



A Plea For Working Girls.

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Do the rich and well-to-do think of the poor girls in their employ, and of their privations? Here and there a generous and noble-hearted individual remembers kindly those in his employ, but if the majority give a thought to them it is only to say mentally: "I pay the regular price, and that is all my duty."

But do you pay the girls in your employ within twenty per cent of the value of their work to you? Is the price you pay sufficient to support them honestly and respectably? Yet in most stores and shops the girls are required to dress neatly and well; if not, the penalty is dismissal. Can they do this, and purchase healthful food upon the paltry sum you pay for their services? No, no, and so half-fed upon cheap food they go to work day after day, the cheek growing thinner and paler; hope dying out of the eye, until an early death makes room for another martyr; or, wearying of this toiling life, they marry for a home and support, with little or no love for the husband, and enter upon new duties with a physical organization weakened by overwork and insufficient food, and with a hopeless heart. Is it strange that children given to that home die young, or grow up pale and delicate, fit subjects for that American epidemic, consumption?

Again, many of these girls have widowed and sick mothers, or young brothers and sisters to support, and beside being in the store all day, do plain sewing at home, working more than half the night. Yet these girls, so nobly, so heroically fighting the battles of life, are looked upon with scorn by many who are living in luxurious ease. There is one now, hurrying home from her daily toil, that she may care for a sick mother. How the crowd jostles her. She is "only a working girl," and a richly dressed woman brushes against her, looking scornfully upon her faded dress in last year's style. Oh, woman of wealth and fashion, do you know that poor girl may be as much purer in heart and life than you are, as the beautiful snowflake floating in mid-air is cleaner and whiter than that trodden in the

filthy street.

What working girls want is to be better paid, and according to the value of their work;—not pity, not the charity of the rich man or woman's purse, but the charity of the heart that thinketh kindly of the toiling. And one word to you who employ these girls, and have grown rich on their hard work, while you have starved them body and mind. Why is it that each year you pay a less price, for the same work? For instance, straw-sewers are this year paid more than one-third less than formerly, and so also in other branches of business. Do you wish to drive them to desperation or death, and have their sin or death registered against you in Heaven? Oh, ye employers, if you persist in longer crushing, and starving these noble, honest, but poor girls, you will be indirectly guilty of the evil consequences that, in some instances, may arise from it. As you measure to them, so will a just God mete it out to you in the life that is to come. Then will you not deal more kindly with them, and pay according to the value of their work?

"I cannot, because others do not," says one. Let one or more rich men try it, and so shut up the low shops where work is half done and half paid for, and let every man and woman, who is truly the friend of the poor, patronize such stores, and so bring about a reform that "woman's suffrage" never will, neither "women's parliaments" called to advertise one woman, or a club of women.

One word to you, my toiling sisters,—work on hopefully—perhaps a better day is dawning,—ever be honest to yourselves, and to the whole world. It may be that you will find rest and peace in a cheerful home, where you will be kindly shielded from toil;—or perchance the sky may brighten, and you make a home for yourself and those you love. Strive to do right, and though your hopes are not realized, you will have the consciousness of having done the best you could even in the darkest hour, and if your reward comes not to you here, it will come in the eternal hereafter.