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Where Girls Would Sell Their Souls

Mrs. Barratt O'Hara, wife of
lieutenant governor of Illinois,
worked for a week in a knitting
factory in Bridgeport, Ct., while
her husband handled shipping
cases in a corest factory in the
same town. The youthful lieuten-
ant governor and his pretty
wife sought and secured the work
because of their desire to ascer-
tain at first hand a knowledge of
conditions among the men and
women of a New England factory
town.
Dressed in rough clothes, suit-
able for the labor they sought,
they left New York City together
and separated at the station in
Bridgeport. Lieutenant Governor
O'Hara worked for three days at
\$4 a week. On the third evening
he was discharged. Mrs. O'Hara
worked through the week, living
the life of a factory girl on a
wage of \$6 a week.
Mrs. O'Hara "made good" at
her job, although her evident in-
experience brought her much un-
solicited sympathy from her fel-
low workers, and three offers of
marriage, one of them from the
factory "catch," who earned \$11
a week at his trade.
This is her story of the ex-
perience, told by herself for the
Cleveland Plain Dealer:

The knitting factory loomed dark
against the sky as I started down the
street alone. Its straight sides of
blackened brick seemed to assume the
shape of a grotesque human face as I
approached closer to the walls. I had
a moment's feeling that the windows
were eyes and mouths that grimaced
at the brightness of the April morn-
ing, before a sudden glimpse of my-
self in the glass of a shop doorway
recalled my attention to the part that
I had assumed.
I was wearing a dark blue suit of
loose skirt and tight coat, a cheap
blouse that I had bought in New York
city and a straw hat trimmed with a
wreath of flowers. A glimpse of my
shoes startled me for a moment, for I

had forgotten to bring them into con-
formity with the rest of my outfit
and I feared that some sharp-witted
forewoman might notice their incon-
gruity. But no one did.
As I opened the door an old man,
evidently a watchman, arose from a
stool where he had been seated.
"What do you want?" he grumbled.
"Work?" "Yes," I gasped, realizing
for the first time the feeling of a girl
to whom securing this work would
mean securing the necessities of life.
The old man pointed to a low door-
way. I followed his directing finger
and found myself in a tiny room in-
closed by glass partitions. Three girls
were standing there. They moved a
little to give me space.
While I stood I became conscious of
the noise that pounded above our heads
unceasingly. It was a roar that numbed
the faculties. The girl beside me, who
was very frail and white-lipped, shook
her head once as she glanced at me,
indicating that speech was impossible
in the din about us. A big, dark-haired
girl at the other side of her laughed
shrilly at some shout of her companion,
a peroxide blonde. The laugh rang
out above the roar, harsh and un-
musical.
After about an hour a man came
from the door of the partitions, staring
at the four of us quizzically. He nodded
to the two girls who had come to-
gether, evidently knowing them, and
gave them slips that they grasped
eagerly as they sped from the room.
"Any experience?" he asked the
white-lipped girl and me.
I was starting to say "No," when
she grasped my hand. "Yes, sir," she
said, "we worked together in Law-
rence."
He looked at us keenly at the men-
tion of the Massachusetts town. "Well,
I guess you aren't firebrands, either
of you," he said. "Can you run the
machines?"
"Yes, sir," she told him, straining
her voice to make it carry above the
ceaseless roar.
He pushed us cards that we filled
out. I wrote my own name from fright
and force of habit. He looked at it
mechanically, studied her a second
longer and then he gave us both slips
like those he had given the others.

The white-lipped girl led me to the hall
and up a dingy stairway.
By a dirty window at the landing
she spoke to me. "I had an awful
time in Lawrence," she said. "I
haven't had a job in months. I've
found that two girls can get work
easier than one. That's why I put us
together."
"That's all right," I told her. "Do
you live here?"
"I've got a room with some girls
that work here."
"Have they another?"
"I guess they can fix one if you
can pay them \$2 a week for it." She
asked me my name and told me hers,
Jennie Prentice. "If we ain't to-
gether in the room, I'll wait for you
at the door at quitting time," she
promised.
The "room" to which the slips ad-
mitted us seemed to me to be whirling,
so many and so swift-moving were the
machines that filled every inch of its
floor. After a time I realized that
there were people beside the machines,
but my first impression of mechanical
motion survived through the time I
worked in a factory.
A man who came from a tangle of
wires looked at our cards and at us,
motioned us to take off our hats, which
we left with a pile of others in a tiny
closet, and led us to a machine at the
end of the room. We threaded our way
after him through the lines of whirling
machinery. More than once I stopped
in fear that my coat had caught in the
wheels. The terrible din seemed to
make me dizzy. I could scarcely walk
straight.
The foreman stopped near a woman
who hardly gave us a look, so intent
was she at work. He nodded to the
machine beside her.
"You're her helper," he shouted.
I must have looked dazed, for Jennie
Prentice pushed me forward. "Bluff,"
she called in my ear as the foreman
went away. "I'll come back and show
you."
For ten minutes I stood before the
machine, trying to see what the wom-
an next to me was doing. The noise
was so terrible that my head seemed
about to burst from overpressure of
sound on the ear drums. The light
came gray through the closed win-
dows. The air was close and suffo-
cating. All around me girls and women
worked unceasingly without even glanc-
ing up from their machines.
Each one seemed to be doing some
highly specialized task. The woman
beside me, I saw, was apparently mov-
ing a needle that was set like that of
a phonograph, backward to the same
starting point whenever it had moved
across a plane of space. Jennie Prentice
was far down at the other end of
the room.
A man passing looked at me with
more kindness than curiosity. "Want
a start?" he cried. I nodded. He
showed me how to work my machine.
The woman beside me did not even
glance up while he stood there, initiat-
ing me into work like her own.
It seemed hours before noon came.
Then the sudden stopping of the ma-
chinery seemed to break something
within my head. For a second there
hung the fearful silence of a sudden
suspended motion. Next everyone
rushed toward the doors. Jennie Prentice
ran toward me, directing me to a
group of girls who were calling to her.
We all went down together into the
sunlight of the street. She told them
that I wanted a rooming place. They
looked me over appraisingly. "She
can come," said one of them.
After lunch, which we ate in a little
shop around the corner, and which cost
us 10 cents apiece for coffee, rolls and
doughnuts, we went back. The after-
noon seemed interminable. All I did
was to place the needle back at its
starting point after it had traversed
a line of knitting and to insert and
take out the wool.
It was work that required infinite
patience. It was work of infinite mo-
nотony. Afterward, when I became ac-
customed to it, I saw that all the
tasks were apportioned in the same
way. Every worker was expert in one
thing, but no one thing was skilled
labor. It was as nearly mechanical as
human action may be made.
That night I went home with Jennie
and the other girls. They did co-
operative housekeeping, managing to
live on about \$5 a week. Their home
was a tenement apartment that cost
them \$9 a week rent. They had kero-
sene lamps for light, and an old coal
range for cooking and heating. They
took turns in getting the breakfast of
coffee and bread, which they bought at
the grocery the night before. The din-
ner was something quick—fried pota-
toes and pork chops that night, I re-
member, and bread and tea. They all
ate listlessly. After dinner the other
three went out. Jennie and I were
too tired. We went to bed as soon as
we had washed the dishes.
In the factory the days dragged in-
terminably. All the girls worked me-
chanically. In the evening they were
all so tired that they looked like old
women as they went down the stairs.
Sometimes they went out at night.
Often they stayed in, too weary to
move from the table.
Noontime was the only friendly time
of the day. Then the factory workers
seemed to pay some attention to each
other. The men often came around,
talking to the girls, but no one was gay
or happy, although there was only one
woman in the room over 25 years of
age. Eight out of every ten of the
girls in the room, though, were sup-

THE DAUGHTER'S ALLOWANCE.

In the August Woman's Home Com-
panion appears a page entitled "Good
Ideas for Girls." One of the sugges-
tions on this page has to do with
monthly allowances for girls. The
writer says that the charge is often
made by men that women are extrava-
gant, but she asks whether the men
have never realized that the remedy
lies in their own hands—that if they
do their share in training their own
daughters, the women of the next
generation will have some knowledge
of administering money. The writer goes
on with her suggestion:
"No; the real solution is more in-
clusive. If your daughter is ever to
know the value of money, you must
teach her to keep accounts and to live
within whatever sum is allotted her."
Figure up approximately the en-
tire amount you have given her for
clothes during the past year. If she
is the sort of girl who asks frequently
or for large sums at a time, knock off
\$10 or \$15 from the lump sum; if she
asks but seldom, and then reluctantly,
add \$25. Tell her that she must keep
within this limit.
"Let her have it monthly or quar-
terly, as is most convenient for you
both. If at all possible, put the money
in the bank for her and let her have
her own check book. By this plan she
will learn to keep accounts, to do busi-
ness by check, to plan and shop for
herself, and to live within her in-
come."
"There is a special advantage in
such a plan for the girl who often
goes without because she hates to ask
for money. It is there all ready for
her, and that peculiar self-respect of
hers is thereby saved."
"No doubt there are some fathers
who will say: 'A great fuss about
nothing! The old-fashioned way of
handing it out is good enough for me!'
Let me tell you, many a girl (it may
be yours) is using her earning capacity
on the housework, by this means sav-
ing you the expense of outside labor.
If she gave the same amount of time
and attention to any business or pro-
fession away from home, she would
draw a salary and enjoy her personal
independence on it. Then why shouldn't
she enjoy a similar independence with
a stipulated income at home? Financial
dependence at home is driving out into
the world many a girl who really does
not need to go, and whose parents
would be glad to have her stay with
them."
"If you have done your share
toward training your daughter to spend
wisely what money she has, you are
privileged to complain of woman's ex-
travagance—but not before!"

WHY BOYS GO WRONG.

Prof. George Walter Fiske, of Ober-
lin college, unconsciously voiced a ring-
ing indictment of the wretchedness of
the present-day social system in a
speech before the Sunday School Work-
ers' Institute of the University of Chi-
cago on "What Makes Boys Go
Wrong?" He traced crime to the fol-
lowing nine specific charges:
Exploitation of child labor.
City life, which is artificial.
Tenements and flats, which have
supplanted homes.
Too few playgrounds, parks and
recreation spaces.
The average policeman, whom the
boy regards as his sworn enemy.
The courts, which are stern and
machine-like and seem to the boy to be
tramping him down.
The present-day school system, which
is an inflexible one, without specializa-
tion and lacking courses interesting to
many boys.
Recreation is unregulated.
Divorces by parents drive them to
the streets.
Perfectly True.
"Mabel says she has had a thousand
refusals of offers of marriage."
"Well she has. When Tom asked
her she said 'No, a thousand times.'"

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