

HOW THE WORKING WOMEN LIVE.

"How the working women of New York live," is a subject deserving of attentive consideration. Few, perhaps, are fully aware of the difficulties to be met with by the honest working women in obtaining employment, and when obtained of retaining it; and still fewer are aware of the scanty remuneration paid to the hard-working, industrious women who earn a miserable living by the needle, whether plied by their own fingers or firmly gripped by the sewing machine.

In one immense establishment, that is daily thronged by the wealth, beauty, and fashion of New York, there are 700 of these poor girls striving to keep soul and body together. They baste, sew by hand and machine, embroider, work button-holes, make carpets, curtains, all kinds of household linen, for private families, hotels and steamboats; bringing their employer an enormous yearly profit and themselves a broken constitution, dimmed eye-sight and premature old age. In this house none but the "fore-women" are paid by the week or month—all the other employees are paid by the piece. One cent each for button holes is considered very high pay; six cents apiece for basting and finishing a chemise, made in so elaborate a style that an expert can seldom exceed one dozen per day, are specimens of the prices paid by one of the largest dry goods houses in the city, where the proprietor avers that they "give the highest pay going." Conspicuously posted in sight of all who enter the work room is a card bearing the following inscription: "All who are dissatisfied with the prices paid for work will please leave immediately. Any person found loitering in the rooms or passages will be instantly dismissed."

The average earnings of working women—by which term are designated those sewing women and others who know no trade or business thoroughly—are estimated by competent authority at less than \$4 a week, the prevalent custom of working half time in dull seasons being considered. In other words the incomes of Astor and Stewart, in a good year, are more than the whole receipts of the 50,000 working women of New York. What kind of a subsistence the pittance of the latter affords them may be imagined in a city where the necessities of life are higher than in any city of the world, where the meanest meal costs fifteen cents, the darkest cellar a dollar a week; where coal is rarely less than \$6 a ton, in bulk, and clothing and all other necessities are rated in proportion.

In one house devoted exclusively to "men's furnishing goods," experts have been known to make \$22 per week in times gone by. This becoming too frequent, the "boss" cut down the price per dozen for neckties, but some of the experts still presenting bills to the amount of \$18, a further reduction ensued. Now the same cut of tie that formerly brought the maker fifty-five cents per dozen brings but forty cents, and the experts daily and fritter away their time for fear of making more than \$14 per week, as bitter experience has taught them that too large a claim for wages at the end of the week will be followed by another "cut down" in the prices. Where one hand may make \$14 per week, an average good hand will rarely make more than \$9, while an ordinary worker, who is desirous to have her ties look as well as the best, may possibly go home at the end of the week with \$6 or \$7, her best directed efforts failing to secure more than that amount.

Millinery also employs its hundreds of women and girls. In one house of this kind can be seen little girls not more than nine years of age, who sit bent over the needle ten hours per day, and at the end of the week carry home, perhaps, to a dissipated mother or a profligate father \$5 or \$6, to be consumed in debauchery. "Experts" may here earn \$25 per week, but the average is \$6 only for steady good workers and learners, all being paid by the piece or dozen.

The smartly-dressed young lady who displays the wonderful mysteries of the toilet to the fair shoppers, fares little better than her envious sister of the shop and factory; her life is rather the more slavish of the two, for while her long experience may entitle her to the highest rate of wages going, she is obliged to be at her post at the designated hour every day, for a delay of ten minutes will subject her to a fine of two shillings, and in some stores delay until nine o'clock is equal to the loss of half the day. From morning until

night must she remain upon her feet, often, during the busy season, never tasting food from the time she leaves home until her return in the evening; because the thoughtless butterflies of fashion turn out in full force just at business people's lunch time; and if the saleswoman is then absent from her post she loses a good customer perhaps. All the fatigue and worry of the day might be better borne were the toilers sure of a kind reception at home, or had they all comfortable homes where they could lay down the burdens of the day and rest; but to many home is unknown, the cheerless lodging-house affords no comfort, the badly-ventilated apartments supplied by the tenement-houses of the city—where many of the mothers, brothers and sisters of the over-worked women of to-day find shelter—are no places for relaxation, for many of them reach home only to renew the cares of the day in another form by ministering to the wants of an invalid mother, trying in vain to satisfy the capricious whims of an exacting father or brother, or soothe the turbulent spirit of a wayward sister.

Every method to maintain existence is resorted to by those who cannot beg and would not steal. One woman toils all day at the sewing machine and works button-holes at night, making by this double labor but fourteen dollars per week, with an invalid husband and three helpless children to be supported by her efforts alone. Another solicits subscriptions for a publishing house ten hours a day, her pay depending upon the number of subscribers she obtains. One house in Mulberry street that is used as a boarding-house, contains over forty girls who work at "paper-boxes;" their average earnings are six dollars per week, their expenses five, leaving but a small margin for clothes. How the deficiency is supplied let the records of the police courts testify. Many of these girls occupy apartments which are a disgrace to a civilized country.

This position and prospect of a working woman steadily employed being realized, there yet remains a lower depth of poverty for contemplation, namely a working woman out of employment. That even these form a large class may be inferred from the fact stated in the records of the Working Women's Protective Union, that during the year 1871 no less than 9,391 working women out of employment came there asking for work—work in shops or factories, or at the needle—for whom no such employment could be obtained in this city. Over fifty of them often applied in one day at this single institution for such work. And now comes the strangest part of the story. Sorely tested as they were for the means of life, they would not hear of "domestic service." When they were informed that good places as servants could readily be procured for them, the offer was, with few exceptions, refused by all.

There was no need of waiting even a single day for a household place, for, as has been stated in the *Times*, over 8,000 ladies applied for servants at the Labor Bureau and Castle Garden during the year, who could not be supplied; and on the same day that half a hundred of these hungry women would be begging in vain for store and factory or needle work at the Working Women's Union, there would be an equal number of worried ladies at the other two points, offering \$3 per week and upward, with board—full double a working woman's wages, in short—to any decent woman, skilled or unskilled, who would condescend to come and make their beds and see that their children did not fall into the fire. This causes a lack of good servants and an overcrowd of working women. Most working women object to domestic service, as they say it takes away their independence.

There are, however, many good and industrious young girls who would waive the question of pride and would go into household service if it were not for another reason. This second reason which many give for their repugnance to domestic service is that it obliges them to leave their families. The greater part of all the working women, however, have no families, and are not of a specially proud or sensitive nature. From the enormous number of such persons always out of employment housewives could get the best possible servants at less than the prices they now offer in vain, if it were not for one thing. A third reason, and the one which the women usually give, namely, the way in which mistresses in New York treat their servants. As a famous woman has expressed it, "Many would be willing to perform these labors, but they are unwilling to be plac-

ed in a situation where their self-respect is hourly wounded by a degree of inferiority which does not follow any kind of labor and service in this country but that of the family." The conviction seems to be growing that, by treating their servants as mere machines to do their bidding, things without souls, and inferior to themselves, the ladies have driven all the self-respecting women from their kitchens into outside manual employments, producing the singular state of things now to be seen in New York, of a great scarcity of woman's labor in our homes, where it would be well paid, and a terrible overcrowd of women in shops and factories, and at the needle, at wages barely sufficient to support life.

This is an experience which thousands of these girls have been through with, and in connection with the expectation of many city housekeepers, that their servants will make up for their own deficiencies, this general overbearing way of treating them has inspired intelligent and high-minded poor women, as a class, with a deep-seated repugnance to kitchens and kitchen service. How it can be eradicated it is hard to say. It is useless to talk of introducing the old New England custom of making "hired help" a part of the family, but until the ladies, in one way or another, establish such relations as will enable worthy girls to serve them without loss of self-respect, they will not cease to have cause to complain of the badness of servants, and the scarcity of servants, and we shall not cease to have a great class of pauper working women to disgrace our wealthy civilization. The ladies offer better homes, easier work, more healthful surroundings, and double the wages, but while they continue to look down upon their servants as an inferior caste, and treat them with humiliating condescension, the best girls will continue to work for men who treat them according to democratic principles. Let the ladies treat their household help as their husbands do their clerks, and they will find plenty of first-class working girls eager to enter their service at the present rate of wages, the over-supply of work girls in the cities will in that way be checked, the natural relations between those who remain and their employers will be restored, and the wages of working women will arise to a point in keeping with the high rates which all kinds of labor naturally command in this prosperous country.—*N. Y. Times.*

Absurdity of Drinking.

It has become a sort of popular, almost national, faith that it is not possible to be truly happy unless you drink. Among certain classes—and they are by no means the lowest—drink is the beginning and end of everything. The very name of liquor is held to be synonymous with enjoyment, and the dearer the liquor the more it is prized and coveted. Yet every man who is not a downright drunkard, is well aware that the pleasures of drinking are, beyond a certain point, a mockery, a delusion, and a snare. I put it to any one who has stood half the night at a bar, or sat half the night in a club room, drinking, smoking, and bandying reckless talk, if the enjoyment of such an evening has been anything like that of a few quiet hours spent at home with a book or newspaper? The evil influence of tavern pleasure on the health is too obvious to be denied by any one, and the illusory nature of the pleasures themselves, put the truth out of sight.

No one ever brought any good out of a drinking spree yet. It is a short, feverish spasm of animal enjoyment, which leaves nothing behind but moroseness, regret, bad temper, self-reproach, and headache. I should like to ask you, sir, if you say your prayers when you come home in that state? No, you don't. You are ashamed to say them. You postpone them until you have purged yourself, your mind, and your lips, by more sober and rational behavior. Next night, when you pass the hours quietly at home with a book or a friend, you feel that you have had real enjoyment, and that the time has passed pleasantly, that you have not injured your health. You are not ashamed to say your prayers, and you get up next morning with a clear head, a good appetite, and an increased facility for work and enjoyment for life.—*All the Year Round.*

PARALYSIS—ITS REMARKABLE PREVALENCE.—There is no city in the Union and no community in Europe of an equal extent to San Francisco in

which there are so many paralyzed persons. Every person walking our streets must be struck by the number of those thus afflicted whom they meet. The victims appear to be of both sexes and to belong to every class—the baker, merchant, miner, mechanic and laborer. We are informed by a leading surgeon of this city that the increase of this affliction during the past two months is unprecedented. His own practice has called him to five cases which have occurred at the Occidental Hotel during the past month. He attributes many of the cases to mental anxiety, caused by speculation or the desire to obtain wealth rapidly. The subject is of considerable interest, and we should be glad to hear what any of our friends have to say about it.—*California Republican.*

A ROMANTIC STORY.—In South Carolina, lately, has been enacted another version of the "old story" of man's inconstancy and woman's constancy. A lady, no longer young, after many years of waiting, has been married to her lover, who was far from being true. She had supposed him dead—killed in battle—and for nine long years had mourned his loss, refusing by the score, admirers of her beauty and wit, both of which were more than ordinary, for she came of Huguenot stock—renowned for good looks and good sense—and an ancestress of hers was one of the beauties at the court of Catherine de Medici, and mistress to the king of Navarre. While she was thus mourning her life away, her recreant lover was alive and well, and the husband of a Northern woman. He had been left for dead on one of the fields of battle, but under the skillful treatment of the Federal surgeon and tender care of a brown-eyed hospital nurse, had regained his lease of life, and lost the heart that was not his to lose. Taking advantage of his death being reported, he came to the North and under a feigned name, married his hospital fairy. With her he lived happily till the fall of 1870, when death took her away. Then at his deserted hearthstone the lonely man thought of his Southern love, and his old passion returned. He yielded to the yearning to see her again, and with three children, the fruit of his marriage, went back to "Old Carolina," and shamed and trembling, presented himself before her. She, on her part, forgot and forgave him all, and has taken the vows which makes her a mother to his children.—*Carolina Republican.*

CAUTION TO WOMEN TRAVELING ALONE.—The *Congregationalist* gives timely warning to women and especially girls, about the acquaintances they make in cars. Speaking of the pimps and scoundrels, who seem to grow ever more numerous and more subtle as our civilization grows older, it says: On the watch for women as bad as themselves, or for the young and unsophisticated, of whom a villain might make a victim, it is next to impossible for a young woman to enter a car unattended without their knowledge. She is fortunate if they make no more or less cautious approaches to find out who she is, where she is going, and whether she will tolerate the familiarity of a stranger. So numerous are these men that it is with some peril that a young woman undertakes a long journey alone. The peril of those who may be unfortified by principle, or unacquainted with the ways of the world, or susceptible to the flatteries of a smooth tongue, is great. We know of no help for this evil but in the watchfulness of parents, in the uprising of the virtuous against the vile, and the discretion of those who are subjected to these annoyances and insults. It is safe for a young woman to repel the familiar advances of smiling and officious strangers at any time. If on the road any help is required, there are public officials to whom it is always proper and safe to make application.

BONNER is in luck again. His five year old stallion Startle, driven by Mr. George Hopkins, trotted half a mile on Fleetwood Park May 15, in 1.04, being the fastest half mile ever made on that course, and the fastest by two seconds, ever made by any horse except Dexter, who once made exactly the same time. Startle also trotted a full mile recently on Prospect Park in 2.19. Startle is brother to Dexter, was bought by Mr. Bonner for \$20,000, and is now considered worth \$100,000, though few there be who would give so much for any horse, fast or slow.