

New Song of the Shirt is Heard in the Land



THEY WORK IN WELL-LIGHTED, WELL-AIRED ROOMS AND EARN AS MUCH AS FIFTEEN DOLLARS WEEKLY—Photo for The Bee by Bostwick.

AN ARMY of nimble-fingered and bright-eyed Omaha girls manufacture every year millions of shirts, shirtwaists, women's skirts and wrappers, overalls, duck coats, pants and shoes. Their products are made in four factories and may be found everywhere in the west and northwest, from the Missouri valley to British Columbia. The main industry is the manufacture of men's apparel, particularly shirts and overalls.

The factories are large and well-lighted, with ample ventilation, sanitary and fire escape appliances. It is a pleasure to work, if one must labor, where fresh air and sunlight abound. Cheerful surroundings make cheerful workers, and that means more and better work.

One shirt and overall factory may be taken as a type of the others. The general conditions surrounding the work of the girls are much the same in all of them. Every labor-saving device is used, for nothing is done by hand that can be done by machinery. Each machine, with the exception of a few that are too dangerous for girls to use, has its girl operative. Each factory employs from 200 to 500 of them, and many have been in the work so long that they have almost forfeited the right to be called girls. But they are faithful, attentive to duties and have no walking delegates.

This miniature army of breadwinners marches to work every morning of a working day at 7:30 o'clock. They are particular to be on time, for there is a tollgate clock at the entrance, and fines are not pleasant to pay. A round of work until 12, an hour for lunch, another stretch of labor and the day is done. Some are able to leave as early as 5, others must stay until 5:45, but none later.

How a Shirt is Made.

The manufacture of shirts is, perhaps, the most interesting part of the work in any factory. Interesting because a shirt, though simple in appearance, passes through more hands and processes than any other product of these factories. The way mother used to make shirts was all right in its day, but times have changed and the making of shirts has changed with them.

The tale of a modern factory-made shirt may be told something like this: The shirt has its beginning in the pattern department, usually located on the top floor of the factory. The big bales of fabrics to be made

up into garments are taken to the pattern room, where the cloth is laid out at full length on tables, from fifty to 150 layers in thickness. A brisk young man with a yardstick and chalk marks out the patterns on the top piece and the pile is ready for the cutter. The old-fashioned implement known as a pair of scissors is not used in the up-to-date factory. Instead, a large band saw follows the white marks of the

swift-running machines driven by electricity they fashion garments quickly and neatly. Each operative is employed on but one class of work. As a result she becomes expert at her own branch of the work. Some have nothing to do but sew on buttons, part of them make only buttonholes and others devote their attention entirely to sleeves. The yoke is first inserted, the fronts and

made and free from defects. The soft shirts are put in bundles and boxes, while the shirts of other fabrics which are to be laundered go to the finishing department. By a secret process they are laundered, then taken by the ironers, who put them through specially designed machinery. At the end of the process each garment is nicely polished and put up ready to place on sale. Some of the operatives do very fine work

lowance, of course, for the difference in the garments. There is the same subdivision of the work throughout and the same general conditions.

All the operatives are paid by the dozen pieces. The more expert earn from \$12 to \$15 weekly, the others from \$10 down to \$6. Some who began learning the trade six months ago in one of the factories just started then, and having not the slightest previous knowledge of the business, are now earning \$12 weekly, with the opportunity of making still more as their expertness increases. There is a constant and ever-increasing demand for operatives who can do good work.

That the girls do not find their work too irksome is attested by their happy, smiling faces.

Girls as Shoemakers.

In the manufacture of shoes the girls find employment also. Most of them learn rapidly and command good pay for the kind of work they do. The various machines are as nearly automatic as human ingenuity can make them and though each requires an attendant, there is but little actual manual labor to be done by the operative.

The various parts of the shoes, such as uppers, insoles, soles and heels, come to the factory readymade and the work remaining to be done is in the assembling and finishing. The uppers are lined with cloth, then welted to the insoles by a machine. The outside soles are put on and go through several finishing processes. The shoe goes from the welting machine to the heeler, a marvelous little machine which drives in the nails accurately and substantially by the dozens every minute. There yet remain a few small details to be finished on various machines, the insertion of eyelets, for instance, all of which is accomplished in a manner calculated to make an old-time shoemaker throw up his hands in despair.

The girls who once learn the trade thoroughly seem well satisfied and are not anxious to leave it for an uncertainty. One, at least, of the "girl" employes has been engaged in the shoemaking business for twenty-five years or more. She commenced when a young woman at \$2.50 per week, though now she receives good wages and owns two or three houses in the Ohio city where she was reared and lived many years before coming west. This property brings in a neat rental every month, and the "girl" is absolutely independent, as she has indiscriminately turned down every proposal of marriage she ever received.



LINING THE VAMPS AND UPPERS FOR SHOES—Photo for The Bee by Bostwick.

pattern through the thick pile as one may cut a single piece of paper. This work is done by young men, but from that point forward the making and finishing of the shirt is entirely in the hands of the girl operatives.

Bundles containing the various parts of the patterns go down a chute to the sewing room on the floor below. There they are kept in a storeroom, where each operative makes requisition to suit her needs, taking a bundle at a time containing a certain number of dozen pieces. Then with their

collars put on next and the sleeves made and set. The embryo garment is then side-seamed and hemmed, the buttonholes are made and buttons put on and the shirt is complete as far as the actual making is concerned. It seems quite simple and easy, but each shirt represents the labor of nearly a dozen pairs of hands in the sewing room alone.

The completed, but not finished, shirts are sent down another chute, this time to the inspection room. There each is carefully examined to see that it is properly

For instance, a little slip of a girl who doesn't look a day over 16 sews on 3,500 buttons every day and does it easily. The operatives on the buttonhole machines make over 3,000 daily and then do not have to overwork themselves. A good operative on a double-needle felling machine, which makes double seams, produces from thirty-five to fifty dozen pieces and has time to talk occasionally while she does it.

The work of making the other classes of garments which shirt and overall factories produce is essentially the same, making al-



GIRLS ASSEMBLING SHOE HEELS—Photo for The Bee by Bostwick.



WHERE SHIRTS ARE MADE BY MILLIONS—Photo for The Bee by Bostwick.