		c	1.58		0.19			a'	2.14		16			
Materials--Sand																	
requiring no pick	d	1.97	0.15		d	1.70		0.12			a'	1.98		14			
Materials--Hard																	
clay in bank	e	1.97	0.15		e	1.92		0.22									
Implements--No. 3																	
shovel;																	
Contractors'																	
wooden																	
wheelbarrow	f	2.36	0.09		f	2.36		0.09									
Conditions--Day-work																	
for a contractor.																	
By previous																	
observation	a	1.24	1.24	13	a	2.05		0.13		13							
An average barrow																	
load of sand is																	
2.32 cu. ft.																	
measured in cut	b	1.36	0.12		b	1.38		0.15									
An average barrow																	



load of clay is | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
2.15 cu. ft. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
measured in cut |c|1.59|0.23| |c|1.60 |0.22 | | | | | | | |
d	1.83	0.24		d	1.78	0.18							
e	2.08	0.25		e	2.05	0.27							
f	2.23	0.25		f	2.23	0.18							

Time | Complete | | | | | Detail | | | | |
| Operations | E | F | G | H | Operations | I | J | K | L | M
-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----
+-----+-----+-----
7 A.M.|Commenced | | | | | | | | | |



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The opening of the Spanish War found some 80,000 tons of pig-iron piled in small piles in an open field adjoining the Bethlehem Steel Company's works. Prices for pig-iron had been so low that it could not be sold at a profit, and was therefore stored. With the opening of the Spanish War the price of the pig-iron rose, and this large accumulation of iron was sold. The ...steel company's ...pig-iron gang ...consisted of about 75 men ...good average pig-iron handlers, under an excellent foreman ...A railroad switch was run out into the field, right along the edge of the piles of pig-iron. An inclined plane was placed against the side of a car, and each man picked up from his pile a pig of iron weighing about 92 pounds, walked up the inclined plank, and dropped it on the end of the car. We found that this gang were loading on the average of about 12-1/2 tons per man per day in this manner. We were surprised to find, after studying the matter, that a first-class pig-iron handler ought to handle between 47 and 48 tons per day, instead of 12-1/2 tons, which were being handled. This task seemed so very large that we were obliged to go over our work several times before we were sure we were absolutely right.... The task which faced us as managers under the modern scientific plan ...was ...to see that the 80,000 tons of pig-iron were loaded on the cars at the rate of 47 tons per man per day in place of 12-1/2 tons.... It was further our duty to see that this work was done without bringing on a strike among the men, without any quarrel with the men, and to see that the men were happier and better contented with loading at the new rate of 47 tons than they were when loading at the old rate of 12-1/2 tons. The first step was the scientific selection of the workmen.... Under ...scientific management ...it is an inflexible rule to talk to and deal with only one man at a time, since we are not dealing with men in masses, but are trying to develop each individual man to his highest state of efficiency and prosperity. The 75 men in the gang were carefully watched and studied for three or four days, at the end of which time we had picked out four men who were believed to be physically able to handle pig-iron at the rate of 47 tons per day. A careful study was then made of each of these men.... Finally one man was selected from among the four as the most likely man to start with.

This man, who had been receiving \$1.15 a day, agreed to follow for \$1.85 a day the directions of the time-student, who had determined the proportion and intervals of rest necessary for the regular accomplishment of the task, without overstrain or undue fatigue. The worker started to carry his accustomed load and at regular intervals was told by the time-student, observing the proper period for rest and work with a watch: "Now pick up a pig and walk. Now sit down and rest. Now, walk—now, rest, *etc.*"

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[Illustration: Courtesy of *Industrial Engineering*

THE NEW METHOD OF PROVIDING THE BRICKLAYER WITH MATERIAL]

He walked when he was told to walk and rested when he was told to rest, and at half past five in the afternoon had his 47-1/2 tons loaded on the car. And he practically never failed to work at this pace and to do the task that was set him during the three years that the writer was at Bethlehem.... Throughout this time, he averaged a little more than \$1.85 a day; whereas he had never received more than \$1.15 a day, which was the ruling wage at that time in Bethlehem.... One man after another was picked out and trained to handle pig-iron at the rate of 47-1/2 tons a day, until all of the pig-iron was handled at this rate, and all of this gang were receiving sixty per cent more wages than other men around them.

A very brilliant and extended investigation concerning the elimination of waste of human energy and labor by motion-study has been made independently of Mr. Taylor by Mr. Frank Gilbreth, whose discoveries in the field have already cut down the effort of the labor of bricklaying two-thirds. The two accompanying photographs show what Scientific Management and motion-study did in one case to serve the worker by an orderly and convenient arrangement of his material.

These extremely simple processes of bricklaying and carrying pig-iron have been selected as instances of the procedure of Scientific Management, because they reveal one of its most illuminating qualities. Scientific Management makes an art of all work. It gives the most primitive manual task its right dignity, and turns knowledge, science, and the powers of direction from the position of tyrants of labor to that of its servitors.

Scientific Management, then, besides eliminating waste in human energy, or rather by way of eliminating this waste, eliminates waste in equipment, waste in machine power, and evolves through an extended planning department such better appliances, such an improved programme of work and recording of individual work as has been only very imperfectly indicated here.

For an instance of the elimination of waste in equipment the account of the saving effected for one establishment by an efficient use of its belting may be narrated. This was the work of Mr. Harrington Emerson, widely known as a counselling engineer. In the '70's Mr. Emerson had become interested in the subject of Efficiency Engineering by his study of the successful conduct of the German Army during the Franco-Prussian War; and he has since then reorganized numerous large enterprises in accordance with the principles derived from his inquiry. Among these establishments was a machine shop where the belting[47]



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“had cost (for maintenance and renewals) at one of the main shops about \$12,000 a year—or \$1000 a month—and it was so poorly installed and supervised that there was an average of 12 breakdowns every working-day, each involving more or less disorganization of the plant in its part or as a whole.” The workmen in charge of the belts now received directions as to their charge from a general foreman, who received directions from an efficiency engineer. This engineer had derived his general information on the subject from a man who had made a special study of belts for nine years. He laid down a few general rules, requiring accurate records of breakdown, repair, and installation, full authority and responsibility for the special worker on belts, a better grade of work in installation and better operation of the belts. Under this method “the number of breakdowns declined from 12 each working-day to an average of 2 a day, not one of them serious ...and due to original defective installation, which it was impossible to remedy without unjustifiable expense.... The cost of maintaining belts fell from \$1000 a month to \$300 a month.”

This elimination of waste of human power, and in connection with it the elimination of waste of equipment and of machine power, have, then, in the course of the last thirty years, been studied and applied in this country in the way roughly outlined by Mr. Taylor, Mr. Gilbreth, Mr. Gantt, Mr. Sanford Thompson, Mr. Barth, Mr. Cook, and Mr. Hathaway; and in somewhat the same manner by Mr. Harrington Emerson, Mr. Edward Emerson, Mr. W.J. Power, Mr. Arion, Mr. Playfair, and Mr. Chipman. These engineers have developed methods which have made it possible for them to reorganize the various businesses mentioned which have consulted them, and to decrease their costs and increase their profits. It will be seen at once that the procedure of Scientific Management in determining by scientific analysis the rate of speed and the working conditions under which machine power and human energy can be at once most productively and continuously employed, is really new, and differs radically from former business management, however ably systematized.

“But these,” said Mr. Taylor, in speaking of the methods of Scientific Management, “are incidents in the course of Scientific Management. Its great underlying purpose is the achievement of prosperity for the workers and for the employers.” Mr. Taylor’s definition of prosperity, given on another occasion, is one of the finest the present writer has ever heard. “By a man’s prosperity, I mean his best use of his highest powers.”

It may be asked, after the efficiency of workers has been increased by scientific study, what provision is made by scientific study for their increased compensation. While Mr. Taylor was at the Bethlehem Steel Company, Mr. Henry L. Gantt, then engaged with him in reorganizing the Bethlehem Steel Works, first applied the Bonus and Task system of compensation, which may be described loosely as a premium paid if a certain predetermined amount be accomplished in a certain time. Its general principles are these:[48]—



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1. "A scientific investigation in detail of each piece of work and the determination of the best method and the shortest time in which the work can be done."
2. "A teacher capable of teaching the best methods and shortest time."
3. "Reward for both teacher and pupil, when the latter is successful." [49]

II

About five years ago Mr. Gantt was consulted concerning the application of Scientific Management in a New England Cloth Finishing house. The installation of the new system here began on the eve of a strike which the workers lost. The history of this strike and its causes is not a part of this account. Only these facts concerning it bear upon the present subject. The strike started among the men folders, then folding 155 pieces of cloth a day for \$10 a week on week wages, and asking for ten per cent increase of wage without increase of output. The women folders' wage on lighter work was \$7.50. As will be seen, this request was met by Scientific Management. The wage was increased far beyond ten per cent. The output was increased, both by improved mechanical methods, and by a standard of more expert work, to from 447 to 887 pieces a day. The engineers of Scientific Management had not on either one side or the other any part whatever in the strike. But undoubtedly one of its contributing causes was a distrust aroused by the rumor that a new system of work was to be inaugurated.

The Cloth Finishing establishment bleaches, starches, and calenders dimities, muslins, percales, and shirtings, and folds and wraps them for shipping. The factory has good light and good air and an excellent situation in open, lightly rolling country. About two hundred young women, Americans, Scotch, English, and French-Canadians are now employed here on the bonus and task system, most of them whom I saw living with their families in very attractive houses in pleasant villages near. One or two were on the gloomy, muddy little streets of a French-Canadian mill town. These girls, too, were in well-built houses and not living in crowded conditions. But all their surroundings were dingy and disagreeable. At the Cloth Finishing factory and both the other establishments, every opportunity for the fullest inquiry among workers as to the result of the system for them was offered by the owning companies. Difficulties in the industry for the workers were frequently pointed out by managers; and the addresses and names of the less well-paid workers and those in the harder positions were supplied as freely as information about the more fortunate effects of the system. Both this firm and that of the cotton mill are anxious to obtain first-class work through first-class working conditions as rapidly as trade conditions will allow.



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The first process at which women are employed is that of keeping cloth running evenly through a tentering machine. The machine holds on tenter hooks—the hooks of the metaphorical reference—the damp cloth brought from the process of bleaching, and rolls it through evenly into a drier, where it slips off. There are two kinds of tentering machines. At one kind two girls sit, each watching an edge of the cloth and keeping it straight on the tenter hooks, so it will feed evenly. The newer machines run in such a manner that one girl who may either stand or sit can watch both edges. Because of the nearness of the drying closet, the air would be hot and dry here but that outside air is driven in constantly by fans through pipes with vents opening close to the workers.

The tentering machines used to run slowly. This slowness enhanced the natural monotony and wearisomeness of the work. The girls used to receive wages of \$6 a week, and to rest three-quarters of an hour in the morning and three-quarters of an hour in the afternoon, with the same period for dinner at noon in the middle of a ten-and-one-half hour day. After Scientific Management was introduced, the girls sat at the machine only an hour and twenty minutes at a time. They then had a twenty-minute rest, and these intervals of work and rest were continued throughout the day by an arrangement of spelling with “spare hands.” The machines were run at a more rapid rate than before. The girl’s task was set at watching 32,000 yards in a day; and if she achieved the bonus, as she did without any difficulty, she could earn \$9 a week. The output of the tentering machines was increased about sixty per cent.

The girls at the tentering machines praised the bonus system eagerly. They said they could not bear to return to the former method of work; that now the work was easier and more interesting than before, and the payment and the hours were better. One of the “spare hands” showed me, as a memento of a new era at tenter-hooking machines, the written slip of paper the efficiency engineer had given to her, explaining to her how to arrange the intervals of rest, and to start the “rest” with a different girl on each Saturday—a five-hour day—so that the same girls would not have three intervals of rest every Saturday.

But in another part of the factory the girls at the tentering machines had wished to lump their rest intervals and to take them altogether in fifty-minute periods in the middle of the morning and of the afternoon. Here the “spare hands” intervals at the machines fell awkwardly, and they were obliged to work for an unduly long time. The girls became exhausted with the monotony in these longer stretches of work; and further wearied themselves by embroidering and sewing on fancy work in the long rest periods. Here the girls were much less contented than in the other departments.[50]

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After the cloth is dry and passed through calendering machines where men are employed, it is run into yard lengths by a yarding machine or “hooker.” At the yarding machines the girls stand under the frame holding the wooden arms that measure off the cloth back and forth. The workers here used to earn \$7.50 a week. They watch the machine, mark defects in some kinds of cloth, by inserting slips of paper, stop the machine when the material runs out, and lift the pile of measured cloth to a table where it is taken up by the cutters and folders and inspectors.

After the bonus system was introduced at the machines where the heavier material is measured, the yarding machines were all elevated to small platforms, so that the pile when finished would be on a level with an adjacent table, and the worker need not lift and carry the heavy weight of cloth to the table, but could slide the work. The machine was run more rapidly. The task was increased to about 35,000 yards, or from about 155 pieces to about 610. The wage with the bonus was now about \$10 on full time, and the hours were lessened 45 minutes, as at the tentering machines.

The worker stops the yarding machine by throwing her weight on her right foot, on a pedal to the right. The girls interviewed said they did not feel this as a strain, as there was a knack in doing it easily. On consulting a neighborhood physician it was found that within the last ten years, however, several women, both at the yarding and tentering machines, had strained themselves, probably by the tread at the yarding machine and by the slightly twisted seated position the older tentering machines necessitated. The number of these cases traceable to any one process of work had not increased under the new system. The whole number of these cases in the factory had, on the other hand, either decreased under the new system, or else had not come under this doctor’s care. He believed, however, that there was a reduction of the cases, and that this reduction was attributable to the better general health achieved by shorter hours, better ventilation, and better working conditions and appliances.

[Illustration: Courtesy of *Industrial Engineering*

THE USUAL METHOD OF PROVIDING THE BRICKLAYER WITH MATERIAL]

The increased task at the yarding machine seems to have increased the danger of accidents. A knife extends from the side of the machine; and when the girl’s attention is concentrated on her work, she sometimes puts her fingers too near the blade, and cuts them, though no instance was known here of the loss of a finger or of serious injury.

The girls stand all day at the yarding machine and at most of the succeeding processes of preparation. These are various arrangements of inspecting, counting yards, folding in “book folds,” of doubled-over material, or “long folds” of the full width, ticketing and stamping, tying selvages together with silk thread, or tying them to wrapping paper by means of a little instrument called a knot-tier—this process is called knotting—tying with ribbons, pasting on strips of silver tissue ribbon, further ticketing and stamping, and

running the sets of tickets indicating the several yards in each piece through an adding machine, which then produces on a stamped card the total number of yards in each consignment, before it is finally rushed away for shipment.



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The process of inspection is different for different qualities of material. Before the material is bleached, the number of yards and the character of treatment for each piece are specified on stamped orders issued from the planning room and sent with the cloth through the processes of production. It may as well be said here, that several girls have been promoted from manual work to work in this planning room, where they stamp orders, on a bonus at different rates, giving them a wage of about \$10 a week in full time on office hours of 8 hours a day.[51]

The inspector receiving the bales from the yarding machines now counts off the number of yards and cuts the bale in accordance with these directions. Some material she inspects yard by yard for imperfections and dirt. After marking the yards on the cut piece, she sends it on to the folder if it is clean, and if it is spotted, to girls who wash out the spots and press the cloth.[52] On other material, imperfections are marked by the girl at the yarding machine, by the insertion of slips of paper. As the inspector has less to do on these pieces, she not only counts and cuts, but folds them.

Before the introduction of the bonus system, one girl used to fold, inspect, and ticket. She used also to carry her material from a table near the yarding machine. Boys now bring the material except where at the yarding machines for heavier stuffs it is pushed along the table. The hours, as for almost all of the bonus workers, have been shortened by 45 minutes. The wages which were \$7.50 a week are now between \$10 and \$11 on full time. Almost all the workers here said they greatly preferred the bonus system and would greatly dislike to return to other work.

But in dealing with the heavier materials the work was tiring, and more tiring under the new system than before, as the number of pieces lifted had been increased. It was said while there was every intention of fairness on the part of the management in arranging the work; it was sometimes not evenly distributed in slack times, the same girls being laid off repeatedly and the same girls chosen to work repeatedly instead of in alternation.

In the further processes of folding, some of the work and the lifting to the piles of the sheer, book-folded stuff is light, but requires great deftness; other parts of the work and the lifting to the piles are heavier.[53] The wage before the bonus was introduced was \$7.50 a week, and with the bonus rose to \$11 a week, in full time. As with the inspectors, the work was now brought to the folders, and the hours were shortened by 45 minutes. Here there was great variation in the account of the system.

One of the folders on light work, a wonderfully skilful young woman, who had folded 155 pieces a day before, and now folded 887, could run far beyond her task without exhaustion and earn as much as \$15 a week. She and some of the expert workers paused in the middle of the morning for 10 or 15 minutes' rest and ate some fruit or other light refreshment, and sometimes took another such rest in the afternoon.



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Another strong worker, employed on heavy material, though she liked the bonus system, and said “it couldn’t be better,” had remained at work at about the same wages as before, because she was a little ahead of the others before and earned \$8 a week; and now, as there was hardly more than enough of her kind of work to occupy her for more than four days a week, she still earned about \$8.

One folder was made very nervous by a constant fear that she would not earn her bonus. She always did complete the necessary amount; but when the system was first introduced, she had been sleepless night after night. Though this sleeplessness had passed away, she still took a nerve tonic to brace her through her work; and this was the case with another folder. The mothers of both these girls urged them to return to week work. But this was of poor quality—odds and ends—and the girls disliked it, and persisted in the new system.

In tying ribbons around the bolts of material, the girls sit at work. Their wages had been \$1 a day for tying ribbons around 600 pieces; and now, on a bonus for 1200 pieces, is at times for quick workers, as high as \$11. But the ribbon tying was not steady work. It is applied to only some of the material, and the task and bonus here are intermittent. The girls who knot, or run silk threads through the selvages, paste on tinsel ribbon, and wrap are younger than the other workers. Their wages before had been from \$5.80 to \$6 a week. Now they are in some cases over \$8; in others about \$7; in others about \$6. The work reaches them in better condition than before. They said it was more interesting, and the chief difficulty was in lifting occasionally a greater number of heavy pieces in piling. Seats were provided for these workers except for those at tinselling; and if they found they were able to complete the task easily, they sat at the work. At the heavier work, the girl at yarding, the folder, knotter, and ticketer, all worked tandem, and if the girl at yarding loses her bonus, all the girls lose the bonus.

In the last process of stamping tickets and ticketing, the girls work without one superfluous motion, with a deftness very attractive to see; and both here and at book folding justify the claim made by Scientific Management that speed is a function of quality. The wages here had been \$6 before, and were now in full time from \$9 to \$10. As the task before had been combined with various other processes, it was, as in other cases, impossible to determine how much the work of each worker had been increased. The present task was that of ticketing 39 bundles of 5 pieces each hourly, with different rates for different amounts of tickets, and was not considered at all a strain. But at the ticketing connected with the adding machines the work was not differentiated so carefully. More of the heavy work came to these ticketers, and the lifting was sometimes too exhausting. But the work was better than in former times, and the wages of from \$9 to \$10 were thought just, if a higher rate had been added for the heavier work here.



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III

All this work described at the tenter hooking, the yarding, the folding, inspection, and ticketing, was of a different character from that carried on under the bonus and task system in a large room where sheets and pillowcases were manufactured. This work afforded the only instance of an application of Scientific Management to the processes involved in the great needle trades and was, on that account, of special interest.

The white cloth is brought on trucks to the girls, who tear it into lengths, in accordance with written orders received with each consignment. They snip the cloth with scissors, place the cut against the edge of an upright knife, set at a convenient height on a bench, and pull the two sides of the cloth so that the knife tears through evenly to the end; then they stamp the material, fold it over, and place it on a truck to be carried to the machine sewer. The weekly wages before the bonus was introduced had been \$5.98 and were now with the bonus \$6.75, though workers sometimes tore more than the 1190 sheets required by the task and made from \$7 to \$7.50 by a week's work. The quick workers occasionally stopped for 10 or 12 minutes in the morning and ate a light lunch. The task was severe for the muscles of the hand and forearm, and apt to cause swollen fingers and strained wrists, though the girls bound their wrists to prevent this. All the work was done standing. The loosened starch flying here was annoying, both to the tearers and the girls at the sewing-machines.

Since the time of the inquiry, all the girls engaged in tearing have been relieved and transferred to other positions, and the work of tearing has been done by men.

Here the sheets are turned back and hemmed by workers who sew tandem, one girl finishing the broader hem and the other the narrower one, their task being 620 sheets a day. The girls at the machines formerly earned \$7.50, and now earn with the machine set at the higher rate of speed from \$8 to \$11. They stop for 10 minutes in the morning, and clean the machines and clear away the litter around them. The sewing and stooping are monotonous, and the work on bonus here is apt to cause nervousness, because of uncertainty occasioned by frequent breakages in the machines.[54]

There is a room at one side of the department, where the girls were to rest when they had completed their tasks. But the present foreman, not understanding the system, comes to the rest room and hurries them out again, even after the 620 sheets are finished.[55] One of the girls in the department, an Italian girl, who used to run far beyond the task at the machine, had fallen ill under the strain of the work, or at least left the factory looking extremely ill and saying that she had broken down and could not remain. Another unfortunate result of the speed at the sewing-machines is that the girls are more apt than before to run the needles through their fingers.



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The folding in this department is also exhausting, and the management is trying to find a better system of conducting this process than that now employed. The folders here stoop and pick up the sheets and fold them lengthwise and crosswise. The task is 1200 a day; and the wage with the bonus comes to between \$6 and \$7 a week. But after the bonus is earned, payment is, for some reason, not suitably provided on work beyond the task. One worker said she used to fold one or two pieces above the amount without any objection, but lately she had folded as many as 200 beyond, without payment.

From the folders the sheets are carried away to a mangle, where they are folded over again by young girls. The work is light, but the payment of \$5.80 to \$6 for 770 pieces an hour is low. The mangle is well guarded. By an excellent arrangement here, the material is piled on a small elevator, so that the girl at the mangle does not have to stoop or lift, but easily adjusts the elevator, so that she can feed the mangle from the pile at her convenience. The girl at a mangle can earn from \$7 to \$8 and is not tired in any way by her work.

The final stamping and wrapping in paper and tying with cord are done at a rate of 25 pieces an hour, for a wage coming to \$6 a week, by young girls; and the situation is otherwise about the same as with the other wrappers.

Except at the mangle, the operation of the sheet and pillow-case factory was unsatisfactory to the management, who had begun to study the department for reorganization just before the time of the inquiry. Competition had so depressed the price of the manufacture of sheets that the commission men, for whom these processes described were executed, paid 25 cents a dozen sheets for the work. This does not, of course, include the initial cost of the material. It means, however, that all of the following kinds of machine tending and manual labor on a sheet were to be done for 2-1/2 cents:—

- Tearing; (men workers)
- Hemming; (women workers)
- Folding; (women workers)
- Mangling; (women workers)
- Book-folding; (women workers)
- Wrapping; (women workers)
- Ticketing; (women workers)

The management lost in its payment for labor here, and yet felt the work was too hard for its workers, and should be changed. Alterations in the rest periods are now being introduced. For the girls the system of operation at the time of the inquiry in the sheet and pillow-case factory, except on the mangle, was undoubtedly more exhausting than the old method, though their wages had been increased and their hours shortened.



In general in the Cloth Finishing establishment Scientific Management had increased wages.

It had shortened hours.



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In regard to health and fatigue, outside the sheet factory, when the general vague impression that the new system was more exhausting than the other was sifted down, the grist of fact remaining was small, and consisted of the instances mentioned. About forty young women told me their experience of the work. Sometimes their mothers and their fathers talked with me about it. Every one whose health had suffered under the new task had been exhausted by some old difficulty which had remained unremedied. This point will be considered in relation to the industry of the other women workers in the other houses after the accounts of their experience of Scientific Management.

IV

There are over 600 workers in the New Jersey cotton mill. Of these 188 are women. One hundred and ten of the women workers are at present engaged under the bonus and task system, though the management expects to employ eventually under this system all of its workers, and is in this establishment markedly in sympathy with Scientific Management. The mill is a large, well-lighted brick structure, with fields around it, and another factory on one side, on the outskirts of a factory town. The establishment is composed of a larger and newer well-ventilated building, with washed air blown through the work-rooms; and an older building, where the part of the work is carried on which necessitates both heat and dampness to prevent the threads from breaking.

The cotton, which is of extremely fine quality, comes into the picker building in great bales from our Southern sea-coast and from Egypt. It is fed into the first of a series of cleaners, from the last of which it issues in a long, flat sheet, to go through the processes of carding, combing, drawing, and making into roving. The carding product consists of a very delicate web, which, after being run through a trumpet and between rollers, forms a "sliver" of the size of two of one's fingers, from which it issues in a long strand. This strand or sliver is threaded into a machine with other ends of slivers and rolled out again in one stronger strand; and this doubling and drawing process is innumerable repeated, till the final roving is fed into a machine that gives it a twist once in an inch and winds it on a bobbin. There are three kinds or stages of twisting and winding roving on these machines, and at the last, the "speeders," women are employed.

Up to this point all the workers have been men. These speeders are in the carding rooms, which are large and high, filled with great belts geared from above, and machines placed in long lanes, where the operatives stand and walk at their work. Humidifying pipes pass along the room, with spray issuing from their vents. The lint fibres are constantly brushed and wiped up by the workers, but there is still considerable lint in the air. The heat, the whirl of the machines, the heaviness of the atmosphere, and the lint are at first overpowering to a visitor. While many of the girls

say that they grow accustomed to these conditions, others cannot work under them, and go away after a few days' or sometimes a few hours' trial.[56]



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The speeders stand at one end of a long row of 160 bobbins and watch for a break in the parallel lines of 160 threads, and twist the two ends together when this occurs. The greater number of the speeders used to earn \$6 a week. But two or three women, on piece-work, earned about \$9 and did nearly twice as much as the other workers. The speeders had helpers who used to assist them to thread the back of the machine and to remove and place the bobbins in front. The change or “doff” occupied about 20 minutes. It generally occurred five times in the day of the better worker and thus consumed an hour and forty minutes of her working time. The hours in the cotton mill are ten and a half a day with five and a half on Saturday,—58 hours a week.

In order to ascertain the proper task for the speeders, a time-study was made of the work of one of the abler workers, who may be called Mrs. MacDermott, a strong and skilful Scotch woman, who had been employed at speeding in the mill for 14 years. Mrs. MacDermott was employed to teach the other speeders how to accomplish the same amount in the same time. The girls now thread the back of the machines with her help. Mrs. MacDermott, the speeder tender herself, and the doff boys, all working together, remove the bobbins and fill the frame, thus accomplishing the change in 7 minutes instead of 20 minutes. The girls are paid, while learning better methods from Mrs. MacDermott, at their old rate of a dollar a day. If they accomplish the task allotted, they receive a dollar a week more flat-rate, a bonus equivalent to a few cents a pound on each pound received by the management; and this brings the wage to \$1.65 a day, or between \$8 and \$10 a week. The work tires the girls no more than it did before. They receive about thirty per cent more wages, and the management receives from the speeders nearly twice as great an output as before. Mrs. MacDermott’s wage as a teacher has been raised to \$12.

From the speeders, the doff boys send the roving—called fine roving in the mill, because the other rovings in preceding operations are coarser—upstairs in the older building to the spinners. Spinning is a more difficult task than speeding. Two rovings are here twisted together by the machines. The spinners have 104 bobbins on one side of a frame, and watch for breakage, and change the bobbins on three frames, or six “sides.” Spinners formerly worked at piece-work rates and by watching eight sides, and frequently doing the work very imperfectly, would earn about \$9. After a time-study was taken, the task was set at six sides, and doffs as called for by a schedule. With the bonus the girls’ weekly wage comes to about \$10. In the spinning department there is a school for spinners. The heads receive a dollar for every graduate who learns to achieve the task and bonus.



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The yarn is carried from the spinners to the spoolers, and wound from bobbins to spools for convenience in handling. The work of the spool tenders seemed to the present writer to be the severest work for women in this cotton mill. The bobbins run out very rapidly, and require constant change. The girls watch the thread for breakages just as at the other machines. In replacing the bobbins and fastening the broken threads with a knot tier, the girls have to stoop down almost to the floor. Before the time-study was taken, the girls were watching 75 bobbins, hurrying up and down the sides, bending up and down perpetually at this work. Some of the spool tenders had \$6 a week on piece-work; others, more experienced workers, were able to earn \$10.50 at piece-work, although the work was frequently unsatisfactory and had loose ends. A little Italian girl, who may be called Lucia, an extremely rapid worker, used to run wildly from one end of the frame to the other, and in the summer-time fainted several times at her work from exhaustion. A time-study was taken from the work of a very deft young Polish girl, and from Lucia. The other spoolers were taught to work with the same rapidity, and were soon able to earn with the bonus and the work done beyond the task a sum which brought their wage up to nearly \$12 a week.

This lasted for about two months. But the work was so improperly done and the spools were so full of loose and untied ends, *etc.*, that the number of spindles to be tended was reduced from 75 to 50, and the machines were run at a lower rate of speed. The task was changed accordingly so that the worker's wage, simply with the bonus, was as it had been before. But she was unable to overrun the task as far as she had, formerly. By the workers' constant attention, the work now improved in quality, but the limit of quantity, was, of course, lower. The wages with the bonus dropped back to a smaller excess, or \$1.47 a day. This was, of course, disheartening, though Lucia said it was better, she was so much less tired by the work than she had been before. But the work is still undoubtedly very wearying and difficult. The spoolers still give incessant attention to their work, still do their best, and yet make by close application far less than they had grown accustomed to expect whether justly or unjustly.[57] The task is now 12 doffs a day—each doff requiring a change of 208 bobbins. So that in changing bobbins alone the girls have to stoop down over 2000 times a day, without counting all the stooping for knot tying, which the forewoman said would about equal the labor of bending and working at bobbin changing. She had talked with the management about having the frames raised, so as to eliminate this exhausting process of stooping to work for the spoolers. This change had been made in two machines and will doubtless be extended. [58]



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At the further twisting and plying of the cotton, the processes succeeding the spooling, men are employed. From these the yarn goes to the winding room in the newer building, where better air and temperature are possible than in the carding and spinning rooms. The winding room is large and light. At one side stand the warps, very tall and interesting to see, with their lines of delicate filament and high tiers of bobbins. In the winding room girls are engaged at machines which wind the yarn from spools back to bobbins for filling in the looms and also for the warp.

In winding the filling bobbins the girls watch the thread from eighteen bobbins, and replace and stop bobbins by pressing on foot pedals. The worker had made from \$7 to \$7.50 a week before a time-study was taken and the task increased. She can now make from \$8 to \$10.50 a week. The work is lightened for her by the fact that whereas she formerly placed the bobbins on the warp, doffers now do this for her. But the increased stamping of the pedals made necessary by the larger task is very tiring.

There are no women on bonus in the weave room, where the warp and the filling are now carried. After the woven product comes from the weaving room—an extremely heavy, strong stuff of the highest grade, used for filter cloth and automobile tires—it is hung in a large finishing room in the newer building over a glass screen lighted with sixteen electric lights which shine through the texture of the material and reveal its slightest defect. After it has been rolled over the screen, it is sent to girls who remedy these defects by needlework.

It is again run over the lighted screen by the inspectors and returned to the girls if there are still defects. Before the bonus system was applied, the girls had made \$5.04 a week, and finished about 5 rolls a day. After the system was applied, they made from \$7 to \$8 and did sometimes 10 and sometimes 12 rolls a day. But, in spite of the greatest care on Mr. Gantt's part in standardizing the quality in this department, here, as with the spool tenders, requirement as to quality had recently caused a temporary drop in wages. This change in requirement was occasioned, not as at the spool tending by the negligence of the workers, but by the somewhat unreasonable caprice of a customer. Knots in the texture, formerly sewed down as they were, are now cut and fastened differently. To learn this process meant just as hard work for the girls, and put them back temporarily to their old day rate,[59] though they were recently becoming sufficiently quick in the new process to earn the bonus as well as before.

By and large, the wages of the women workers in the cotton mill had been increased by Scientific Management.

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Their hours had not been affected. These were in all instances 10-1/2 a day and 5-1/2 on Saturday. There was no overtime. But on five nights in the week, women preparing yarn for the following day worked at speeding and spinning from six at night until six in the morning, with half an hour for lunch at midnight. This arrangement had always been the custom of the mill. The girls go home at six for breakfast, sleep until about half past four, rise, dress, and have supper, and go to work in the mill again at six. The night workers I visited had worked at night in other mills in New England before they worked in New Jersey. Their sole idea of work, indeed, was night work; and if it were closed in one mill, they sought it in another. One of the youngest girls, a clever little Hungarian of 17, who had been only 3 years in this country and could barely speak English, knew America simply as a land of night work and of Sundays, and had spent her whole life here like a little mole. The present owner, the superintendent, and the head of the planning department all seriously disliked night work for women, and said they were anxious to dispense with it. But they had not been able to arrange their output so as to make this change, though they intended to inaugurate it as rapidly as possible.

Concerning the health and conservation of the strength of the women workers in the mill under Scientific Management, the task of the speeders and of the women at cloth inspection tired the girls no more than it had before. In the spool tending and the winding, as the two most exhausting operations in each process, the stooping and the stamping of the pedals, had been increased by the heightened task, the exhaustion of the workers was heightened. But the work of the excitable little spool tender mentioned was finally so arranged as to leave her in better health than in the days when she was employed on piece-work, and the management was now endeavoring to eliminate the stooping at the bobbins. At spinning almost all the spinners found the work easier than before, probably because Scientific Management demands that machine supervision and assistance shall be the best possible. It must be remembered that the adjustment of conditions in the mill here is comparatively new. Almost all the girls said: "They don't drive you at the mill. They make it as easy for you as they can." It was of special value to observe the operation of Scientific Management in an establishment where all the industrial conditions are difficult for women. As in the white goods sewing for the Cloth Finishing establishment, these industrial conditions are unfortunately controlled to a great extent by competition and by custom for both the employer and the employees. The best omen for the conservation of the health of the women workers under Scientific Management in the cotton mill was the entire equity and candor shown by the management in facing situations unfavorable for the women workers' health and their sincere intention of the best practicable readjustments.



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V

The application of Scientific Management to women's work in the Delaware Bleachery was very limited, extending only to about 12 girls, all employed in folding and wrapping cloth.[60] The factory, on the outskirts of a charming old city in Delaware, is an enormous, picturesque cement pile, reaching like a bastion along the Brandywine River, with its windows overlooking the wooded bank of the stream.

The girls stand in a large room, before tables piled with great bolts of material, and stamp tickets and style cards, fasten them to the roll, fold over the raw edges of the material in a lap, tie two pieces of ribbon around the bolt, wrap it in paper, stamp and attach other tickets, and tie it up with cord to be shipped. Here, after a time-study was made of the quicker girls in all the operations, different tasks were set for different weights of material; and if the task was accomplished, a bonus was paid, amounting, roughly speaking, to a quarter of the worker's hourly wage. The arrangement of the different processes was so different for each worker, after and before the system was installed, that none of the girls could compare the different amounts of work she completed at the different times. But the whole output, partly through a better routing of the work to the tables, and by paying the boys who brought it a bonus of 5 cents for each worker who made her bonus, was increased from twenty-five to fifty per cent.

The girls' hours were decreased from 10-1/4 a day with frequent overtime up to nine at night to 9-1/4 a day with no overtime, the Saturday half-holiday remaining unchanged. Here is a list of the changes in the week wages. The work at the time of the inquiry was slack. Sometimes there were only a few hours in the day of wrapping of a kind on which the task and bonus was applied. Besides, these workers were in the midst of an establishment managed by another system. The bonus was given on the basis of the former wage. And this remained lower in the case of workers employed fewer years by the firm, though sometimes their task was the same as that of workers employed longer. Where the girls wrapped both the heavier and the lighter materials, the allotment of these was in the hands of a sub-foreman, who, instead of being in the new position of a teacher rewarded for helping each worker to make her bonus, was in the old position of a distributor of favors. The slackness of the work had led the management, in a good-willed attempt to provide as well as possible for the employees, to place several girls from other departments under this sub-foreman. One of these less strong and experienced girls, at the time of the inquiry, was receiving such an amount of heavy work that she could wrap only enough of the task to enable her to earn from \$3 to \$5 a week. The firm's policy was paternalistic, and while in many ways it had a genuine kindness, it was not in general sympathy with Scientific Management, though the superintendent is a thorough and consistent supporter of the new system. But he had not been able, single handed, to achieve all the necessary adjustments, in spite of the decided increase of output the new methods had already obtained for the company.



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| PER WEEK | FORMERLY

	PER WEEK	FORMERLY
Folding and ticketing on light material	\$5 to 6	\$4.84
Folding and ticketing on light material	5 to 6	4.84
Wrapping light material	6 to 7	4.56
Wrapping light material	7 to 8	4.84
Wrapping light and heavy material	6 to 6.50	4.56
Wrapping light and heavy material combined with napkin tying	6 to 7	4.84
Folding and ticketing both light and heavy material	5 to 6	4.84
Folding and ticketing both light and heavy material (unaccustomed to the work)	4.59 (once 6.69)	4.56
Folding and ticketing both light and heavy material (unaccustomed to the work)	5	4.56
Folding and ticketing both light and heavy material (unaccustomed to the work)	3 to 5	7

|(in another department)

Even considering slackness, these increases per week for first-rate speed and work, though in many cases the work was light, cannot but seem small. All the girls lived in attractive houses and pleasant places. All but one were with their families. The city has an open market. People of all grades of income go to market properly with market-baskets, choose food of excellent quality, and have fresh vegetables through the winter. The ladies of the house, the girls' mothers, preserve fruit from June strawberries to autumn apple-butter, and exhibit it proudly in row after row of glass jars. But the girls' wages could not pay for such living conditions. The girl who was boarding, and whose wages were sometimes \$5 a week, could not always pay her board bill and had almost nothing left for other expenses.[61]

In regard to health and fatigue the main difficulty here, as at the Cloth Finishing factory, was in the lifting of heavier pieces of cloth. Two of the girls had suffered, since the introduction of the bonus and task, by straining themselves in this way. One of them was at home ill for a week, and is now quite well again. The other girl was away for two months, and though she is now at work, had not fully regained her health. The



company had at once obtained employment less straining for the first of these girls, and the second said that the firm had always been fair with her in arranging the work. It was said that it had been Mr. Gantt's intention to have the heavier lifting done by men and boys, instead of combining it with the larger tasks the girls now accomplished under the new system. But the department had never fully carried out its intention, and unfortunately since Mr. Gantt's departure rather more of the heavy material had been ordered from the house than before.



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The general good will of the firm, the picturesque factory site, the pleasant work-rooms, and the attractive living conditions of the Delaware workers gave them an extraordinary opportunity to pursue their labor healthfully. But because of its incomplete adoption, Scientific Management, though it had shortened hours, and in most cases had raised wages, had proven of less potential value to the workers than to those in the more difficult industrial situation obtaining in the cotton mill.

VI

In general, then, Scientific Management for women workers in this country may be said as far as it has been applied to have increased wages, to have shortened hours, and to have resulted fortunately for the health of women workers in some instances and unfortunately in others.

Wherever a process presented a difficulty which remained unremedied, if the task were multiplied, the difficulty, of course, was multiplied. No matter how greatly the weight of a wagon is lightened, if there is a hole in the road of its passage, and the road is now to be travelled sixty times a day, instead of twenty times, as before, the physical difficulty from this hole is not only trebled, but while it may be endured with patience twenty times, is not only a muscular, but a nervous strain at the sixtieth. This was the situation in regard to all unrelieved heavy lifting wherever cloth was manipulated, the situation in regard to the stooping for the spool tenders, the stamping at the winding machine, and the stooping and breakages at the sewing-machine. But these points, instead of being ignored by the management, were seriously regarded by the employers as inimical to their own best interests in combination with those of their employees, and in all the establishments were in process of adjustment.

In the present writer's judgment this adjustment would have been inaugurated earlier in several processes and would have been more rapid and effective for both the employer's interest and that of the women workers if the women workers' difficulties had been fairly and clearly specified through trade organization. Such an organization would also be of value in preventing danger of injury for workers whose attention under Scientific Management should be concentrated on their tasks, and of value in supporting the tendency of Scientific Management to pay work absolutely according to the amount accomplished by the worker, and not under a certain specified rate for this amount.

Scientific Management as applied to women's work in this country is, of course, very recent. This synthesis of its short history is collected from the statements made by about eighty of the women workers, by Mr. Gantt, and by the owner, superintendent, and head of the planning department of the cotton mill, by the superintendent and one of the owners of the Cloth Finishing factory, and the superintendent and one of the

owners of the Bleachery. The account should be supplemented by several general observations.



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The first is that it is difficult to determine where the health of a worker has been strained by industry and where by other causes. Quite outside any of the narratives mentioned were those of two young women employed under Scientific Management whose health was hopelessly broken. Both of these poor girls were subject to wrong and oppressive maltreatment at home. Indeed, from oppression at home, one of the girls had repeatedly found refuge and protection in the consideration shown to her by the establishment where she worked. It was not she who blamed the new way of management for her breakdown, but people whose impression of her situation was vague and lacked knowledge.

The whole tendency of Scientific Management toward truth about industry, toward justice, toward a clear personal record of work, established without fear or favor, had inspired something really new and revolutionary in the minds of both the managers and the women workers where the system had been inaugurated. Nearly all of them wished to tell and to obtain, as far as they could, the actual truth about the experiment everywhere. Almost no one wished to “make out a case.” This expressed sense of candor and cooperation on both sides seemed to the present writer more stirring and vital than the gains in wages and hours, far more serious even than the occasional strain on health which the imperfect installation of Scientific Management had sometimes caused.

These strains on women’s health in industry in America—stooping and monotony in all the needle trades, jumping on pedals in machine tending, dampness and heat in cotton production, the standing without pause for many hours a day throughout the month, the lifting of heavy weights in packing and in distribution—all these industrial strains for women constitute grave public questions affecting the good fortune of the whole nation and not to be answered in four years, nor by one firm. It is undoubtedly the tendency of Scientific Management to relieve all these strains.

No one can see even in part the complications of contemporary factory work, the hundred operations of human hands and muscles required for placing a single yard of cotton cloth on the market, the thousand threads spinning and twisting, the thousand shuttles flying, the manifold folding and refolding and wrapping and tying, the innumerable girls working, standing, walking by these whirring wheels and twisting threads and high piled folding tables, without feeling strongly that ours is indeed an industrial civilization, and that the conditions of industry not only completely control the lives of uncounted multitudes, but affect in some measure every life in this country today.



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No finer dream was ever dreamed than that the industry by which the nation lives should be so managed as to secure for the men and women engaged in it their real prosperity, their best use of their highest powers. By and large, the great task of common daily work our country does to-day is surely not so managed, either by intent or by result, either for the workers or for the most "successful" owners of dividends. How far Scientific Management will go toward realizing its magnificent dream in the future will be determined by the greatness of spirit and the executive genius with which its principles are sustained by all the people interested in its inauguration, the employers, the workers, and the engineers.

FOOTNOTES:

[Footnote 43: Brief on behalf of Traffic Committee of Commercial Organizations of Atlantic Seaboard, p. 70. Louis D. Brandeis.]

[Footnote 44: Fourteen years ago Scientific Management was applied to women's work in a Rolling Machine Company in Massachusetts. Here the women's hours were reduced from 10-1/2 day to 8-1/2; their wages were increased about 100 per cent; and their output about 300 per cent. All the women had two days' rest a month with pay. The work consisted in inspecting ball-bearings for bicycles. Their department of the business, however, closed twelve years ago. Accurate facts other than those listed concerning the workers' experience as to hours, wages, and general health under Scientific Management are at this date too few to be valuable.]

[Footnote 45: "Academic and Industrial Efficiency," by F.W. Taylor and Morris Llewellyn Cook.]

[Footnote 46: The specialistic and detailed care necessary for practical and exact time-study may be indicated by the reproduction below of a method of record used by Mr. Sanford E. Thompson in timing wheelbarrow excavations. (Explanation. The letters *a*, *b*, *c*, *etc.*, indicate elementary units of the operation: "Filling barrow" = (*a*); "starting" = (*b*); "wheeling full" = (*c*), *etc.*)]

[Footnote 47: "Efficiency." Harrington Emerson.]

[Footnote 48: "Work, Wages and Profits," pp. 110 to 111. H.L. Gantt.]

[Footnote 49: While the bonus system as a means of compensation has been used very often in connection with the Scientific Management, it must not, however, be supposed that this method of compensation is alone and in itself Scientific Management. In fact, as employed without Scientific Management, it is to be regarded with some apprehension.]



[Footnote 50: The work in this department was, besides, rather slack at the time of year when I visited the factory, and wages for some of these workers were \$6 a week, as low as they had been before the bonus was introduced.]

[Footnote 51: The girl who directs them and issues the orders receives a bonus for every stamper earning a bonus and earns on full time from \$12 to \$15.]



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[Footnote 52: These girls are not employed under the bonus and task system. But it is interesting to observe that they may either sit or stand to iron, as they prefer.]

[Footnote 53: The men folders at the heaviest work here now receive with the bonus from \$14 to \$17 a week.]

[Footnote 54: A worker does not lose her regular wage if she is stopped by a breakage. Her time-card is altered. And she has credit on a time basis for the period while the machine is not running. A breakage in the first machine of a tandem pair stops both sewers. But a breakage in the second means that work piles up for the second sewer, and unless she makes it up, she will prevent her companion from earning a bonus, though not a time wage.]

[Footnote 55: The management, on learning of this, said the practice would be stopped at once.]

[Footnote 56: "The cotton as it grows in the field becomes more or less filled with blown dust.... Lint is given off in all processes up to and including spinning.... The only practical way to keep down the dust in all of these operations is by frequent sweeping and mopping the floor and wiping off the machinery." Report on Condition of Women and Child Wage-earners in the United States. Vol. I, p. 365.

"What degree of moisture is safely permissible from the standpoint of the operatives' health is an unsettled question.... When the operative after a day's work in a humid and relaxing atmosphere goes into one relatively drier, the assault on the delicate membrane of the air-passages is sharp. The effect of these changes is greatly to lower the vital resistance and make the worker especially susceptible to pulmonary, bronchial, or catarrhal affections. It is very possible that the dust and lint present in the mill have been credited with effects which are due in part to these atmospheric conditions." Report on Condition of Women and Child Wage-earners in the United States. Vol. I, p. 362.]

[Footnote 57: Besides, work had lately been slack, and this had further decreased the wages.]

[Footnote 58: Since visiting the New Jersey cotton mill, the present writer has seen spool tenders at work at a machine requiring no stooping, and provided with a board below the bobbins, placed at such a height, that the worker can relieve her position while standing by resting her weight against the board, above one knee and then above the other.]

[Footnote 59: At the same time work was slack so that week wages had dropped to \$3 and \$4.]



[Footnote 60: One of the girls issues batches of tickets. Another girl unfolds one end of certain of the packages, and inserts a ticket and stamps an outside label, to accord with the invoice system of some of the purchasers. These girls had received before \$5.40 and \$4.84 a week, respectively, and now receive, the one \$5.73, and the other between \$5 and \$6.]

[Footnote 61: All the firms have rest rooms for the girls. The Delaware firm and the New Jersey cotton mill have pleasant lunch-rooms, where an excellent lunch is provided at cost.]



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