

What About the Flowers On Your Summer Hat, Madam?

Most artificial flowers are made by children in disease-infested tenement houses under very bad working conditions. Efforts made to stop the evil

OF ALL the artificial flowers made in the United States 74 per cent are made in New York city, says a government report. A report of the Consumers' league of that city shows that a large proportion of these flowers are made in tenement houses and that most of the workers are children whose ages range from eleven down to four. It would be shocking to some to see with their own eyes how the beautiful flowers which adorn their hats are made by the tiny hands of young children, some of them mere babies, who work from early morning until late at night and earn from ten to fifteen cents a day.

Yet the purpose of this article is not to shock anyone's sensibilities, but to lay bare facts and describe conditions as they are, says Israel Zevin in the New York Herald.

Some ten or twelve years ago a few men and women were sitting in the assembly room of a settlement house listening to the talk of a charity investigator, who, among other things, told a story of how, on a cold winter night, a poor family were sitting huddled together round a small stove and burning up a pack of old papers, which the jobless head of the family had dug up in some place.

"That was the only fuel they were able to get," the investigator said. "The children were clapping their hands with joy, feeling the warmth of the flames penetrating their frail bodies."

"Suddenly one of the children, a thoughtful little girl, stopped for a moment and, becoming serious, asked her mother: 'Mamma, dear, please tell me, what do those poor children who have no old papers do on a cold night like this?'"

The women and men laughed; they thought it was clever. But there was one man who did not laugh. All night the vision of those pale, emaciated children sitting around the stove haunted him, and for a long time he was tortured by the heartache effect of the grim joke. He is now one of the chief workers of the movement to abolish child labor.

It is not pleasant, these facts relating to the work of children. Some of them almost challenge credibility. For how could any mother allow her tiny baby, three or four years old, who is even too young for the kindergarten, to sit indoors all day long and work making imitations of flowers the child has never seen?

Some Starting Cases.

And yet I have seen children begin to learn to make artificial flowers when they were only two years old. I do not say that children of that age are compelled or coaxed by their mothers to work, but it is this way.

The baby sits in a chair by the table watching mother and the other children work. The baby stretches out its hands, grabbing a petal or a leaf to satisfy his desire the mother gives the baby a few petals, showing him how to pull them apart. At three or four the child is already an efficient worker, able to earn about ten cents a day.

Here are some of the facts:
A mother and two daughters, living and working in a rear tenement, so dark that an oil lamp must be kept burning all day in order that they may see to work, make forget-me-not wreaths. They receive seven cents for one dozen wreaths, and can earn \$4.20 every 15 days.

A frail, delicate mother of five children sits at a table in their two-room flat from morning until late at night putting artificial berries on stems. She earns from ten to fifteen cents a day.

In a four-room flat, where three children have died of tuberculosis and two others were suffering from it, a mother and an eleven-year-old girl made artificial roses at 15 cents a gross.

In one home on a Saturday morning four children, ten, nine, six and four years old, were found sitting by a table near the one window making cherries. They had been there since six o'clock in the morning, and worked each day until eight o'clock at night.

No child above four or five is considered too young to work. The hours for all, whether children or adults, are determined not by law, not by physical welfare, but by the amount of work the factory gives out to be done. If there is an extra amount of work the whole family work from half-past five in the morning until ten or eleven at night, and sometimes even until one or two o'clock in the morning, stopping only long enough to eat their scanty meal of spaghetti, dry bread and coffee, on which they seem to subsist.

Breaking the Labor Law.

In the 165 families studied by the investigator for the Consumers' league 601 children were found. More than 18 per cent of these were fourteen years and over and were contributing something to the family income; about 36 per cent were five years and under, too young to work, though in a few cases children of this age were found helping with the flowers. Out of the remaining 46 per cent between the ages of six and fourteen who might be found helping 14 per cent were busily at work at the time of the investigator's call. At least 14 per cent, then, of the children who were able to do this work were violating the child labor law of New York state.

How many more could be included in this list it was impossible to ascertain. Many families were visited during the morning, when the children were at school, and it was only through the word of the mother that we were able to determine whether or not the children helped with the flowers after school hours. For the most part only cases of children who were actually found at work were listed. Therefore, the estimate is a very conservative one.



The tenement houses where most of the flowers are made are of the worst type, with dark and shaky stairways. The crowded tenement houses of the "congested East side," of which so much has been said in print, are palaces in comparison to those rickety old structures. And in them the children of sunny Italy spend their days and nights. Ostensibly it is their inherent love for flowers that is drawing them to this work.

It is not an easy matter to get the confidence of some of the women and to make them answer questions. They are always suspicious that visitors are from the board of health with a mission to make trouble. In some houses no amount of arguing or coaxing will bring results—not even the assurance of the children who return from school and are appealed to.

However, there are some who are quite willing to talk and to shed light on the situation. They are not greedy, but they are very ambitious, and it is their ambition that impels them to utilize every possibility of making money.

Average \$8 a Week.

They are all honest, hard-working people. The children are orderly and respectful, and there was a world of love in the mothers' eyes on seeing them return from school and resume their work separating petals and pasting leaves on stems.

The earnings of heads of the families were found to average eight dollars a week, which, according to the standard of living in that locality, is a fair income. A good many of the men work in flower factories and from them they take work home. The others are mostly shoemakers, bootblacks and pushcart peddlers.

One of the places where children were found at work after school hours had a restaurant and pool-room on the ground floor of the building in which the family lived. When there are no diners in the restaurant the long dining table is covered with wreaths and bunches of cherries and forget-me-nots, a mother and her children working diligently at them. The proprietor of this restaurant was also in the rag business.

In one place a young woman, Margarita Rozzoni, who looked quite different from the general type—she being blonde and having blue eyes—was at work with her little girl, who seemed to be a willing and ambitious helper. Little Giovanna, three years old, looked like a miniature of her mother—golden haired and eyes of the color of violets. "I don't want her to help me," the mother said, "but she insists on doing that." And she accentuated her words by bending over the child and kissing her with all the fondness of a mother.

The children one meets here in the streets are all pretty, but their beauty fades before maturity. Their physical development is stunted by long hours of work and very little play. Their childhood does not last long. A girl who is married at fourteen is no rare case. Here they make the step from childhood right to manhood and womanhood, skipping over the period of youth and maidenhood.

Why Tony Sells Flowers.

Such a child was Tony, who at thirteen became the breadwinner for the family, selling flowers—real flowers—by day and helping his mother make artificial flowers by night. Tony was never a boy; he never played in the streets with other children, never threw a ball in the air. Tony's father kept a fruit stand on a corner, where he also shined shoes

and roasted peanuts. You could see him at this stand in the early morning before people went to work and late at night after they returned home from the theater. He was there in all kinds of weather, and he had been on the same spot for 15 years. During this period his wife and later his children helped to swell his bank account by making artificial flowers. When the war began there was a run on the bank where Tony's father kept his savings. The bank was closed, and then the poor man's reason gave way. He was taken to an insane asylum, and Tony, not being able to keep up his father's business, took to selling flowers as his trade.

And Tony is not the only "man" at the early age of thirteen.

Owners of flower factories find it more profitable to have work done in the tenements by women and children. The flower factories give out parts of flowers—petals, leaves, and stems—to be made up into whole flowers and wreaths by the workers in their homes. Usually the oldest child in the family calls for these parts, which she carries home in a huge pasteboard box. When the flowers are done she brings them back to the factory and the "boss" pays her for the work.

The petals, which usually come from the factory in bunches, must be separated and then pasted together with the leaves and stems. Sometimes there are as many as nine pieces which must be joined before the flowers are ready to be returned to the factory. Buds are made by tying pieces of silk over a round ball of cotton. The work, though slow and tedious, is not hard and can be done with very little skill and practice. Whole families were found busily working around a table in the kitchen or living room pasting and twisting and bunching the gayly colored flowers, which sometimes give the only bright note to an otherwise desperately dingy home.

Worst Paid Work.

The price paid for the work is perhaps the lowest in any trade. Prices vary from two cents a gross for pasting leaves on stems to \$1.40 a gross for making flower wreaths. One girl of fifteen who had trouble with her spine, was found at work putting berries on the ends of stems and receiving for the work only one cent a gross. She told the investigator that she made usually ten cents a day. "But when my little sister helps me," she added "I can make fifteen cents a day."

It is these conditions that the Consumers' league is striving to abolish. And the activities of the Consumers' league are not limited to the flower industry. The members of the league are working hard to improve conditions in other occupations in which women and young children are employed, and have been doing great work in educating the people on the dangers of woman and child labor under unsanitary conditions.

By pointing out the dangers to the consumer through goods made in dark and airless homes, where scarlet fever and other contagious diseases were found to exist, the leaders of the league have already accomplished many good results. But there is much work to be done. Few realize how closely connected are our own lives with the lives of the workers along certain industrial lines. It is not only the health of the workers that is often at stake, but the conditions are a menace to the consumers as well, and the danger to society is great.

OUT-OF-ORDINARY PEOPLE

"GATLING GUN" PARKER



Surprise and concern were felt when it was learned that a United States army machine gun had failed to work during the raid made by Villistas on Columbus, N. M. Promptly the war department set about preventing a repetition of that breakdown by sending to the border the army's machine-gun expert, Maj. John Henry Parker of the Twenty-fourth infantry, variously known in the service as "Gatling Gun Parker" or, more intimately, "John Henry." Major Parker has a noteworthy record, because he is the man who demonstrated the possibilities of the machine gun.

This happened 18 years ago, during Shafter's campaign, which culminated in the fall of Santiago de Cuba. The man in the street may not be aware of it, but Lieutenant Parker—for such he was then—has been credited with turning the tide of battle at a critical period and making the capture and the retention of San Juan hill possible. More than that, his modest little detachment effectually halted the operating of a formidable battery that might easily have put many of Shafter's fieldpieces out of action.

In short, Lieutenant Parker showed the military world for the first time just what the machine gun could be relied upon to do in the hands of capable men. He anticipated and actually predicted the part that the machine gun has played in the present struggle in Europe.

Long before the war with Spain Lieutenant Parker grasped the tactical value of the machine gun, and became so insistently an advocate of the weapon that he talked about it upon every possible occasion.

He drew up plans for a suitable carriage, so that the machine gun, ordinarily equipped with only a tripod, might have the fullest mobility and keep right along with the most advanced troops.

So persistent was Parker in riding his hobby that other army officers thought him something of a bore and sometimes avoided his company. But his enthusiasm and theories have been fully justified, first by the work of his machine-gun detachment in the Spanish-American war, and now, even more fully, by the developments of the great conflict in Europe.

VARDAMAN ON "FLUNKIES"

James K. Vardaman, United States senator from Mississippi, has said many biting and even bitter things during his public career, and the other day he took occasion to pay his respects to a certain class of citizens of Washington, in the course of an eloquent plea for better citizenship made before a mass meeting in Alexandria.

"There are more flunkies to the square inch in Washington than I ever saw in my life," declared the senator, "and I verily believe that if you would stuff a colored laborer's overalls with straw and label the effigy 'congressman' or 'senator,' you would soon have half the population crawling to it."

Senator Vardaman said that a public office should be honored, but that the man in that office should be honored in accordance with his worth. Honest, fearless, patriotic men and women are needed at the ballot box today, Senator Vardaman told his audience, and if mistakes have been made in the past they may be righted in the future. The speaker expressed the fear that "in this nation dollar is the god and commerce the religion of too many."



DEMOCRATS' PUBLICITY MAN



When the joint finance and executive campaign committee of the Democratic national committee selected Frederick W. Steckman as director of publicity for the national committee in the coming presidential campaign, it picked one of the most experienced and popular of the newspaper writers and correspondents in Washington.

Mr. Steckman, who was born in Princeton, Mo., thirty-six years ago, first went to Washington about 1904 as correspondent of the St. Louis Republic. For some years now he has been a political writer for the Washington Post and besides has covered the capitol and the White House for the New Orleans Daily States. However, he began his newspaper activities when he was less than ten years old.

In 1912 Mr. Steckman was in charge of the Chicago headquarters of the Democratic national committee, and it was he who devised the plan of small contributions for the campaign from great numbers of people. The scheme netted the committee more than \$100,000. His excellent publicity work that year led to his selection for chief of that department in this campaign.

MADDEN, LONG LOST BROTHER

Martin B. Madden, congressman from Chicago, is not only wealthy. He is also quite handsome. Nevertheless he is not satisfied with his physical make-up. He would be much better pleased if he were built along more original lines. The trouble with him is that he looks like too many people. He makes a specialty of being a ringer for the long-lost brothers.

On an average of once a month he gets a letter from someone who has seen his picture and claims him as a brother thought to have been lost at sea or strayed from home years and years ago.

One day he heard from a woman, who said she had a locket with an "M" on it, and containing a boyhood picture of her long-lost brother that looked exactly like the one of Madden in a Chicago paper. Madden was obliged to tell her that his congressional duties are too pressing to allow him any time for being a long-lost brother this year. This is only a sample incident, and Mr. Madden is getting somewhat "peevish."

