

MAKING HEARTS FOR ROSES



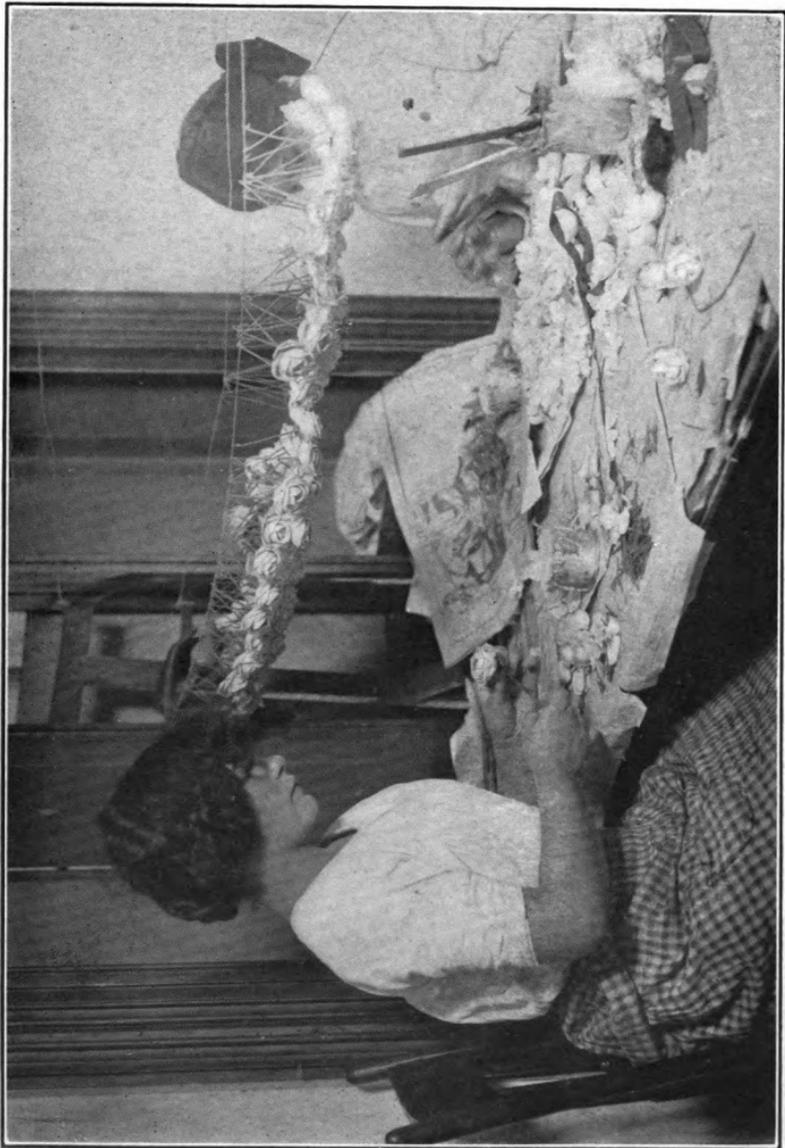
## *Artificial flower makers*

Mary Van Kleeck, Russell Sage Foundation



Van Kleeck





FINISHING A ROSE

RUSSELL SAGE  
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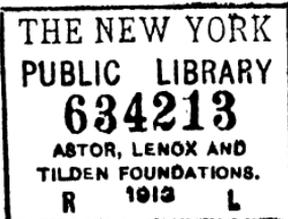
ARTIFICIAL FLOWER  
MAKERS

BY  
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SECRETARY COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S WORK  
RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION

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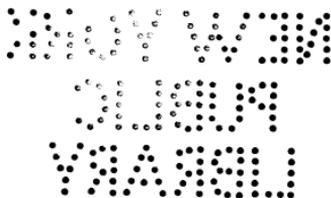
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## PREFACE

**T**HIS book describes the results of an investigation made by the Committee on Women's Work of the Russell Sage Foundation, and is the second in a series of studies of the condition of women's work in important trades in New York City. While the inquiry was local in scope, the facts discovered are national in their significance. New York produces three-fourths of all the artificial flowers made in the United States. The development of the industry in any other section of the country will depend on the labor standards maintained in the city where it is now so largely concentrated. Furthermore, the trade is a concrete illustration of large industrial problems—seasonal work, child labor, lack of skill, the home-work system—which are common to many occupations in many communities. Intensive studies of the conditions in one trade in one city will throw light on conditions in other trades in other cities. Efforts to solve the problem in one locality will stimulate action in other sections of the country.

The series of studies of which this investigation of artificial flower makers is a part is based on first-hand information secured from employers and workers. Attention was focused purposely not on

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trade prosperity, value of product, or profits to investors, but on the wellbeing of the girls employed, in so far as it could be measured in wages, hours of labor, regularity of employment, opportunity to acquire skill, chance to advance, and the conditions of living made possible by the earnings received. The scope of the investigation is shown in detail in the four record cards reproduced in the Appendix.\* The first contains facts about the worker's industrial history and living conditions, such as her relationship to the head of the household in which she lives, her age and birthplace, and a chronological record of positions held, with the name and address of each firm, the kind of work done by her, weekly wages, means of securing the position, reason for leaving, and loss of time through unemployment. The facts about living conditions include nationality of father and mother, number of children at home, other wage-earners in the family, the number of rooms in which they live, rent, and the proportion of her earnings which the girl contributes to her home.

The second card contains facts secured from a worker about the factory in which she was working. Often reports were obtained from several girls employed in the same factory. The third card shows the record of the investigation of a factory. It is filed with the cards containing reports from the girls, thus bringing together for comparison all the information secured from workers

\* See pages 228-235.

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and employer concerning each place of employment covered in the inquiry. Both the second and third cards include data regarding the processes of work carried on by women, wages, opportunities for learners, seasons, hours of labor, overtime, home work, and sanitary conditions in the workroom.

The fourth record used in the investigation provided information about home workers—their work, earnings, and living conditions, and the employment and wages of members of the family at work in other occupations. When a flower maker employed in a factory was a member of a family of home workers all four cards were used.

Names of workers were secured from social settlements and other philanthropic organizations, public evening schools, and fellow workers or friends of the girls.\* In the investigation of home

* Sources of Names of Flower Makers in the Shops:	
Richmond Hill House	68
Other settlements, girls' clubs, etc. (College Settlement, Greenwich House, Henry Street Settlement, Downtown Ethical Society, Council of Jewish Women, Girls' Friendly Society, Educational Alliance)	45
Other organizations (Alliance Employment Bureau, Child Welfare Exhibit, Protestant Episcopal Mission Church, Consumers' League, International Institute of the Young Women's Christian Association)	11
Evening schools	51
Other schools (Manhattan Trade School for Girls, public school teacher)	7
Through other shop and home workers visited	45
Found by visitors	17
	244

Of these 244 names of workers, records were secured from 174, while the remaining 70 were no longer flower makers, could furnish only inadequate information, or could not be found.

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workers,\* a group of families were interviewed who had been visited in 1907 in an investigation of child labor in tenements in New York.† Comparison of the records secured in these two investigations gave added value to the more recent data. More than 980 visits were made during the course of the present investigation, 591 to workers in their homes, and 391 to factories to interview employers. It is the practice of our investigators to have at least two interviews in the home of a worker; first, in the daytime with her mother or some other member of the household, and second, in the evening with the worker after she gets home from the factory. Records were secured of 174 shop workers, 114 artificial flower factories, and 110 families of home workers.‡

* Sources of names of Home Workers on Artificial Flowers:	
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Evening schools . . . . .	1
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Found by visitors . . . . .	55
	150

From this list of 150 names, records were secured from 110 home workers, while the other 40 families were no longer making flowers at home, or could not be found.

† This study had been made under the auspices of the College Settlements Association in coöperation with the Child Labor Committee, local and national, and the Consumers' League, local and national. For results of the study see Van Kleeck, *Mary: Child Labor in New York City Tenements, Charities and the Commons*, XIX: 1405-1420 (January 18, 1908).

‡ In addition, records were secured of 12 workers employed in fancy feather shops, four in ostrich feather factories, and three home workers in the ostrich feather trade.

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All the shops which we could find in Manhattan were visited, including both independent factories and departments of establishments that combined more than one branch of the millinery industry. These shops employed 5,240 workers, and the interviews with employers, forewomen, and others afforded a thorough basis of information for the intensive case study of girls employed in the trade.

The determination of the number of cases which should be investigated in order to make the study thorough is a matter of judgment, and depends largely upon the character of the occupation. A representative group illustrative of every important phase of labor conditions in the trade must be studied. In a complex industry, in which changes are rapid and methods differ radically in different factories, the number of case studies necessary to insure representative data will be larger than in an occupation in which machinery is not used, and where processes are more or less similar in all establishments. In every investigation of this kind, the time arrives when the reports of field workers begin to repeat facts already learned, and when each record contains less new information than that secured during the first interviews. When the repetition on all important points has been frequent enough to constitute corroborative evidence, it is time to apply objective tests to the data at hand to determine whether the field work may safely be terminated or whether more data

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must be secured. Census figures regarding wages, factory inspectors' reports concerning hours of work, information found in trade journals, and advertisements for workers published in daily newspapers, afford corroboration of the reliability of statements made in interviews. No *a priori* judgment of the numbers to be studied can be relied upon.

The preliminary field work in this investigation was begun in the spring of 1910. Interviews with workers were continued until the summer of 1912. The investigation was made simultaneously with other investigations of women at work in New York, and constant comparison with conditions in other occupations made possible a sounder interpretation of results than would otherwise have been possible. The investigators who took part in the field work were Miss Louise C. Odenchantz, Miss Alice P. Barrows, Miss Elizabeth L. Meigs, and the writer, who directed the inquiry. To Miss Odenchantz we are indebted also for the compilation of statistics. The comparative study of conditions of employment in the artificial flower trade in Paris was made by Miss Elizabeth S. Sergeant. Before leaving New York, Miss Sergeant accompanied one of our investigators in some of her visits, and thus was enabled to seek in Paris information comparable with facts already secured in New York. It should be added that in order to have any errors detected and to secure the benefit of criticisms by the trade, we sub-

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mitted the manuscript to an employer and to a flower maker of many years' experience, who confirmed the accuracy of the facts presented in the study.



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## CHAPTER I

### THE ARTIFICIAL FLOWER TRADE

**I**N the making of a flower the hand worker has no mechanical rival. No inventor has been able to harness electricity or steam to any instrument which can reproduce the deft twist of the skilled rose maker's fingers, or the discriminating touch of the worker who tastefully groups together leaves and finished flowers. The nature of the product, the absence of machinery, and as a result the lack of change in fundamental processes, make this industry unique among the important wage-earning pursuits of women. Nevertheless, even without machines, which are commonly considered the prime factors in producing industrial revolution, the artificial flower trade in New York has not escaped industrial changes. It is today not a handicraft but a factory industry in which many evils of the factory system have robbed the occupation of its artistic possibilities.

Flower making as an art has been practiced in Europe for nearly two centuries. Its exercise does not belong to any one people, although the industry has now become associated chiefly with the French. But from early times the Romans and Egyptians, as well as the Chinese, had made arti-

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ficial flowers out of various precious materials, and in more modern days the people of tropical islands have made them in quaint and formal designs out of tiny, delicately colored shells and feathers. Seafaring men in the days of the West and East India trade in this country used to bring these shell and feather flowers home to their families in glass-covered boxes, as New England parlors (and attics) can still bear testimony. It is said that Italy introduced the art of flower making into France, and from thence fleeing Huguenots carried it across the channel to England. It was through French immigrants, too, that the art was brought to this country.

In an article on this trade, its introduction here is thus described: \* "It was necessary that these strangers should live, and one of the first industries they took up was artificial flower making. We had at that time few greenhouses, and those which existed contributed very little to the daily supply of the citizens. But artificial flowers are permanent, lasting a year or so if required, and they serve as cheap decorations for ladies' hats and bonnets. † For the same purpose feathers were used, and it became the custom to unite the two industries in.

\* Depew, C. M.; *One Hundred Years of American Commerce*, Vol. II, p. 671. New York, D. O. Haynes and Co., 1895.

† In a letter dated June 2, 1799, Jane Austen in England wrote, "Flowers are very much worn and fruit is still more the thing. Elizabeth has a bunch of strawberries, and I have seen grapes, cherries, plums, and apricots."—Austen, Jane: *Letters*. Edited by Edward, Lord Brabourne. Vol. I, p. 212. London, Richard Bentley and Son, 1884.

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the same shop. As long ago as 1840 there were 10 manufacturers in this line in New York, T. Chagot being the chief. He was an importer as well as a manufacturer, his place being at 24 Maiden Lane. The others were nearly all in William Street. In 1847 the number had increased to 24."

From that time the trade has grown in this country, but official statistics showing its history are very meager and unsatisfactory. The union of feather making with flower making is still a marked characteristic of the industry, and the two are combined in census figures. In 1850, according to the recent official report on the history of women in industry, the number of women employed in these two allied occupations was 372.\* In 1870, 1,114 women were recorded as flower and feather makers. The figures for the census years from 1880 to 1910 are given in Table 1.

An interesting point regarding the comparative importance of the trade in 1900 and 1905, was suggested in the census of 1905 in which the statement was made that the artificial flower and feather trade seemed to show "a decreased production between the two census periods" (1900 and 1905); that it was "possible that the decrease was caused by a reduced demand for these

\* Report on Condition of Woman and Child Wage-earners in the United States. Vol. IX, History of Women in Industry in the United States, p. 253. U. S. Senate document No. 645.

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TABLE 1.—THE ARTIFICIAL FLOWER AND FEATHER MAKING INDUSTRY OF THE UNITED STATES<sup>a</sup>

Census year	Number of establishments	Capital	AVERAGE NUMBER OF WAGE-EARNERS				Cost of materials used	Value of products
			Total	Men 16 years and over	Women 16 years and over	Children under 16 years		
1880	174	\$1,253,050	4,342	550	3,577	215	\$4,879,324	
1890	251	3,081,828	6,357	979	5,319	59	9,078,083	
1900	224	3,632,789	5,331	671	4,191	469	6,293,235	
1905	213	2,567,648	4,343	604	3,545	194	5,240,822	
1910 <sup>b</sup>	412	9,693,000	10,016	...	...	...	23,981,000	

<sup>a</sup> Twelfth United States Census, 1905. Manufactures, Part 1, p. 3.

<sup>b</sup> Figures from the Thirteenth United States Census, Bulletin on Manufactures, pp. 18 and 74. In this bulletin the average number of wage-earners is stated as a total, and not separately for men, women and children. The number of men, women and children is given for "December 15, or nearest representative day," but these figures cannot be compared with the figures for former years, which represent averages. Capital, cost of material used, and value of product are given only to the nearest thousand.

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goods." It will be noted that the number of establishments had fallen from 224 in 1900 to 213 in 1905, value of products from \$6,293,235 to \$5,246,822, and the number of women employed from 4,191 to 3,545. An alternative interpretation, given in the same report, however, was that possibly a large quantity of this class of goods was included under the head of "millinery and lace goods." Thus the apparent decrease in flower and feather making during the five years between 1900 and 1905 may have been due to a change in the method of counting rather than to an actual change in trade conditions.

One enthusiastic employer whose father before him had been in the business all his life, declared that the flower trade was "the coming industry of America." Whether or not so great a degree of enthusiasm is justified, this investigation of the trade in New York does not indicate that it is declining, for the records of the flower factories visited show that in the busy season nearly 6,000 women are employed in flower making alone, not counting the feather makers in the same establishments, nor the flower makers who work in the tenements. Furthermore, in 1910 factory inspectors \* visited 479 flower and feather factories in Greater New York, which employed 7,292 women and 1,231 men, while United States census enumerators recorded the total number of wage-

\* New York State Department of Labor. Report of Bureau of Factory Inspection, 1910, p. 321.

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earners in these two trades in 1910 as 10,016.\* These figures indicate growth rather than decrease in the importance of this two-fold industry. Nor are these data merely local in their significance. New York is the most important center of flower and feather making in the United States, and conditions there are a good index of the trade throughout the country.

✓ This concentration in one city is probably the most important characteristic of the industry, influencing in a marked degree the conditions of employment. Measured by value of products, 74.3 per cent of the flower and feather trade in the United States in 1905 was located in Manhattan and the Bronx.† Only two other industries in the whole country showed a more marked localization in one center; namely, lapidary work of which 96.5 per cent was in New York, and collars and cuffs of which 89.5 per cent were made in Troy.‡ In 1905, United States census agents counted in New York City 146 flower and feather factories, employing 440 men and 2,827 women.§ In the whole United States in the same year they found but 213 factories in this industry, employing a total of 604 men and 3,545 women. Thus four-

\* The large increase in 1910 as compared with 1905 is probably due in part to the abnormal demand for willow plumes in the census year 1910. This demand soon lessened and a census taken now would doubtless show less violent change since 1905.

† Twelfth United States Census, 1905. *Manufactures, Part I*, p. cclix.

‡ *Ibid.*, Part I, p. cclix.

§ *Ibid.*, Part II, p. 770.

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fifths of the entire number of women employed in the trade throughout the country were working in New York. Of the remainder, 336 were in Philadelphia, 130 in Chicago, 103 in Baltimore, and 56 in West Hoboken.\* In all, about 700 were outside New York.†

The story of an expert flower maker, interviewed in this investigation, is an illustration of the way in which this localization influences workers to live in Manhattan and to increase the congestion of population there. After ten years' experience in the trade in New York, this woman married and went to Baltimore to live. Her husband was a tailor, earning \$15 a week in busy seasons, but in slack seasons his wages were often cut in half and occasionally a prolonged strike meant the loss of all earnings. Twice when her husband had little or no work, the woman returned to New York with her children and went to work in a flower factory. She has now concluded that it will be best for the whole family to stay in Manhattan. "My trade's here," she says. "I know of only one flower factory in Baltimore and they don't pay as good wages as here." But she added regretfully, "I like Baltimore better. We had six rooms for \$12. Here we pay \$10 for one room and there's no conveniences. If I'd been educated I could have gotten work in Balti-

\* Twelfth United States Census, 1905. Manufactures, Part II, pp. 978, 232, 412, 691.

† Figures from census of 1910 which would be comparable with those for 1905 are not yet available.

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more, but I only know my trade and it's in New York."

Concentration in New York is accompanied by congestion of the flower shops in a small and flowerless district south of Fourteenth Street and west of Broadway. In the course of this investigation only four flower factories were found north of Fourteenth Street, while 124 were south of it,—28 on Broadway, 21 east of Broadway, and 75 west of it. The firms brave enough to move north of Fourteenth Street are those whose reputation is sufficiently established to attract buyers away from their usual haunts. These buyers are the agents of milliners not from New York alone but from every state in the union, and their market for buying all millinery supplies is the wholesale millinery district in the neighborhood of Broadway between Prince and Fourteenth Streets. Thus the flower manufacturer regards this district as the Mecca of his trade.

Flower making is not an independent but a subsidiary industry, chiefly controlled by conditions in the millinery trade to which it is a contributor. It is true that a minor branch of artificial flower manufacture has always been concerned with the making of flowers and plants as decorations for houses, theaters, or stores, but the materials used are coarser, the designs different, and the processes by no means identical. Workers who make flowers for decorations do not turn easily to the making of roses and violets for hat trimmings, and the two

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types of shops, therefore, represent quite different occupations. Compare, for example, the cherry blossoms used on an Easter hat with the full-blown blossoms on the branches of a cherry tree, used in some store window as a background for a display of Japanese kimonos. Only 10 shops manufacturing such decorations were found in New York in the course of this inquiry. Much more important is the production of flowers for milliners, and it is the work of women in this branch of the industry which is the subject of these chapters.

The millinery trade has many ramifications. If "it takes nine tailors to make a man" it takes twice nine workers to make a woman's hat. The shapes are made in straw hat factories, felt hat factories, and wire frame factories. Trimmings are produced in artificial flower shops, feather factories, ribbon factories, and in workrooms for the manufacture of such miscellaneous supplies as jet ornaments, bandeaus, shirred chiffon, and pompons. All these materials are bought by the proprietors of those retail millinery shops which we as private customers know best, and are there used in the final processes of hat trimming. They are bought also by wholesale milliners to supply the salesmen and jobbers who come from north, south, and west to buy hats by the dozens to be sold in New England, Louisiana, California, or Texas.

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Nor is the millinery industry a simple, well-organized business with branches clearly defined. Some firms are both wholesalers and retailers, selling either to private customers who buy one hat at a time, or to middlemen or other milliners who purchase in quantities for sale to their own customers. Some wholesale milliners not only trim dozens of one style of headgear, but also manufacture the straw shapes on which to put the trimming. Manufacturers of straw hats occasionally add trimming departments. In some retail establishments all the wire frames are made in the shop, while other retail milliners buy these frames from wire frame factories. Some wholesale milliners have departments for manufacturing flowers and feathers, while some manufacturers of flowers and feathers are also hat trimmers, in order the better to sell their products by showing their use on hats. Furthermore, this grouping of branches of the trade under the same roof varies from season to season according to the demands of fashion.

In New York is found all this confusion of millinery. Besides its large retail trade, it has a wholesale trade unequalled in importance by that of any other city in the country. The census enumerators in 1905 \* counted in New York 13,511 women employed in the manufacture of millinery and lace goods, a group in which wholesale mil-

\*Twelfth United States Census, 1905. Manufactures, Part II, p. 775.

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liners decidedly predominate over the lace goods makers counted with them. The second city in importance in this industry was Chicago with 2,298 women workers.

In this kaleidoscopic group of occupations essential to the making of a woman's hat, artificial flower making is clearly a dependent in its position, with seasons, hours, and even wages largely determined by conditions in other branches of the industry. It cannot be more prosperous than the millinery shops. If unseasonable weather, or a drop in the stock market, makes the sale of hats less lively on Fifth Avenue, or in California, the artificial flower makers in New York suffer. On the other hand, though the milliners may rejoice in a profitable season, they do not necessarily share their profits with flower manufacturers, for fashion may have decreed that hats shall be trimmed not with flowers but with jet ornaments, or ribbon, or feathers.

Of all the products of the millinery trade fancy feathers\* are most closely related to artificial flowers. Fashion has the habit of regarding the two products as substitutes for one another as trimming, using more feathers in winter and more flowers in summer. This has led to a dove-tailing of the seasons which makes it desirable to carry

\* The feather trade has two branches, fancy feathers and ostrich feathers. The ostrich feather establishments are not connected as closely as fancy feather factories with any other branch of the industry, and are more independent,—possibly because the use of ostrich feathers is approved at all times by fashion.

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on both trades under the same roof, with advantage to employers and to workers. Employers thus prolong the season for their sales, and workers by learning both trades may be employed more months in the year.

In spite of this close connection, however, it has seemed advisable in making this investigation to study the artificial flower trade as a separate occupation, and to describe the fancy feather trade only in an incidental way as throwing light on conditions of employment, especially in regard to seasons, in flower shops. Obviously the products and materials used are different, and the processes of work although similar are by no means identical. An experienced flower maker must become a learner again if she would master the feather trade. Furthermore, some shops manufacture flowers only. Where both flowers and feathers are made in the same shop, the tendency is for the manufacturer to specialize in the sale of one or the other. One manufacturer whose sign read "Flowers and feathers," said that his specialty was flowers and that he never made feathers except in years when flowers were not in demand; his sign was intended to provide for such emergencies. Workers often make flowers only, and never learn the processes of feather manufacture. Home workers in the flower trade are usually a distinct group having no connection with the feather trade.

On the other hand, although the two occupa-



A FEATHER FACTORY



MAKING ROSES PIECE WORK



## THE ARTIFICIAL FLOWER TRADE

tions are distinct in so many respects, their close intertwining creates difficulties in considering them separately. It is hard to secure clear-cut information in interviews with employers or workers engaged in both trades. The fact that the official reports of factory inspectors and census enumerators include data on feather and flower making combined has already been noted. This very lack of distinct information, however, may be considered an added reason for separate study.

Nothing in the nature of the work would prevent one flower maker from carrying on a business independently. She could design and execute, using real flowers as models, and sell direct to private customers. Such a plan might make the work an art to be practiced in a professional spirit, with pride in the creation of a beautiful object. In fact, just such a spirit animates some of the women who make the exquisite Parisian flowers. Usually the history of a trade shows that the coming of machines has substituted the factory system for this artist method, as for example, in the binding of books. In flower making, it is not machinery but the organization of the market which has turned an art into a trade. Because a manufacturer sells a hundred gross of flowers to a wholesale milliner instead of two or three beautiful roses to a private customer, he organizes a shop and employs many workers who are driven by the necessity to swell the volume of production rather

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than by the desire to create a perfect and beautiful object.

The raw materials used in the making of flowers are chiefly muslin, silk, and velvet.\* These are bought from other manufacturers and come in large bolts apparently ready for the counter of a department store. Usually white is used, and the color applied later. In preparation for the making of leaves or flowers, the material is cut off in a strip usually a yard and a half long and stretched on a wooden frame. Starch is then applied with a brush to give the required stiffness to the goods. If leaves are to be made, the green color is brushed on while the muslin is on the frame; if flowers, the dyeing is done later, after the muslin or silk or velvet has been taken from the frame and cut into petals in the cutting department. The tools for the cutting are a steel die or stamp, a lead block, and a wooden mallet.† As soon as the petals are cut they are ready to be dyed.

In the selection of the color fashion is as much in control as in any other department of the millinery industry; for if the shade of its petal be not fashionable, the flower will not sell. Color charts are secured from Paris each season, and the dyer has a chart constantly before him as a guide. It is

\* Contributory industries supply also powders for dyes, wire of various kinds, tools, muslin, and rubber tubes for stems, tiny peeps which form the center of the flowers, tied buds for roses, and sometimes leaves.

† A cutting machine is on the market but seems to be seldom used.

## THE ARTIFICIAL FLOWER TRADE

the task of the dyer not only to dissolve the powdered aniline but to mix it so as to produce exactly the colors displayed on the Parisian chart or those ordered by the designer in the shop. The dye must then be applied in exactly the right way to each petal. Sometimes petals are stenciled, as for example in the making of an orchid. The finished petals are finally laid out to dry between sheets in a wire frame. For the best grade of flowers they are dried naturally; in some shops they are dried in a room artificially heated. These processes of starching, cutting, and dyeing are done usually by men,\* and it is not until the dyeing of the petals is completed that the girls' work begins.

Their work has three main divisions: preparing, making, and branching. The petals when cut are flat, and except in color and outline they bear small resemblance to any part of a flower. To "prepare" them means to shape them by curling their edges, pinching them between the fingers, or "goffering" them. Goffering is the making of the cup-like shape such as that of a rose petal, and it is done with a tool consisting of a ball at the end of a handle. This ball is heated on a gas stove and applied to each petal as it rests on the cup-like palm of the hand. Crimping machines are used in some factories, but only for cheap flowers.

\* A woman does the dyeing in one factory, but she is said to be the only woman in the city who has learned this process. Some employers say that the dyers jealously guard their methods as trade secrets, and would certainly be unwilling to teach women to be their competitors.

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"Making" includes all the processes of arranging the separate petals to form the flower, and attaching the stem. In the making of a rose, for example, the petals used are of different sizes. Each must be pasted in its appointed place about a center attached to a wire which when bound in green forms the stem. In some models the petals are not pasted on in this way but are "slipped-up"; that is, the stem is inserted through a hole in each petal which is then "slipped-up" into its place and held with paste. In making cheap flowers this single process takes the place of preparing as well as of making. After the petals are cut, piles of a dozen or more are put in the "punching and goffering machine" which at one stroke punches a hole through the center and rounds the petals into a cup shape. The makers simply pull the petals apart, slip the stem through the hole, slip the petal up the stem, and pinch it into place about the "peps" or bud which forms the center. This process is flower making reduced to its simplest terms, requiring neither taste nor skill but demanding merely an easily acquired deftness of touch which makes speed possible.

Leaves are sometimes made in separate factories. After they have been cut with hammer and die from the green-dyed muslin, which has been starched and colored while stretched on a frame, a stem is pasted to each leaf,—an unskilled and monotonous process done sometimes by girls, sometimes by boys. When the stem is attached

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the leaf is veined. This is done on a pressing machine moved by a hand wheel not unlike an ordinary letter press. It also is unskilled work but requires speed and greater strength than is needed for any other process done by girls in this trade.

When flowers and leaves are completed they are brought together and deftly arranged to appear pleasing to the customer. This is called branching and is considered the most skilled work in the trade. Its success depends entirely upon taste, deftness of touch, and readiness in understanding the thought of the designer who planned the model.\*

All the work involved in this construction of a bunch of artificial flowers may be wasted if they are not of the form, color, and size to be popular in the market. The success of a firm depends, therefore, upon the work of designing and of making samples to be copied in the workroom. It is said that few designers worthy of the name are to be found in New York. In the better grade of factory, the models are flowers that have been designed and made in Paris. In the cheaper grade, the product of the higher grade factory is copied.†

Sometimes the manager is responsible for the designs. He buys an imported sample, or brings a real flower to the factory, as suggestion for a model

\* The final work is to arrange the flowers in boxes not only for shipping, but for display in the showrooms of wholesale milliners. New York readers will recall these displays in the windows of shops in lower Broadway. In large factories packers have no opportunity to learn to make flowers.

† Manufacturers complain that rival firms send girls into their workrooms to stay two or three days and steal the styles.

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which he explains fully to the sample makers. He must understand the prevailing millinery styles so well as to be able to prophesy the probable success of the design. On the basis of this prophecy, he must purchase the right materials, tell the dyer what shade is needed, order the right number of petals to be cut, and explain to the girls exactly how to prepare, make, and branch the flower. The models prepared by the sample makers stand before their eyes for copying. After the sample flowers are finished success depends on the salesmen who go out to solicit orders, or on the fancy of buyers who frequent the showroom.

In this establishment the work is almost all done to fill definite orders. Each model has its number and can readily be duplicated after the first samples have been shown to customers. The risk of making stock in advance of orders is said to be very great in this trade. "We cannot tell what the leading color will be," said this manager. "A milliner may try to push a certain color but if women see something they like better they won't buy what the milliner offers them." This view was emphasized by a forewoman who was also a designer. "One week you load up with blue flowers," said she, "and the next you can't get rid of them at any price." Even in filling orders the risk is not small. Buyers from the west may have been unwise in their judgment of what would please their customers, and after leaving New York they may telegraph cancelation. To sue a buyer for

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canceling his order would mean the loss of other customers, who would fear similar treatment.

For example, in the spring of 1910 some flower manufacturer designed a species of wheat which was made up in a great variety of colors, regardless of the shade preferred by nature. The design became very popular. One New York factory opened a branch in Brooklyn solely for its manufacture, to secure workers who were not available in large enough numbers that season in the neighborhood of the New York establishment. Another, situated on the lower west side, rented a store in an upper east side street and sought out home workers in a district not hitherto exploited by the flower trade. Suddenly the demand for wheat collapsed, as though this artificial product were trying to simulate the power of the real model to create a panic on the Stock Exchange. From all over the country came telegrams canceling orders, and the firms in chagrin offered wheat to purchasers at prices that did not cover the wages paid the makers.

Fashion is a sensitive creature; she loves a model which is popular enough to be called stylish, but not so prevalent as to be worn by "everybody" and thus to be condemned as "common." Between what is fashionable and what is common is a very short step, and unless buyers and jobbers take account of this fact they may work havoc for the flower maker. Capricious fancy is ready to adopt the most whimsical suggestions drawn from a new play, or from nowhere in particular. On

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such uncertain conditions depends in large measure the welfare of workers in the trade. "Our flower season usually lasts until May," said one employer. "But this year Chantecler made it stop short the first week in April."

Between the fine "made" rose copied from the model of an expert and the "slipped-up" buttercup there are many grades of flowers. It is in the assignment of the tasks of preparing, making, and branching to one worker, or their subdivision among groups, that firms differ in their methods. These differences in organization in workrooms depend upon the grades of flower made in them. Cheap flowers whose petals are "slipped-up" demand no carefully organized and well-trained group of preparers and makers as do those which are made by pasting each petal in its proper place. The finer the flower the more important it is that it be prepared and made by one hand. Subdivision of processes does not produce an artistic effect.

In the higher grade establishments the subdivision which exists is not according to process but according to kind of flower,—violet, orchid, or rose,—each worker preparing and making the whole. Branching is almost always a distinct department, although it is by no means unusual for an experienced worker in the trade to know how to branch as well as how to prepare and to make. So distinct are the processes, however, that there are importing firms in New York with branching

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departments only, the making having been completed in Europe. Even in the manufacture of cheap flowers branching requires skill.

The difference in product probably accounts for the differences of opinion of employers as to whether it is more profitable to have workers specialize in one process only or to make the whole flower. Nothing in the nature of the task prevents individual work and all the artistic results implied in thus giving free scope to the worker. It is the market a firm supplies that determines its method. If it cater to the demand for a cheap product its workers will specialize, one girl preparing petals, another pasting, because this makes greater speed possible. If it meet a demand for good work its workers will probably make the whole flower. Large establishments may combine both methods, having some flowers made by all-round workers, and others divided among groups of girls who press, crimp, goff, paste, or slip-up. One large factory has found it desirable to have the work done by groups of three,—two preparing the petals under the direction of the third who is the maker, thus aiming at the advantages both of specialization and completeness. The preparers see the whole process of making from the beginning, while the maker produces more rapidly than if she worked alone.

Thus the factory system, without the use of machines, has taken possession of this trade, not because the process requires it, but because sales

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are made at wholesale and volume of production is the aim. The final step in organization to meet the demand for the cheap and plentiful is the development of the home-work system, which makes the artificial flower trade a sweated industry in New York. In the manufacture of cheap flowers the only skilled processes are cutting and dyeing and the final branching. The whole process between, consisting as it does only of slipping up the petals, can be removed from the factory to tenement homes, thus utilizing the labor of the unskilled. This practice swells the volume of production while relieving the employer of paying for rent and heat for these workers.

Artificial flowers are not a necessity, and the demand for them depends on their attractiveness to the milliners' customers. The attractiveness of the flower depends in turn upon the skill of the workers. From this point of view the adoption of factory methods, followed by the development of sweated forms of home work, does not promise well for New York's power to produce as beautiful a flower as the Parisian. A study of the conditions of women's work in artificial flower shops is a study not only of the welfare of the workers but of the very life and future prosperity of the industry.

## CHAPTER II

### WORKERS IN THE SHOPS

**E**MPLOYERS who confess that the artificial flowers made in the United States are not equal in workmanship to the Parisian product, usually claim that this inferiority is due to the lack of the right type of workers. Many of these are young girls, who drift into a flower shop from a candy factory, and out of it again to become cash girls in department stores. Employers complain also that the workrooms are filled with foreigners. "Formerly Americans and Germans worked at the trade," said one employer, "and then the Italians and Jews came in and killed it. It has changed the class of work. We cannot compete with them in cheapness of product. The only way out is for us to make higher class goods, not cheaper, and for this we need a better class of workers and we cannot seem to attract them."

A study of the workers interviewed in this investigation, supported by census data, indicates a large proportion of young girls in the trade. Of the group of girls interviewed 25, or about 14 per cent, were under sixteen; 125, or 72 per cent, were between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five; while only 24, or about 14 per cent, were twenty-five years

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

of age or older. Figures given in the United States Census of 1900 are in substantial agreement, showing that of 1,670 flower makers\* enumerated in the house-to-house canvass in New York City, 233, or 14 per cent, were under sixteen; 1,053, or 63 per cent, between sixteen and twenty-five; and 384, or 23 per cent, twenty-five or over. Thus the proportion under sixteen agrees with our investigation, although the census shows a larger percentage over twenty-five. Official figures on this point are not yet available for 1910.† Between our investigation and the taking of the census of 1900 here quoted is a lapse of ten years, so that rigid comparison is not feasible. It is possible that in that decade a larger proportion of young girls have entered the trade. Or it may be that we interviewed younger women, although judged by wages, to be discussed later,‡ they were better paid than the group enumerated in the census. Both sets of figures agree, however, in showing that a large majority are under twenty-five. This means that a considerable proportion of the present workers were not in the trade ten years ago, that the occupation does not hold its workers for many years, and that in a single decade great changes occur in the personnel of workroom forces. That so large a proportion of younger workers is not found in all women's trades is shown by Table 2 and the

\* Twelfth United States Census, 1900. Occupations, p. 640.

† For total number of wage-earners counted in the industry in 1910, see Chapter I, p. 4.

‡ See Chapter IV, p. 66.



MAKING HEARTS FOR ROSES



GOFFERING ROSE PETALS



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chart which follows, giving the comparative ages in other important occupations in New York.

**TABLE 2.—AGES OF WOMEN EMPLOYED IN ALL MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES, IN ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKING, AND IN OTHER SPECIFIED INDUSTRIES. NEW YORK CITY, 1900<sup>a</sup>**

Industry	WOMEN EMPLOYED, BY AGES			All women
	10 years and under 16 years	16 years and under 25 years	25 years and over	
<b>All manufacturing industries</b>				
Number . . . . .	12,647	69,967	49,864	132,478
Per cent . . . . .	9	53	38	100
<b>Artificial flower making</b>				
Number . . . . .	233	1,053	384	1,670
Per cent . . . . .	14	63	23	100
<b>Dressmaking</b>				
Number . . . . .	1,836	15,409	20,263	37,508
Per cent . . . . .	5	41	54	100
<b>Millinery</b>				
Number . . . . .	761	4,340	2,546	7,647
Per cent . . . . .	10	57	33	100
<b>Paper box making</b>				
Number . . . . .	544	1,819	730	3,093
Per cent . . . . .	17	59	24	100

<sup>a</sup> Twelfth United States Census, 1900. Special Reports, Occupations, p. 640.

Dressmaking was chosen for comparison because it employs more women than any other trade in New York, millinery because it is the trade on which artificial flower shops depend, and paper box making because a number of factories are located in the same district as are the artificial flower

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establishments. The figures are also given for all manufacturing pursuits grouped together. Com-

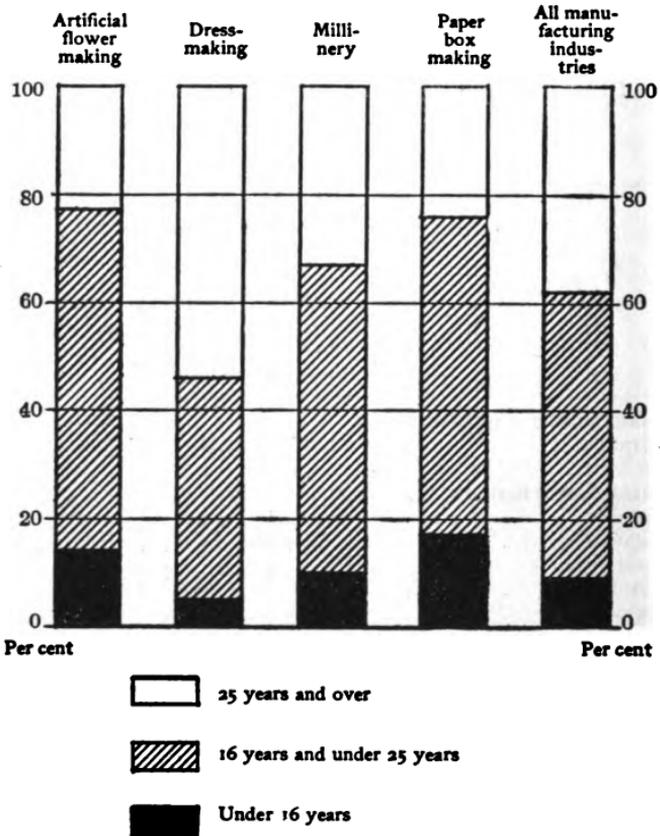


CHART I.—AGE DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN EMPLOYED IN ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKING, IN OTHER SPECIFIED MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES, AND IN ALL MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES, NEW YORK CITY, 1900

pared with this latter comprehensive group of all trades, a larger proportion of children under sixteen is found in the artificial flower shops,—14 per

## WORKERS IN THE SHOPS

cent as compared with 9 per cent. The group between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five is also larger in the flower trade,—63 per cent as compared with 53 per cent. Of all women in manufacturing nearly 50,000, or 38 per cent of the total employed, have passed their twenty-fifth birthday, compared with 23 per cent who continue in flower shops until they reach that age. Dressmaking offers a contrast even more striking, with only 5 per cent of its women employes under sixteen, and 54 per cent twenty-five or over. In millinery 10 per cent are under sixteen, 57 per cent between sixteen and twenty-five, and 33 per cent twenty-five or over. The paper box trade employs about the same proportion under the age of twenty-five as does the flower trade, but the percentage under sixteen is larger.

It is evident that flower making ranks with industries employing a large proportion of young girls. "Nearly all the girls round here work on flowers, especially the little girls," said one young flower maker. Several employers complained of this condition, explaining that it was due to the fact that as girls grow older they leave the trade for other occupations. Workers, asked for the reason, said that it was because of low wages, short seasons, and "no chance to advance." Whatever the explanation may be, a preponderance of young workers in an industry is a fact of great importance in its relation to wages, seasons, and hours of labor, and in its bearing on the develop-

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ment of skill. The absence of older workers is usually a sign that the reward of experience is too small, and that the occupation is not so organized as to encourage a high grade of efficiency.

The second point made by employers, that the more recently arrived foreigners were taking the place of workers formerly employed in the trade, was corroborated by our data. In a trade in which the personnel of the force changes so frequently as it does in flower shops, changes in nationalities represented are to be expected. On this point the data gathered by the census of 1900 and those gathered by our investigators in 1910 present marked differences, especially in regard to the birthplaces of the parents of flower makers. Of 174 workers interviewed by us, 88, or about half, were born in the United States. These figures agree closely with the census figures of 1900, in which 54 per cent of the flower and feather makers were recorded as "native born white." Birthplaces of the foreign born workers are not specified in the census. Our investigation shows that 49, over a fourth, were born in Italy; 20, or a ninth, in Russia; 12, or a fifteenth, in Austria, Hungary, or Bohemia.\* Gauged by parentage, however, a much larger proportion represent foreign countries. This fact, and the differences between census figures in 1900 and our data of 1910-11, appear in Table 3.

\* Three were born respectively in England, Germany, Roumania. Of two the birthplace was not stated.

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**TABLE 3.—NATIVITY OF PARENTS OF WOMEN  
EMPLOYED IN ARTIFICIAL FLOWER  
MAKING, NEW YORK CITY**

Country of birth	DATA OF PRESENT INVESTIGATION		CENSUS FIGURES	
	Women with fathers born as specified <sup>a</sup>		Women with parents born as specified <sup>b</sup>	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
United States . . . . .	3	2	117	7
Italy . . . . .	124	72	301	18
Russia, Poland . . . . .	24	14	379	23
Austria, Hungary, Bohemia . . . . .	18	10	109	6
Germany . . . . .	2	1	433	26
Ireland . . . . .	...	...	195	12
Other countries . . . . .	2	1	137	8
Total . . . . .	173	100	1,671	100

<sup>a</sup> Of the 174 women interviewed, one did not supply information as to nativity of father.

<sup>b</sup> Both parents born as specified, or one as specified and the other born in the United States. Mixed foreign parentage is included under "Other countries." United States Census, 1900. Occupations, p. 640.

The characteristic of the census figures is the comparatively even representation of persons from Italy, Russia, and Germany, and a somewhat smaller number from Ireland, while our data show a much larger proportion of Italians, 72 per cent, and no Irish. Of course, the number included in our interviews is small compared with the census totals, but the variety of sources of our names,—settlements, girls' clubs, public evening schools throughout Manhattan, and fellow-workers in the trade,—and the facts gathered through the thor-

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ough canvass of employers indicate that the groups are typical. Furthermore, the census of 1910 shows that the Italian population of New York more than doubled between 1900 and 1910, increasing in the ten years from 145,429 to 340,524.\* This fact further supports the explanation of the difference between our figures and those of 1900; namely, that conditions changed greatly in the trade in that decade. It lends support to the assertion of employers and workers that the Italians are "driving out" other nationalities from the flower shops.

A number of employers complained that this change in the nationality of workers cheapens the work in the shops, and results in the spread of the home-work system. One man who manufactured flowers for decoration, but who was well informed about conditions in the millinery branch of the industry, said, "There used to be a good many American girls employed in the trade. Then there was no home work. The Italians began the home work fifteen or twenty years ago. They have cheapened the whole trade. They are willing to work at home for anything because they have their children to help. A manufacturer who has his work done in the shop cannot compete with employers who give it out."

This reputation of Italian women for underbidding is not confined to the flower trade.† In

\* United States Bureau of the Census, Special Notice for Press Associations, correspondents, etc. 1912. Nationality of the foreign born white population of New York.

† For further discussion of the subject, see pp. 67-70.

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other industries also they are charged, as are Italian men, with working for wages below the prevailing standard. Because of this charge, data about the distribution of Italian women in other occupations throw light on the artificial flower trade.

**TABLE 4.—WOMEN WAGE-EARNERS BY NATIVITY OF PARENTS AND GENERAL OCCUPATIONS.  
NEW YORK CITY, 1900<sup>a</sup>**

	WOMEN WITH PARENTS BORN IN <sup>b</sup>					
	All countries	United States	Ireland	Germany	Russia and Poland	Italy
Number considered <sup>c</sup>	366,997	71,149	112,421	72,554	24,238	12,127
Per cent occupied in						
Professional service	6.1	13.3	3.9	4.2	1.5	1.2
Domestic and personal service	40.0	37.7	52.0	37.3	15.2	13.2
Trade and transportation	17.8	23.4	16.3	18.7	14.3	8.1
Manufacturing and mechanical pursuits	36.1	25.6	27.8	39.8	69.0	77.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

<sup>a</sup> Twelfth United States Census, 1900. Special Reports, Occupations, p. 638.

<sup>b</sup> Women having one parent born in the United States and one born abroad are classified as of foreign parentage according to the nativity of the foreign born parent.

<sup>c</sup> The totals given do not include women engaged in agricultural pursuits of whom 440 were reported in New York City.

While the figures given in Table 4 are those of 1900, and cannot therefore be accepted un-

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

hesitatingly as indicative of present conditions, observation of all the women wage-earners in the Italian families visited in the course of this study confirms the main conclusions of the census report regarding the types of employment selected by the largest groups of Italian women. A comparison of their choice of occupation with that of the four nationalities most largely represented among wage-earning women in New York brings to light some significant facts about the position of Italian girls in industry. The four predominant groups of women wage-earners in New York in order of numerical importance are, first, those of Irish parentage; second, German; third, native born; and fourth, Russian.\* Italians are seventh in the list.

Of the women wage-earners of Italian parentage, a very large majority are in manufacturing industries, while only a small group are employed in domestic and personal service, and a still smaller proportion earn their living in the group of occupations known as trade and transportation, including saleswork, stenography, typewriting, bookkeeping, and similar office work. This concentration in one group of wage-earning pursuits is more marked for Italian girls than for those of any other nationality.

Of all wage-earning girls of Italian parentage 78 per cent are in factories, as compared with 69 per cent of the Russians, 40 per cent of the Germans,

\* Twelfth United States Census, 1900. Special Reports, Occupations, p. 639.

28 per cent of the Irish, and 26 per cent of the native born. Equally marked is the concentration of Italian girls in a few trades in the group of manufacturing pursuits. Thus 52 per cent of Italian girls in all occupations are employed as tailors, dress-makers, or seamstresses, compared with 14 per cent of the Irish, 21 per cent of the German, and 19 per cent of all nationalities. In the 16 trades employing 1,000 or more women in New York, Italians lead in numbers employed in two,—in tailoring and in candy making. The other groups in which they are found in large numbers are dress-making, sewing, tobacco and cigar manufacture, and artificial flower making.\*

These data indicate that the Italian girl's choice of work is limited. Whatever the cause, whether it be ignorance of the labor market, prejudice of the Italian girls themselves against other occupations or of employers against them as workers, this tendency to congregate in the trades commonly considered sweated is a fact of great importance to

\* Card records of 97 club members in a social settlement, Richmond Hill House, located in the center of an Italian district, showed, June, 1911, a fairly even distribution of girls employed in artificial flower and feather making (21), dressmaking and hand sewing (21), embroidery (15), candy making (11), and machine sewing (8). The other occupations represented were millinery; machine sewing on vests, corset covers, and bathrobes; paper box making; ribbon manufacture; umbrella making; and sample mounting. A mutual benefit association, organized in connection with the same settlement, for the purpose of securing medical assistance at small cost for its members and for the discussion of industrial problems, had 17 members employed in the artificial flower and feather trade, 34 in hand sewing trades, eight in machine sewing, and scattered members at work in candy factories, box factories, bookbinding, saleswork, and a few minor occupations.

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the welfare not only of Italians but of other wage-earning women in New York.

The significance of these tentative statements in relation to the flower trade is obvious. As home workers and as shop workers, Italian girls are an important factor in determining the conditions of flower manufacture. If their choice of other occupations be limited, we are likely to see an increasing competition on their part in the flower shops, with an extension of the home-work system and its evil influences, a further curtailing of the seasons in consequence of this extension, and a probable reduction in wages such as usually follows keen competition for employment. Moreover, the characteristic attitude of Italian girls toward their work is an important factor to be considered in its effect on conditions in industries in which their numbers are increasing as they are in flower shops.

Many exceptions must be made to any characterization of national traits. Nevertheless, the difference is marked between the attitude of the Italian flower maker toward her work and that of her fellow worker, a Jewish girl from Russia or Austria or Germany. Briefly stated, it may be said that when the Italian girl exhibits an interest in her trade it is an interest in craftsmanship or in her own wages rather than in general trade conditions. The Jewish girl, on the contrary, has a distinct sense of her social responsibility and often displays an eager zest for discussion of labor problems. These traits naturally make a marked im-



A CORNER OF A LARGE BROADWAY FACTORY



BRANCHING ROSES

1910  
P. 100  
1910  
1910

## WORKERS IN THE SHOPS

pression on an investigator. The Italian girl will receive her visitor with courteous hospitality and will proudly show her some artificial flowers which she has made, often insisting on presenting one or two as a gift. She will answer all questions graciously but briefly, considering work in the flower trade as only one of many interesting topics of conversation. It is vital to her not as a general industrial problem but as a means of supplying money for the needs of her family, to whose welfare she is traditionally inclined to subordinate her individual desires. The Jewish girl, on the other hand, will probably plunge at once into a discussion of her trade, its advantages and disadvantages, wages, hours of work, and instances of shabby treatment in the shops, or of unsanitary conditions in the workrooms. Her attitude is likely to be that of an agitator. Nevertheless, she has the foundation of that admirable trait, "public spirit," and a sense of relationships to a community larger than the family or the personal group of which she happens to be a member. It follows that the Italian girl is more willing than the Jewish girl to accept conditions as she finds them. The owner of a large flower factory says that he prefers to employ Italians because they "are more tractable."

These differences in point of view prevent a sense of fellowship among them: their common interests as workers in the same occupation have never been realized or expressed in any representative group organization in the artificial flower

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

trade. The attempt on the part of the Jewish girls to organize a trade union has failed so signally that not until several months after the investigation began did we find any girls who had ever heard of such an effort. Finally two were found who had been members. They were interviewed at different times and the visitor thus records their reports of the organization :

I. The Flower Makers' Union was organized about 1907, but broke up in six months or so. There were about 200 members including girls and men cutters, colorers, etc. They met every Friday evening in a hall on 2nd Street near Avenue A. The dues were 5 cents a week. The girl interviewed said it was hard to persuade girls to join. They were not interested. One girl said, "I'm going to get married soon," and another, "I got a fellow. Vy should I join?" When asked the aims of the union, the girl informant said, "We started to kick about wages. But when I asked my boss for a raise, he said, 'For vy should I gif you a raise? Didn't I teach you the trade?'" However, even this girl is not interested in starting the union again, as she has a fairly good position with steady work all year, and does not now feel a personal need for its support.

II. The second girl said that the union was started chiefly by girls in the Broadway flower factory in which she happened to be employed. She was the secretary. Most of the members were Jewish girls, who had just come from Europe and could not speak English, and the discussions were carried on and the minutes kept in Yiddish. They met in a hall on 2nd Street. They had several mass meetings, but these were very poorly attended, with one exception, when several forewomen came, and there were English and Italian speakers.

## WORKERS IN THE SHOPS

In 1909 or 1910 an attempt was made to unite the milliners, wire makers, and flower makers into one union so that they could control the trade, but it was not successful. Since then the Flower Makers' Union has been replaced by the Educational League of Flower Makers, which meets every Saturday evening. Yiddish only is spoken at its meetings. It was thought that more girls would join, if it were not called a union, but this girl left, saying that she would not return unless they frankly called themselves a union.

The old union had saved up \$100 in its treasury, which in 1910 they turned over to help the shirtwaist strikers. After the success of that strike in winning members for the shirtwaist union, some of the flower makers thought of organizing their union again. But many girls, "especially the Americans," are not interested in joining, "because they don't expect to stay in the trade. They think only of themselves," said this girl. "Perhaps some day they will have daughters working at this same trade, and they could help them if they would form a union." The Italian girls, she says, have no interest in unions. This Russian Jewish girl's comment was, "If they were more civilized, they wouldn't take such low pay. But they go without hats and gloves and umbrellas."

The attitude of these young girls of different races and different points of view toward their trade is too often a casual one. "I don't like the trade," said one girl. "I happened to learn it because one day I saw a sign on a door and I went upstairs to the shop. I got into it and I don't seem to be able to get out of it." Two sisters expressed the same lack of interest, without having the initiative to enable them to take the visitor's suggestion to find another occupation. "We might only

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get into more trouble," said they. Julia, an Italian, liked it better, but her reason for choosing it had been the casual one that "everybody else I knew worked in it. It is the Italians' trade; and then I thought that when I get married I can still keep it up at home." In contrast to this plan for the future was that of Gertie, a quiet-voiced, gentle Russian girl, whose younger sister said of her, "She'd like to leave the trade now, but she thinks that perhaps soon somebody will marry her and she won't have to work any more."

It is noteworthy that workers of real ability, not so much from lack of interest as from lack of confidence, sometimes shun promotion to positions of greater responsibility. One worker refused an offer to be forewoman in a shop where a number of German girls who could speak no English were employed. "I was afraid that I wouldn't be able to get along," was her explanation. Another, Theresa, an Italian girl, had reached the position of forewoman with full responsibility for the shop employes and the home workers. But when she found that she could get the same wages in another shop without being in charge, she preferred the less responsible position.

On the other hand, many workers are ambitious to advance to higher ranks and take great pride in their work. "Do I like the trade?" said one. "I don't like it,—I love it." Others emphasized its social opportunities. "A nice class of girls go into it,—nice girls to pal with." This idea was voiced

## WORKERS IN THE SHOPS

again by a woman who had worked twenty-seven years in flower shops. "There is always some news to talk about among the girls in the shop," she said; and added, "It is interesting work and does not tire one."

These workers who "love the trade" prove its possibilities for attractiveness, but too many others have the drifters' attitude of indifference or aversion. They are in it because they happened to see a sign on a factory door when they were out looking for work. When the season in the trade is over they must find other employment, and they may never return to flower making. If under these conditions they lack interest and pride in their work it is not the workers but the industry which must be held primarily responsible. Conditions in the trade are opposed to the development of that spirit of craftsmanship which springs from love of the work and joy in doing it, and is fostered by rewards ahead for experience and skill, the influence of older workers in the workroom, steady employment, and adequate payment for work well done. It is upon such conditions that the ultimate success of the artificial flower industry will depend. Many employers complain of inefficiency in their workrooms. Few have tried to grapple with the situation by a fundamental change in the conditions which produce inefficiency and afford no encouragement to craftsmanship.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SEASONS AND UNEMPLOYMENT

**T**HE number of workers employed in the artificial flower trade is not fixed but varies each month of the year. This changing ratio between the demand and the supply of labor influences profoundly all other important conditions in the trade,—disorganizes workrooms, lengthens the hours of work in one season and reduces earnings in another, attracts casual workers, interferes with the training of learners, and causes girls to drift from trade to trade. Yet important as it is to have accurate information as a first step in solving in any trade this immense problem of irregular employment, facts about it are not easily secured. The uncertainty which menaces the workers, creates difficulties for the investigator.

That flower makers face the problem of the seasons is shown first of all by the fluctuations in the numbers employed during the course of a year. Of 114 firms investigated, 101 reported the comparative numbers employed in their workrooms in busy and dull months. The maximum force of women in these shops was 4,470. In slack season only 873 of these 4,470 workers were still to be found in the workrooms, and of that number 385

## THE SEASONS AND UNEMPLOYMENT

were not flower makers only but worked on feathers also, according to the orders received. It was found that 46 firms employed no flower makers in their slack seasons, 15 employed less than five, and 13 employed between five and 10. The length of the seasons as reported by 113 of the 114 employers is shown in Table 5.

**TABLE 5.—LENGTH OF BUSY SEASON OF YEAR IN ARTIFICIAL FLOWER SHOPS <sup>a</sup>**

Length of busy season	Shops in which length of busy season was as specified
3 months . . . . .	3
4 months . . . . .	10
5 months . . . . .	10
6 months . . . . .	13
7 months . . . . .	18
8 months . . . . .	30
9 months . . . . .	17
10 months . . . . .	4
"Busy all the year" . . . . .	5
Seasons too irregular to be classified .	3
Total . . . . .	113

<sup>a</sup> Of the 114 firms investigated, one did not supply information.

Only five shops were reported as "busy all year," 17 reported a nine-month season, and four said that they were busy ten months. Thus only 26, or almost one-fourth (23 per cent) of the number investigated, had a season longer than eight months, while among the remainder the chief characteristic was variety in the length of the busy period ranging from three months to eight. Even

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during those months, the maximum force may be employed for a short time only, for within that period business has its ups and downs. "It is a trade that depends on the will and fashion of women. You never can tell what kind of a season you are likely to have," said one employer. "It's busy, busy, busy," said a flower maker, "and then the work stops like that," slapping her hand on the table. Moreover, between the busy months and the slack months there is a fringe of uncertain days, so that it is desirable to know also the length of the slack season. This cannot safely be determined merely by subtracting the number of prosperous months from twelve. A statement of the slack months in the 113 flower shops where employers reported the facts is given in Table 6.

**TABLE 6.—LENGTH OF SLACK SEASON OF YEAR IN ARTIFICIAL FLOWER SHOPS <sup>a</sup>**

Length of slack season	Shops in which length of slack season was as specified
1 month . . . . .	3
2 months . . . . .	13
3 months . . . . .	32
4 months . . . . .	31
5 months . . . . .	14
6 months . . . . .	8
7 months . . . . .	3
8 months . . . . .	1
No slack time . . . . .	5
Seasons too irregular to be classified .	3
Total . . . . .	113

<sup>a</sup> Of 114 firms investigated, one did not supply information.

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It will thus be seen that in more than half the shops the workers must expect a dull period of three or four months every year. During that time, as is shown by the figures indicating fluctuations in numbers employed, about one girl in every group of five will have work. The remaining four must look for other employment or else be idle. This uncertainty seems to be especially marked in the fall season. Sometimes no flowers are worn on fashionable winter hats, and then the season from September to December disappears from the flower maker's calendar. "If they wear flowers in the fall we are busy all the time," said one employer; "if not, then only from January to June." This frequent change in styles makes stock work impossible, consequently flowers are made only for immediate sale or after orders have been given for them. Many employers consider this the chief reason for the short seasons. "It's like speculation," said the owner of a small shop; "if you only could find out what the style is going to be, you'd get rich, but you cannot make stock on anything but black flowers." Since the trade is largely a branch of the millinery industry, the bulk of the orders depends upon the preparation of spring hats. Beginning, therefore, about eight months before Easter, and straggling along in scattered groups from July to December, the shops gradually "take on hands" necessary to fill the equally straggling orders.

Part time is another phase of the problem. Firms

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may report that they keep their employes "all year round," and yet the workers may suffer the disadvantages of irregularity by a reduction in pay in dull weeks. For instance, a rose maker who earned \$9.00 a week in the busy season was employed through the dull summer months, but she worked only three days a week with half pay, except for an occasional week when more orders were received. Even then she was paid \$2.00 less than in the winter for a full week's work, a premium to the firm for not "laying her off." Such cuts in pay may apply to the rates paid to girls whose earnings are determined by the number of flowers made, as well as to those whose wages are fixed by the week. One employer pointed to a "standard" rose which can be made in slack season with the certainty that it will be marketable in busy months. He cuts the rate for making it from 35 cents a dozen in busy season to 30 cents in slack season. "That's to pay me interest on my money," he explained. He does not cut the selling price of the flower. The extra profit is his.

The time of the ending of the season is more uniform than the time of beginning. In nearly three-fourths of the shops it ends in April or May, the exact date depending upon the place of Easter in the calendar. The dates when the season began and ended in the shops investigated are given in Tables 7 and 8.

The facts given here show the fluctuations of the trade. The effect of these fluctuations on the

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workers is read in such signs as the short length of time they hold their positions and their tendency to drift from shop to shop, their reasons for leaving,

TABLE 7.—MONTH OF BEGINNING OF BUSY SEASON IN ARTIFICIAL FLOWER SHOPS<sup>a</sup>

Month of beginning of busy season	Shops in which busy season began in month specified
July . . . . .	4
August . . . . .	18
September . . . . .	31
October . . . . .	15
November . . . . .	11
December . . . . .	5
January . . . . .	19
"Busy all the year" . . . . .	5
Seasons too irregular to be classified .	5
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>113</b>

<sup>a</sup> Of 114 firms investigated, one did not supply information.

TABLE 8.—MONTH OF ENDING OF BUSY SEASON IN ARTIFICIAL FLOWER SHOPS<sup>a</sup>

Month of ending of busy season	Shops in which busy season ended in month specified
March . . . . .	3
April . . . . .	24
May . . . . .	58
June . . . . .	17
July . . . . .	1
"Busy all the year" . . . . .	5
Seasons too irregular to be classified .	5
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>113</b>

<sup>a</sup> Of 114 firms investigated, one did not supply information.

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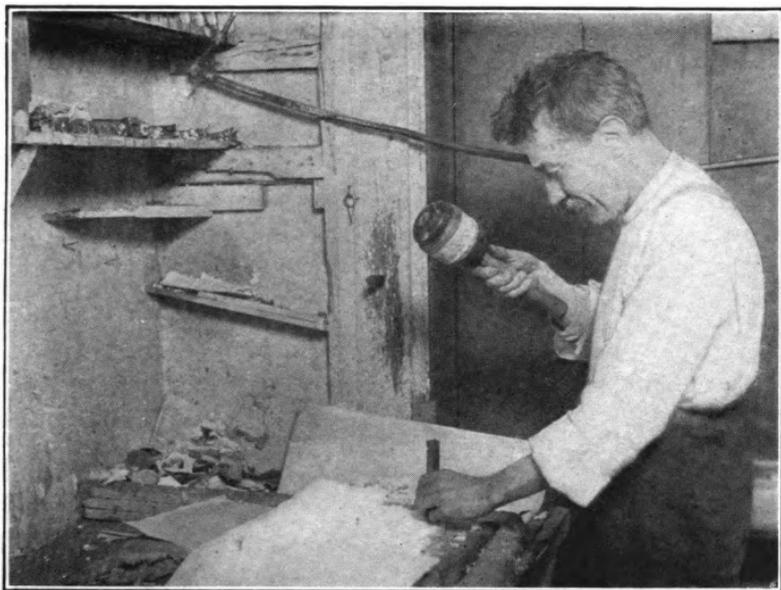
their employment in other occupations during dull seasons, and the amount of time lost during the twelve months of the year. Choosing as typical the last positions held by the workers interviewed, the brief duration of "jobs" in the flower trade is shown in Table 9.

TABLE 9.—LENGTH OF TIME FOR WHICH WOMEN WERE EMPLOYED IN LATEST POSITIONS IN ARTIFICIAL FLOWER TRADE<sup>a</sup>

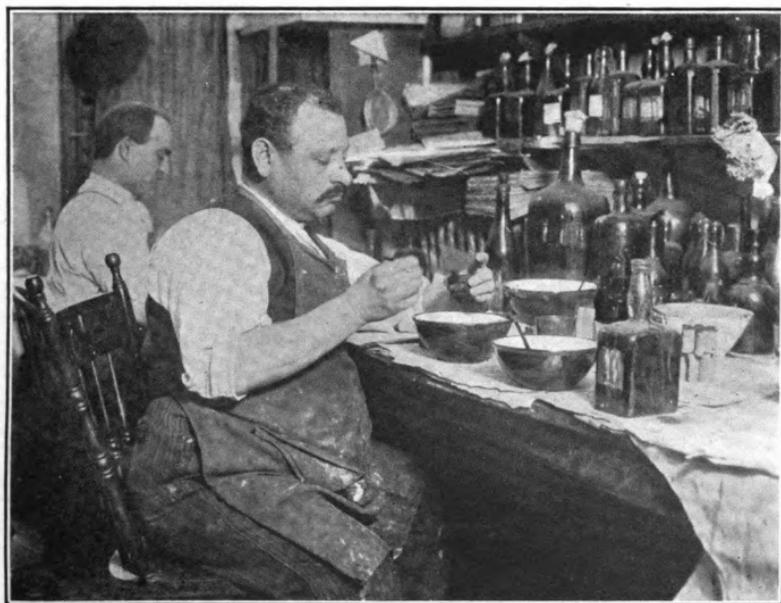
Length of time employed	WOMEN EMPLOYED SPECIFIED LENGTH OF TIME IN	
	Last position left	Present position, if worker was still in her first position in the trade
Less than 1 month . . . . .	15	1
1 month and less than 3 months . . . . .	20	3
3 months and less than 6 months. . . . .	16	4
6 months and less than 9 months. . . . .	14	5
9 months and less than 12 months. . . . .	8	6
<b>Less than 1 year . . . . .</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>19</b>
1 year and less than 2 years . . . . .	22	6
2 years and less than 3 years . . . . .	5	8
3 years and less than 5 years . . . . .	10	10
5 years and less than 10 years . . . . .	7	6
10 years and less than 21 years . . . . .	1	2
Total . . . . .	<b>118</b>	<b>51</b>

<sup>a</sup>Of the 174 women interviewed, five did not supply information on this point.

In tabulating the duration of the last position held, those who were still in their first positions were separated from the others, since their employment had not terminated and therefore its



A CUTTER WITH HEAVY HAMMER



COLORING THE PETALS

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO  
PUBLIC LIBRARY  
AS OF LENOX AND  
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

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length could not be stated. This separate group numbered 51, and of these 19 had been flower makers less than one year. In one case, on the other hand, the position had already been held twenty-one years. Of the 118 whose last position in the trade could be definitely measured, 73 had held their last jobs less than one year,—an indication that frequent change in employment is typical of the experiences of a large majority.

A count of the number of shops in which these flower makers had worked in the twelve months preceding the interview showed that only two in every five reported only one place of employment, while nearly an equal proportion had worked in two or three different establishments, and the remainder had changed from one workplace to another four or five times. An investigator's comment on the record of one flower maker shows how discouraging these frequent changes are for the workers. "She wishes she could find some place that would last all year round. She says that as soon as she gets started in any work and begins to make money, it gets slack and she must search for something else."

It may be asked why it should be necessary to change from one shop to another in the same trade, since similar seasonal conditions are commonly supposed to prevail in all establishments producing the same goods. The facts already stated, however, show how widely the seasons vary in different shops. This is due partly to the superior efficiency

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of one firm over another in securing orders, partly to the reputation of one shop in producing a line of goods which happens at the moment to be most fashionable, and partly to various other causes of success or failure. At any rate it is true that not only is the year divided into dull and busy seasons, but within the busy season employment fluctuates in a way which cannot be foreseen. As an example of variations from season to season, one employer in a small shop showed his payroll for corresponding weeks in two successive years. In 1909 the total wages paid out in the second week in May amounted to \$113.42, while in the same week in 1910 the total fell to \$15. "The season depends on what takes," said an employer. "This is a bad business," said another. "At one time there is so much to be done you'd give any wage to a girl, and at another time you can not give your goods away. There are plenty of girls in the trade but the trouble is that too many are wanted at one time for only a short period."

Such uncertainty accounts for many changes among the workers. That there are other factors, however, is shown in the following tabulation (Table 10) of reasons given by the workers for loss of positions in flower shops.

The table shows that the ending of the season accounts for the loss of positions in two-fifths of the cases considered, but it indicates also the number of other factors that enter into the causes of irregular employment. The failure or removal of

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firms; the return to other work previously tried; dissatisfaction with conditions; illness; disagreement with forewomen or others in the workrooms; and "to advance," the hope of getting ahead faster in some other shop,—these all contribute to irregularity of employment. Some of them,

**TABLE 10.—REASONS FOR LEAVING POSITIONS IN ARTIFICIAL FLOWER SHOPS, AS STATED BY ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS**

Reasons for leaving positions	POSITIONS LEFT FOR EACH SPECIFIED REASON	
	Number	Per cent
Slack season . . . . .	90	42
To advance—higher wages or better work . . . . .	41	19
Disagreement, etc. . . . .	15	7
Firm failed, moved, etc. . . . .	13	6
Dissatisfaction with conditions of work . . . . .	9	4
To return to other work . . . . .	9	4
Illness . . . . .	6	3
Other miscellaneous reasons . . . . .	31	15
Total . . . . .	214	100

such as "to return to other work" or "to advance," are often traceable to seasonal conditions, while others, such as "disagreement" and other more or less trivial difficulties counted in the same group of reasons, may indicate in many cases a casual attitude toward the trade, due in large measure to the disorganized, irregular character of the industry. It is not conducive to skill or pride in

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one's work to face uncertainty in the length of employment and to turn periodically to employment elsewhere, in candy factories, card factories, ribbon factories, sewing trades, paper box making, saleswork, packing chandeliers, packing olives, wrapping electrical novelties, embroidering, machine operating on underwear or children's dresses, making neckties, sewing rings on overalls, or painting pipes. All these occupations are represented in the group of girls whom we interviewed.

In spite of this versatility in combining trades, steady employment the year round is very unusual among the girls who are flower makers in the busy months in that trade. In every interview the visitor discussed with the girl the amount of time lost in the preceding twelve months. The reports of 105 appear in Tables 11 and 12, the

**TABLE 11.—TIME LOST IN THE YEAR PRECEDING DATE OF INTERVIEW FROM ALL CAUSES BY WOMEN EMPLOYED IN ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKING <sup>a</sup>**

Time lost	Women losing the time specified
"No time" . . . . .	15
Less than 1 month . . . . .	32
1 month and less than 3 months . . . . .	35
3 months and less than 6 months . . . . .	21
6 months and over . . . . .	2
Total reporting . . . . .	105

<sup>a</sup> Of 174 women interviewed, 41 had not been wage-earners during the past full year, and 28 did not supply definite information.

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first indicating time lost for all causes, and the second showing the loss due to slack season.

**TABLE 12.—TIME LOST IN THE YEAR PRECEDING DATE OF INTERVIEW BECAUSE OF SLACK SEASON BY WOMEN EMPLOYED IN ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKING <sup>a</sup>**

Time lost	Women losing the time specified
"No time" . . . . .	29
Less than 1 month . . . . .	31
1 month and less than 3 months . . . . .	31
3 months and less than 6 months . . . . .	13
6 months and over . . . . .	1
Total reporting . . . . .	105

<sup>a</sup>Of 174 women interviewed, 41 had not been wage-earners during the past full year, and 28 did not supply definite information.

These figures are a record of the time actually lost, in spite of employment in other occupations when the season of flower making was over. Thus they do not show the total time out of work in the flower trade. Furthermore, such data are liable to contain the error of understatement, since the worker often fails to recall frequent losses of short intervals whose combined total may be considerable. According to Table 11 only 15 girls, or one-seventh, reported no time lost for any cause. Over half had been out of work a month or more, due to the same variety of causes already listed as reasons for leaving positions. Because of slack season alone, 31 lost

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

less than a month, an equal number were out of work from one to three months, while 13 lost time varying from three to six months. The effect of these losses on yearly income will be discussed in the chapter on wages. It may be roughly estimated here, however, that after workers have followed several different occupations in the course of a year only about one girl in seven will have received wages for fifty-two weeks.

Nearly half of the 174 flower makers interviewed had worked on fancy or ostrich feathers during their careers. Ability to turn to this trade is the solution of the seasonal problem most often urged by employers and workers. The close connection between these two industries has already been described. The manufacture of ostrich feathers usually stands as a separate industry with a longer season of work, but fancy feather making and the manufacture of artificial flowers are twin trades whose seasons for the most part do not overlap but rather fit into one another, making it possible for workers to turn from one to the other. Of the 114 flower shops investigated, 54 manufactured also fancy feathers. This number is not a fixed one, for flower factories may add feather departments, and vice versa, or the flower or feather department of a millinery supply house may be discontinued without involving any great change of policy on the part of the firm. From the point of view of the workers, however, opinions differ as to the feasibility of thus combining the two occupations.

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A brief description of the fancy feather trade at this point seems desirable.

The industry includes all feather manufacture other than ostrich feathers; for example, quills, birds, marabouts, aigrettes, "paradises," and the making of all sorts of marvellous combinations which no bird has ever worn. As in flower making, dyeing is one of the most important of the processes and it is done by men. The processes in the girls' department are "stringing," or tying the feathers at intervals on a cord in preparation for dyeing; "steaming" them, or holding them over boiling water to make them pliable or to give them certain effects; "preparing," or cleaning and assorting the feathers. The feathers are then pasted or sewed on frames in different designs, such as heads, breasts, wings; or they may be wired or branched into various styles of feather ornaments. The stemming or papering of the free ends of wire is usually the final process for completing the product for sale to milliners.

A large Broadway flower and feather factory employing 100 girls is an example of the combination of the two occupations, since the same workers are taught both. The forewoman said that the flower season begins in October and ends in May, and the feather season is nominally from May to October. Usually, however, there is a month or two between seasons, so that the workers who combine the two trades cannot count on more than ten months of employment in the year.

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This statement was borne out by the testimony of a worker who had learned the flower trade fifteen years ago and who is now employed alternately in flower making and fancy feather making. She has advanced to the position of forewoman and designer in both trades. She said that the flower season lasts from September to May, that there is very little occupation in it in June, and that then the fancy feather season starts, lasting until Thanksgiving Day, thus overlapping a little with the autumn season in flower making. Thus although June is dull, and the autumn flower season uncertain, the worker who understands both flower and feather making will have a much longer period of employment than would be possible if she had learned only flower making.

(On the other hand, many workers object to the feather trade because, they say, it is unpleasant work, and they believe it to be unhealthy. One girl who had combined flower making with the mounting of fancy feathers and had thus avoided the loss of any time, complained of the dirt and the dust especially in the process of taking the bones from wings. Another, who worked on ostrich feathers, said that she was obliged to keep her hair covered during her work and that she felt "choked up" at the end of the day. Others mentioned the fact that the dust and the small particles which flew off from the feathers when they were sewing them hurt their throats and "often gave girls consumption.")

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(Employers recognized these objections. One with a force of 50 hands who manufactures both flowers and feathers said that very few of his employes combined both occupations. "The two trades are utterly different. Only the branchers can pass easily from one to the other." Another employer said that the necessity to serve an apprenticeship at lower pay prevented flower makers from working on feathers. "If they can earn \$10 at flowers they don't want to go back to \$4.00 or \$5.00 to learn feathers. Moreover, a good flower maker is rarely a good fancy feather maker.")

(Whether these opinions of employers as to the desirability of a combination of two occupations be correct or not, the feather trade, for reasons already given, cannot and does not completely solve the problem of the irregularity of the seasons for all flower makers. This is proved by the fact that feathers are made in less than half of the flower factories investigated, and that only 85, less than half of the flower makers interviewed, could work on feathers. Moreover, as already noted, even the larger firms who manufacture both flowers and feathers, and who say that they keep their workers "all year round," report that "between seasons," that is, in December and in June, the workers have a "vacation" (without pay) of three weeks or a month.) This is better, of course, than being laid off indefinitely, for the worker is practically sure of returning at a date known in advance; but with wages at their present level, to

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most workers this interval of unemployment is a serious hardship.

( Yet no method of lengthening the seasons of employment for flower makers is as yet advocated or attempted by workers or employers. Laymen who talk about the "marvelous organization of modern industries" need only inquire into the methods of steadying the seasons in almost any trade which employs a large number of women, to discover proof of a most lamentable lack of efficient organization. So few are the efforts made in this direction that we are forced to the conclusion that business conditions have not compelled manufacturers to give attention to the problem.\* In other words, it appears to be not so difficult to secure workers in the busy season as to compel firms to devise means of prolonging their employ-

( \* An employer who read this report contradicted this statement in so far as it implied indifference on the part of manufacturers. "If anybody could invent a method for us of avoiding slack season we'd give him a fortune," he said. Nevertheless, judging by present conditions, it seems clear that employers and workers accept the fact of irregular employment as inevitable, and no concerted effort has been made to solve the problem. This statement is corroborated by the fact that an association of artificial flower manufacturers, organized in 1908, discussed first of all not the lack of work in dull season but the inconvenience of having their workers "enticed" from one factory to another in busy season. The *Millinery Trade Review*, November, 1908, thus reported the first meeting: "It is the desire of the promoters to enlist the interest of every manufacturer of artificial flowers in New York and vicinity as members of the organization. The statement made by those present regarding the enticing of help from one factory to another makes it imperative that some arrangement should be entered into whereby the trade at large would be protected against extra inducements offered to secure the help of competing manufacturers and thus crippling concerns in the height of the busy season. There are other matters of equal importance that the manufacturers hope to take up in the near future." )



A BUILDING WHICH HOUSES THREE FLOWER FACTORIES



ONCE A RESIDENCE, NOW A FLOWER FACTORY



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ment through twelve months.) In reply to questions on the subject, 21, or 18 per cent, of the firms reported that they had no difficulty in obtaining workers even in the busy season; 77, or 68 per cent, said that they could not secure enough; and 14 per cent were indifferent to the question, apparently regarding it as by no means impossible to find workers when they needed them. (Many complained of lack of efficient employes but all agreed that if there were any scarcity from the point of view of numbers, it was only at the height of the season. )

(At that time the "cheap and docile home workers" are a great resource for the employers. Competition for work is keen among them. After the long dull months when they have no work, they are eager to toil until late at night, producing in a short time enough goods to supply the market for the season. It is the volume of business rather than its distribution through the year which chiefly determines the success of the manufacturer. Employers would doubtless find a more even distribution convenient, but steady production in their workrooms is not enough of a factor in their success to compel them to take steps toward prolonging the season for their workers. On the other hand, it is the universal testimony of workers of experience that their welfare depends upon steady work, and that overwork for a few months followed by part time or idleness is for them a most serious calamity. )

## CHAPTER IV

### WAGES AND HOME RESPONSIBILITIES

**T**HAT the short and irregular season is a calamity for flower makers becomes more evident when the facts about wages in this trade are known. Furthermore, information about the home conditions and family responsibilities of these workers shows that low earnings and unemployment affect not only the individual wage-earner but serve constantly to undermine the standard of living of the family group.

It may be well to begin with the most favorable view of the situation, and to discuss employers' statements regarding the maximum earnings of the best paid flower makers in a busy week of the year in their establishments. Tables 13 and 14 are based on a tabulation of this information. The wages of forewomen are excluded. The tables do not show minimum earnings or the wage of the majority but indicate the number of establishments in which one or more of the women employes receive the stated maximum, and the number of women working in them. Table 14 shows not the number of women receiving the specified wages but the total number employed in shops whose owners stated that they paid that

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wage as a maximum to at least one of their women employees.

**TABLE 13.—ARTIFICIAL FLOWER SHOPS, BY MAXIMUM WEEKLY WAGES PAID TO WOMEN<sup>a</sup>**

Maximum weekly wages paid to women	SHOPS IN WHICH THE MAXIMUM WEEKLY WAGE PAID TO WOMEN WAS AS SPECIFIED		
	Time work	Piece work	Total
Under \$10 . . . . .	19	5	24
\$10 and under \$12 . . . . .	20	7	27
\$12 and under \$15 . . . . .	20	17	37
\$15 and under \$20 . . . . .	9	11	20
\$20 and over . . . . .	1	2	3
Total . . . . .	69	42	111

<sup>a</sup>Of 114 firms investigated, three did not supply information.

**TABLE 14.—WOMEN EMPLOYED IN ARTIFICIAL FLOWER SHOPS, BY MAXIMUM WEEKLY WAGES PAID TO WOMEN IN THE SHOPS IN WHICH THEY WERE EMPLOYED<sup>a</sup>**

Maximum weekly wages paid to women	WOMEN EMPLOYED IN SHOPS IN WHICH THE MAXIMUM WEEKLY WAGE PAID TO WOMEN WAS AS SPECIFIED			
	Time work	Piece work	Total	
			Number	Per cent
Under \$10 . . . . .	641	66	707	13.5
\$10 and under \$12 . . . . .	1,009	317	1,326	25.4
\$12 and under \$15 . . . . .	1,343	793	2,136	40.9
\$15 and under \$20 . . . . .	371	494	865	16.6
\$20 and over . . . . .	82	105	187	3.6
Total . . . . .	3,446	1,775	5,221	100.0

<sup>a</sup>Of 114 firms investigated, three employing 19 women did not supply information.

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( In nearly four-fifths of the shops, 88 in number, employing 4,169, or 80 per cent of the total number of women in the trade, the highest weekly wage received by any woman is less than \$15, while 39 per cent are in shops in which the maximum never reaches \$12. ) The maximum is \$12 or more in a larger proportion of shops paying their best workers by the piece than of those paying them by time.\*

These figures show maximum possibilities. The important question to ask is how many women in the shops are found in these maximum groups, and how large a proportion receive much less. The answer is contained both in official census figures and in the data of our investigation. ( In taking the census of 1905, agents of the United States government copied the payrolls for one week in 90 artificial flower and feather establishments in the United States, securing wage records of 1,845 women. The facts are not stated separately for flower makers, nor are they given for New York City; but as so large a proportion of the flower and feather makers in the whole United States are in New York,† the facts may be used as an indication of conditions in this city. The figures were the weekly earnings in a busy part of the year, and in them no allowance was made for slack seasons. ) In Table 15, the proportion of

\* Time workers receive a definite weekly wage. Piece workers are paid by the number of flowers produced.

† Four-fifths of the women employed live in New York City. See p. 6.

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women in each of the wage groups is shown and compared with the proportion of women in the corresponding wage groups in all industries. The comparative earnings of men in flower and feather shops are also indicated.

**TABLE 15.—WEEKLY EARNINGS OF MEN AND WOMEN EMPLOYED IN THE ARTIFICIAL FLOWER AND FEATHER MAKING INDUSTRY, AND OF WOMEN EMPLOYED IN ALL MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES, UNITED STATES, 1905 <sup>a</sup>**

Weekly earnings of employes	EMPLOYES IN FLOWER AND FEATHER MAKING				WOMEN IN ALL MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES	
	Men		Women		Number	Per cent
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent		
Under \$3.00 . . . . .	7	2.7	245	13.3	43,858	7.5
\$3.00 and under \$4.00 . . . . .	10	3.9	221	12.0	64,170	10.9
\$4.00 and under \$5.00 . . . . .	14	5.5	264	14.3	88,657	15.1
\$5.00 and under \$6.00 . . . . .	12	4.7	290	15.7	95,674	16.3
\$6.00 and under \$7.00 . . . . .	14	5.5	185	10.0	97,311	16.5
\$7.00 and under \$8.00 . . . . .	16	6.3	157	8.5	68,192	11.6
\$8.00 and under \$9.00 . . . . .	17	6.6	145	7.9	47,170	8.0
\$9.00 and under \$10 . . . . .	42	16.4	101	5.5	34,050	5.8
\$10 and under \$12 . . . . .	40	15.6	112	6.1	29,633	5.0
\$12 and under \$15 . . . . .	37	14.5	87	4.7	14,294	2.4
\$15 and over . . . . .	47	18.3	38	2.0	5,590	0.9
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,845</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>588,599</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Average weekly earnings . . . . .</b>	<b>\$10.80</b>		<b>\$6.20</b>		<b>\$6.17</b>	

<sup>a</sup> United States Census. Bulletin 93, Earnings of Wage-Earners, Manufactures, pp. 82, 90, and 98. 1905.

(According to these census figures, more than half the women, 55.3 per cent, in the flower and

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feather industry earned less than \$6.00 in a busy week of the year. Slightly more than one-fourth, 483, earned \$8.00 or over, and only about one in

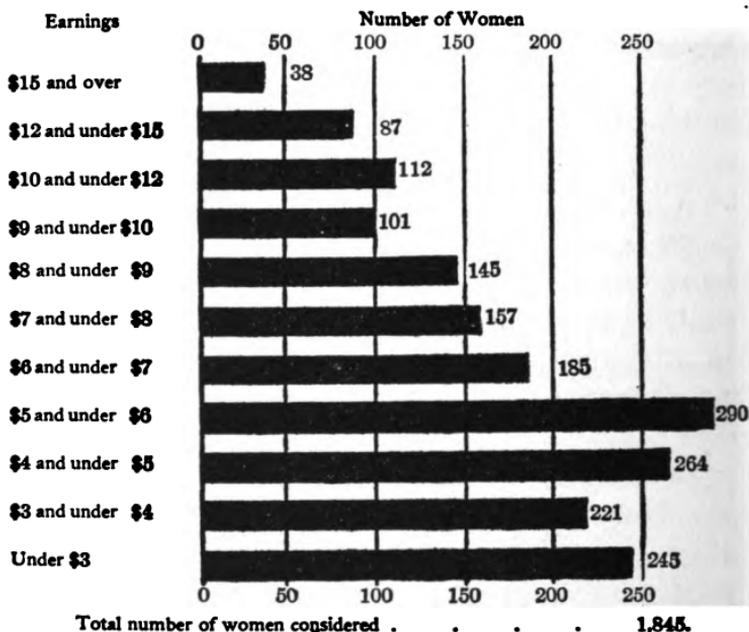


CHART II.—WOMEN EMPLOYED IN ARTIFICIAL FLOWER AND FEATHER MAKING, BY WEEKLY EARNINGS, UNITED STATES, 1905

16 rose to \$12 or over.) Chart II visualizes these facts.

( A larger group, 13.3 per cent in the flower and feather trade as against 7.5 per cent in all industries, earned less than \$3.00.) The point in the wage scale at which the groups divide, half earning less and half earning more, is between \$5.00 and \$6.00 for artificial flower and feather makers and between \$6.00 and \$7.00 for women in all industries.

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Furthermore, a slightly larger proportion of flower and feather makers, 6.7 per cent as compared with 3.3 per cent in all industries, earned \$12 or more.

The contrast between the earnings of men and the earnings of women is marked. Larger groups of men are found earning above \$9.00 than below that sum,—just the reverse of the figures for women. This showing does not mean necessarily that women in the trade receive unequal pay for equal work, for men and women, as has been said, work in different departments. It is simply an added proof of the statement that in those trades in which men have one set of tasks and women another, the tasks of men are more remunerative. The facts about the flower trade do not supply us with conclusive reasons for the difference in remuneration, but they justify the statement that in this trade, which at first glance would be considered pre-eminently women's work, women's wages average about 60 per cent of the wages of men.

Wages differ for different processes, but a tabulation of employers' statements on this point would be of little value, as occupations called by the same name are not equal in grade in all factories. With the exception of designing and dyeing, "branching" is the most remunerative work, with "making" second; but as one employer pointed out, these operations are not standardized, and therefore wages are not uniform. Nevertheless, the general range of weekly wages as stated by employers is shown in the following list.

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PROCESS AND METHOD OF PAYMENT	WEEKLY WAGES
Designing	
Time work . . . . .	\$25.00
Dyeing	
Time work . . . . .	\$22.00
Branching	
Time work . . . . .	\$6.00—\$15.00
Piece work . . . . .	\$5.00—\$18.00
Making	
Time work . . . . .	\$3.00—\$15.00
Piece work . . . . .	\$5.00—\$15.00
Rose making	
Time work . . . . .	\$4.00—\$13.00
Piece work . . . . .	\$4.00—\$15.00
Foliage making	
Time work . . . . .	\$5.00— \$8.00
Piece work . . . . .	\$7.00— \$8.00
Goffering	
Time work . . . . .	\$7.00— \$8.00

Neither the statements of employers nor official transcripts of payrolls tell us how long the workers in the various wage groups have been employed. This information must be secured from the girls themselves. (Table 16 gives data for the 174 girls interviewed during the course of the investigation, and shows their wages correlated with years of experience.

For those who have been at work less than one year the average weekly wage is \$3.62; one to three years, \$5.84; three to five years, \$7.74; five to ten years, \$9.11; and ten years or longer, \$11.65. Roughly speaking, the increase amounts to about \$1.00 a year, with small chance of earning more than \$12 even if the experience be longer than ten

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years. The nine who earned more than that included a skilled brancher of twenty years' experience, an assistant forewoman in charge of stock in the flower department of one of the largest millinery supply houses, a brancher of eleven

TABLE 16.—WEEKLY WAGES OF WOMEN EMPLOYED IN ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKING BY YEARS OF EMPLOYMENT IN THE TRADE<sup>a</sup>

Weekly wages	WOMEN WHO HAVE BEEN EMPLOYED IN ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKING					All women
	Less than 1 year	1 year and less than 3 years	3 years and less than 5 years	5 years and less than 10 years	10 years or more	
Under \$5.00 . . .	39	12	1	..	..	52
\$5.00 and under \$6.00	3	10	4	1	..	18
\$6.00 and under \$7.00	7	11	7	..	1	26
\$7.00 and under \$8.00	1	8	7	3	1	20
\$8.00 and under \$9.00	..	4	5	2	1	12
\$9.00 and under \$10	..	1	6	5	3	15
\$10 and under \$12 .	1	1	6	6	5	19
\$12 and under \$20 .	..	..	1	2	5	8
\$20 and over . . .	..	..	..	..	1	1
Total . . .	51	47	37	19	17	171
Average weekly wages	\$3.62	\$5.84	\$7.74	\$9.11	\$11.65	\$6.72

<sup>a</sup> Of 174 women interviewed, three did not supply information.

years' experience, and a rose maker who in the course of her fifteen years of work in flower shops had held a position as forewoman but preferred now to have less responsibility with equal wages. The fifth was a forewoman with thirty-seven years'

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experience, and the sixth, who earned the maximum of \$30, was a forewoman and designer in a large factory manufacturing both flowers and feathers. The three others in the higher wage groups had had less than ten years' experience,—one a forewoman who had worked eight years in a flower factory, another a forewoman of seven years' experience, and the last the niece of an employer who was in charge of the giving out of work to a large force of home workers. Each of these three earned \$12. The average weekly wage of the whole group, excluding forewomen, was \$6.37. If we include forewomen and drop all workers under sixteen years of age, as was done in the census enumeration of 1905, we have an average for our group of \$7.24 as compared with the census average of \$6.20.\* The average weekly wage of all women eighteen years of age and over, including forewomen in our group, was \$8.28.)

These statements regarding the whole group should not be understood as indicating that the rate of increase is fixed and invariable for every worker in the trade. Girls who had worked ten years or longer in flower shops were found to be earning a wage of \$6.00 or \$7.00; and, on the other hand, workers of two or three years' experience had received \$10 or \$11 in their pay envelopes. In fact, the table shows considerable variation in wage among girls of each group whose experience

\*United States Census, Bulletin 93, Earnings of Wage-Earners, Manufactures, p. 98. 1905.

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was of equal length. For example, for the girls who had worked one or two years in the trade the wage varied from \$3.25 to \$10, and for those who had worked three or four years, from \$4.50 to \$12.

The fixing of the wage seems indeed to be a matter of chance. It was described by a forewoman, who said that although a definite percentage of the price of the flower was always allowed for salesmen's pay and firm's profits, the wage rate was determined by the forewoman's guess. She made it as low as possible without causing a spontaneous uprising in the workroom. (As no trade union has been developed to force flower manufacturers to adopt a definite wage scale it is inevitable that variety and fluctuation should characterize the earnings of flower makers.)

(Nationality is also said to be a factor in wage variation.\* Again and again an investigator hears the statement that Italian girls in the trade underbid the workers of other nationalities and thus depress wages. For example, one young Russian girl said of her Italian fellow-workers that they are quick and "work like horses," but that "they spoil the trade because they don't stick up for their prices"; that "an American girl will say she won't make a flower for less than 10 cents a gross, and the Italian girl will come forward and say she will do it for 8 cents." The same sort of comment is occasionally made by employers, who complain of the changing personnel of the workers, and the

\* See pages 30-35.

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lowering of standards through the low pay accepted by Italians. It was therefore with great interest that we tabulated separately the wages of Italian workers for the purpose of tentative comparison with the wages of girls of other nationalities.) The results are shown in Table 17.

Of the whole group investigated 124 were Italians or the children of Italian fathers, and 50 were of other nationalities, including those from Russia, Austria, Hungary, Bohemia, and the United States. The table shows that the average wage of the Italians was \$6.64 as compared with an average of \$6.72 earned by the group of other nationalities. Closer analysis according to years of experience is, however, a fairer basis of comparison, especially when the numbers considered are small. In the groups of workers of long experience the cases are too few for conclusive statements. In the groups of workers having an experience of one to three years the average wage is \$5.54 for Italians and \$6.32 for other nationalities, while among the succeeding group the Italians' average wage is \$8.40 compared with \$11.77, indicating a lower rate of earnings for Italians in every group except the learners of less than a year's experience. Caution is needed in interpreting such data, however. The influence of any nationality on trade standards is to be determined not merely by differences in wages received at a given time, but also by statistics of different periods in the history of the industry from the time of the en-



MAKING FOLIAGE



PRESSING PETALS



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TABLE 17.—WEEKLY WAGES OF ITALIAN WOMEN AND OF WOMEN OF OTHER NATIONALITIES EMPLOYED IN FLOWER MAKING, BY YEARS OF EMPLOYMENT IN THE TRADE<sup>a</sup>

Weekly wages	ITALIAN WOMEN EMPLOYED IN FLOWER MAKING				WOMEN OF OTHER NATIONALITIES EMPLOYED IN FLOWER MAKING			
	Less than 1 year	1 year and less than 3 years	3 years or more	Total	Less than 1 year	1 year and less than 3 years	3 years or more	Total
Less than \$5.00 . . . . .	24	9	1	34	15	3	..	18
\$5.00 and under \$6.00 . . . . .	2	7	5	14	1	3	..	4
\$6.00 and under \$7.00 . . . . .	5	7	8	20	2	4	..	6
\$7.00 and under \$8.00 . . . . .	..	4	9	13	1	4	2	7
\$8.00 and under \$9.00 . . . . .	..	1	7	8	..	3	1	4
\$9.00 and under \$10 . . . . .	..	..	11	11	..	1	3	4
\$10 and under \$12 . . . . .	1	1	13	15	..	..	4	4
\$12 and under \$20 . . . . .	..	..	6	6	..	..	2	2
\$20 and over . . . . .	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	1
Total . . . . .	32	29	60	121	19	18	13	50
Average weekly wages . . . . .	\$4.31	\$5.54	\$8.40	\$6.64	\$4.16	\$6.32	\$11.77	\$6.72

<sup>a</sup> Of the 174 women interviewed, three Italians did not supply information.

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trance of workers of another race. Unfortunately, such data are not available for previous years in the artificial flower trade. In a city like New York, however, where so many of the wage-earners are foreign born or the children of foreign born parents, questions regarding the effect which immigrant workers have on industrial standards are of the utmost importance. The rapid increase in the number of Italians in the population of New York makes the economic standards of Italian women workers a matter of prime importance to all other women in industry.

Statistics of weekly wages cannot give a just impression of the real income of flower makers unless some effort be made to estimate the effect of irregular employment on yearly earnings. Such an estimate is most difficult. Indeed, it cannot be satisfactorily computed without a continuous study of wage-earners' budgets for a period of a year, to ascertain not only the wages received from one establishment (the sort of information which could be secured from payrolls), but the full history of workers who have drifted from shop to shop within the twelve months. Such a continuous study was impossible in this investigation. Instead, an attempt has been made to estimate the approximate yearly income of the flower makers interviewed, basing the estimate on a combination of facts regarding wages and information about time lost from work in the twelve months preceding the interview. As already pointed out

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in the chapter on the seasons, workers frequently forget small periods of unemployment which may aggregate no small loss in a year, so that an estimate of their total income is liable to overstate the amount received. Nevertheless, information on this topic is so much needed that even fragmentary and uncertain data are worth considering. Table 18 gives the estimate for 82 flower makers, and covers not only wages received in flower shops but earnings in all occupations in one year.

TABLE 18.—APPROXIMATE YEARLY INCOME OF WOMEN EMPLOYED IN ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKING WHO HAD BEEN WAGE-EARNERS NOT LESS THAN ONE YEAR <sup>a</sup>

Yearly income	Flower makers whose income was as specified
Under \$100 . . . . .	1
\$100 and under \$200 . . . . .	10
\$200 and under \$300 . . . . .	31
\$300 and under \$400 . . . . .	19
\$400 and under \$500 . . . . .	14
\$500 and under \$600 . . . . .	6
\$600 and over . . . . .	1
Total . . . . .	82

<sup>a</sup> The figures given represent income from all occupations in which the women were employed, and not from artificial flower making alone.

One-half the group, 42, had a yearly income of less than \$300. The others had earned from \$300 to \$700, but only seven of these had reached \$500. One of the most interesting aspects of these figures

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is their indication that from the point of view of yearly income weekly wage statistics must be discounted. The average weekly wage of all the women investigated who had had a year or more of experience was \$7.76. If employment were steady throughout the year this average weekly wage would amount to an average yearly income of about \$400. Nevertheless, half the workers whose earnings in twelve months could be estimated received less than \$300. A rough comparison of these last two statements would indicate that the tax made by irregular employment on the income of flower makers amounts to about two dollars a week,—a sum by no means insignificant.

Without some knowledge of the manner of living of the workers, statistics of wages received are as dry bones. Human interest centers rather more on expenditure than on income, and it is according to our knowledge of the buying power of a dollar that we interpret statements about wages. Furthermore, the relation between the two is fundamental in a different sense. Economic pressure is recognized as an important factor in the wage bargain, and signs are not lacking to indicate that the wage received is in inverse ratio to the pressure. It is the worker nearest starvation who is most likely to accept starvation wages. If this be true, then the worker's standard of life will determine in part the wage received. In a trade where there is no collective bargaining but the arranging of terms of employment is left to individuals, the poverty

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of applicants for positions will occasion a constant downward pull on wage standards. On the other hand, it is even more obvious that as the wage standards in a trade become more or less fixed within certain limits they will determine the standard of living possible to the workers, and therefore tend to draw to the trade workers from those families in the community whose manner of living most nearly approaches that wage level. To speak of "the standard of living" or even "the minimum living wage" as though it were a single fact capable of definite determination for a whole complex community does not seem in accord with actual conditions. It is more reasonable to believe that standards differ in different occupations and that they must be measured with reference to the two main factors, trade conditions and family requirements.

In this investigation the subject of inquiry was the trade, and in interviewing workers about their trade experiences it was not always possible to take time for complete investigation of home conditions, especially as a second or third visit is often necessary to secure this more personal information regarding the family. Nevertheless, data about the relationship of the 174 flower makers to the head of the household and the more detailed information secured in 128 families about the work of the father and the mother and other wage-earners in their family, size of households, rent paid, and number of children not yet old enough to

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work, are an indication of the home standards and family responsibilities not only of those interviewed but of a still wider group of flower makers of which our group was representative.

Flower makers in New York do not come from a distance to their work. They live nearby and save carfare. Only nine of those interviewed reported that they paid carfare going to and from their shops. Only eight, or 5 per cent, lived north of Fourteenth Street. West of Broadway and south of Fourteenth Street were found the homes of 121, or 69 per cent, while 45, or 26 per cent, lived on the east side of Broadway, south of Fourteenth Street.

Girls who board alone in New York are not found in flower shops, doubtless because the wages paid are too low to enable them to support themselves. Two of the 174 made no statement about their household relationships. Only three were boarding or living alone, without the protection of a family or other relatives. For the remaining 169, or 97 per cent of the group, who lived with their families (including the 10 married women\*), the protection given them by the home brought with it a more or less heavy share of responsibility for maintaining the household. In the 128 families under discussion were 807 members, and 545 of these contributed in some way to

\* It should be remembered that in this chapter we are describing women at work in the shops. Among home workers the proportion of married women is much larger.

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the family budget. In only 93 of the 128 families was the father living and at home, and even in those cases he was not always a wage-earner; in 29 cases the father was dead; in six he was not living with his family; and in eight he was ill or too old to work. In 85, the father was a contributor either as a wage-earner (58 cases), or from "independent business" (21 cases), or, in one case, through helping in home work. In five households the father's work was not stated. The wage-earning pursuits included professional work (a rabbi, a secretary, and a translator); the trades of carpenter, cabinet maker, wood turner, cooper, painter, mason, marble cutter, and tailor; employment in factories manufacturing furs, men's caps, belts, suspenders, hats, bags, mirrors, clocks, cigars, candy, artificial flowers, and piano strings; work in wine shops, butcher shops, and saloons; employment in a city department, and as driver, elevator runner, janitor and cleaner, bootblack, and day laborer. The "independent business" men, as distinct from wage-earners, were: a real estate agent, a contractor, storekeeper, keeper of a fruit stand, barber, bootblack, coal dealer, plumber, tinsmith, shoemaker, and two owners of small factories, one of whom manufactured bronzes and one feather dusters.

Data were obtained concerning the weekly wages of 33 of the 58 wage-earning fathers employed at the dates of the interviews. Of these, 11 earned less than \$10 a week, nine earned \$10 to \$12, four \$12

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to \$15, and seven \$15 to \$20, while one received a wage of \$24, and one, \$25. The maximum wages were reported by a longshoreman and a marble cutter. The group earning \$15 to \$20 included a furniture maker, cabinet maker, worker on mirrors, presser in a tailor shop, two hod-carriers each of whom received \$18, and a bootblack. The four who reported wages of \$12 and less than \$15 were a fur dresser, worker on bags, candy maker, and a driver. The larger group, who earned \$10 but less than \$12, included a wood-turner, cooper, worker on belts, worker on piano strings, employe in a wine shop, bartender, hod-carrier, porter, and a janitor. The lowest paid group of 11 consisted of a translator earning \$6.00, a mason, worker on suspenders, bag maker, tailor, employe in a butcher shop, day laborer, elevator runner, and three factory cleaners.

The figures take no account of the irregularity of employment which is characteristic of many of the occupations listed. To ascertain the earnings of the men who had "their own business" was difficult, and the results very doubtful. Everywhere in our visits, however, we were met by the same story: that the father could not earn enough the year round to support the family; that rent and other necessary expenditures were growing constantly larger; that the family could not live without the wages of the daughters; and in a large number of cases that the mothers must also contribute to the income.

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Of 122 mothers living in these 128 families,\* 76 contributed to the family income by direct earnings, several of them combining two or more occupations. Seventeen of these worked outside the home. Of these 17, nine were themselves flower makers, of whom eight were included in the group interviewed; one was an embroiderer earning \$12 a week; two finished coats or suits at wages of \$4.00; one kept a day nursery receiving \$4.50; one did day's work; two were factory cleaners at \$6.00 a week; and one was an umbrella sewer, earning \$6.00. Two of the flower makers earned \$10, one \$6.00, one \$7.00, one \$8.00, one \$9.00, one \$11, one \$12, and one \$18. The work done by the mothers at home included janitor service in 10 families, keeping boarders and lodgers in 11 households, and home manufacture (of flowers, feathers, embroidery, belts, and corset covers) in 50.

Not only the mothers but many of the sisters of flower makers and other women relatives living in these households were also wage-earners contributing to the family support. They represented a variety of occupations. They were employed in "finishing" cloaks, underwear, corset covers, and men's vests; in operating on shirtwaists, underwear, and veils; in dressmaking; in the manufacture of men's caps, belts, paper boxes, envelopes, feather dusters, and fancy feathers for hats; examining sweaters and petticoats; in making buttonholes, embroider-

\* In five cases, the mother was dead, and in one she was not living at home.

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ing by hand, and in millinery; in mending goods in a coat and apron supply house; in stock work, book-keeping, and saleswork. They numbered 52 in all. Of these the wages of 37 were ascertained. Six received less than \$5.00, 12 received \$5.00 to \$7.00, 14 received \$7.00 to \$10, three \$10 to \$12, one \$12 to \$15, and one \$16.

A count of the total number of contributors to the family income, including fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers, in addition to flower makers, shows that in only two households were flower makers the only wage-earners. Not counting home workers, 33 households reported two wage-earners, 47 three, 27 four, and 17 five, while one had as many as six and one seven, all uniting in the family support. In 10 households no men contributed; the families were supported entirely by women. In 57 families no women except the flower makers were at work outside the home; but in the majority of families three or four wage-earners shared the burden of supporting the household.

The households were large. In 59 there were seven or more members. In the majority of households there were dependent children under fourteen, a fact which bears directly on the responsibilities of flower makers in aiding in the family support, besides emphasizing the fact that the need for the mother's employment outside the home constitutes a grave social problem.

In 46, or more than one-third of the 128 families,

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were children under six years of age, while in the remaining 82, there was no child under six. In the majority of families, then, the children had passed beyond babyhood. In 86, or about two-thirds, were children of school age, six to fourteen years old. Older sisters or brothers had gone to work, while the younger ones were still in school. This is a different type of family from that sometimes chosen as "normal" in investigations of the standard of living; namely, one in which the father is a wage-earner and the children are babies or of school age. Among these flower makers the time has come for the children to become wage-earners and the family begins to break. The father is dead, or in many cases he is no longer looked to as the main support. He is "too old to work," or his work grows more and more irregular as he gives place to young boys who are crowding into the labor market, his own sons among them. The family must now look for an income made up of small sums contributed by the mother, and by the boys and girls who have passed the legal age required before they can get their working papers.

These facts should be carefully considered in any discussion of the wages of working girls in any trade. A critical period is reached in wage-earners' households when the older members of the family are beginning to be burdens and the younger are not yet strongly enough established economically to meet new responsibilities. At such a time the children go into the labor market handicapped,

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instead of being free to choose the job which offers the best training and promises the happiest and most profitable future, regardless of immediate returns. No one who wishes to understand the causes of poverty can safely neglect consideration of the wages of working girls who "live at home," and whose low wages, because they do so, are regarded complacently by men and women who lack a comprehending knowledge of the responsibilities of daughters in such homes. In the flower trade the typical flower maker is a member of just such a breaking family.

The stories told by some of the flower makers show more vividly than statistics what their home responsibilities are. One girl, eighteen years old, had worked four years in paper box factories but after an injury to her finger from an unguarded machine she applied at a flower shop for a job as learner at \$4.00 a week. After six months this sum was increased to \$4.50. In May, when interviewed, the dull season had begun and until September she expected to work only three days a week, earning \$2.25. "That isn't enough to pay for what I eat," she said. She was hoping for a second increase of 50 cents a week in September, and she figured that if the family could hold out until autumn she could work overtime four nights a week, beginning in November, and in addition could bring work home at night, from which she and her mother, her sister, and a brother twelve years old could earn together \$3.00 a week. But



GOFFERING AND PRESSING



ARRANGING FLOWERS AND LEAVES



## WAGES AND HOME RESPONSIBILITIES

she feared that she would be obliged to look immediately for work in another trade and miss that 50 cents raise and that opportunity to work overtime in the shop, and later make flowers at night. Her father had deserted the family. Her brother, who had been a driver for a woolen goods house, had been out of work three months, having lost his job because of a strike. A younger sister was a learner in an ostrich feather shop, earning \$3.50. That sum plus the flower maker's \$2.25 was at the moment the family income to support the mother, two sons, and two daughters. "If my brother don't get work," said the flower maker, "I'll have to leave the flower trade. I've worked in a lot of different places, and I've been out of work a lot, too. And every time I change, it's always the same money or less, never a raise. It was all right in winter when I was making more than \$6.00 a week with overtime, but what's \$2.00? And everything has gone up so. We can't eat meat any more,—only on Sundays."

A young married woman, not quite twenty-five years old, was obliged to work sometimes in the shop and sometimes at home to supplement her husband's earnings. She had been married when she was sixteen years old, and had four children, a girl of seven years, another of five years, a boy of three, and baby of nine months. Her husband was a driver employed by a dry goods store, but he had been injured and had had an operation performed. At best his earnings were \$12 a week and for two

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

months he had been out of work. When he was employed the wife helped by home work. She said, however, that only cheap work is given to home workers. "If you work night and day you are lucky if you get \$9.00, or even \$6.00; \$3.00 is more like it." Whenever her husband was out of work she was obliged to leave her babies in the care of her mother and work in a shop nine hours a day. As she was an expert flower maker, however, she could earn \$10 or \$12 in a week, and thus equal her husband's wages.

Another flower maker, sixteen years old, was one of four sisters who supported the family by adding together the contents of four thin pay envelopes. The father had been a helpless paralytic a year and a half before his death. There was a young brother twelve years old. The mother did the housework. The flower maker earned \$4.50. The oldest sister, aged twenty-two, an examiner in a skirt factory, earned \$5.00. A sister aged eighteen did office work, earning \$6.00. The youngest girl, aged fifteen, was learning the flower trade at a wage of \$3.50. Thus \$19 was the total weekly income for the support of six persons, and any slack season in the flower trade was likely to reduce this weekly sum to \$11. In the summer the two flower makers worked on feathers, but during the previous twelve months the older had been laid off two weeks at Christmas time and three weeks in June between the feather and flower season, and the younger sister had lost four weeks in June for the

## WAGES AND HOME RESPONSIBILITIES

same reason. They lived in three rooms for which they paid a rent of \$15 a month. "We must crowd together," they said, "because we don't make much."

This overcrowding is typical of flower makers' families. By far the largest number, 98, lived in three or four rooms. The extremes were two families each of whom had only one room, and eight who had six-room flats.\* The figures indicating the number of persons per room are, however, a more significant index of the standard of living. This does not mean the number per bedroom, but the number per room including the kitchen, and any such unusual luxury as a parlor.

In studies of standards of living it has been generally agreed that households with an average of more than one and one-half persons per room are abnormally crowded. Of the 128 families of flower makers, but 47, or slightly more than a third, would be classed as normal, having this amount of space or more; while 71 of the 118 questioned on this point were overcrowded, 20 being classed in the group having "more than one and one-half and less than two persons" to a room, 44 having "two persons and less than three" to a room, and six having "three and less than four." One family crowded seven persons into one room. Such overcrowding is a convincing sign of an inadequate standard of living with its usual disastrous effects

\* Five had apartments of two rooms each, six of five rooms, and in nine cases the number of rooms was not recorded.

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on the welfare of the members of the family. The rent paid for this space appears in Table 19.

**TABLE 19.—MONTHLY RENT PAID BY FAMILIES OF WOMEN EMPLOYED IN ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKING <sup>a</sup>**

Monthly rent	Families paying each specified rent
Less than \$10 . . . . .	6
\$10 and under \$12 . . . . .	11
\$12 and under \$14 . . . . .	18
\$14 and under \$16 . . . . .	21
\$16 and under \$18 . . . . .	19
\$18 and under \$20 . . . . .	8
\$20 and under \$25 . . . . .	10
\$25 and over . . . . .	1
Total . . . . .	94

<sup>a</sup> Of 128 families investigated, 23 did not supply information, six received free rent for janitor service, and five owned or leased a building or had rooms in connection with a store.

Of the 94 families that were paying rent, 58 paid amounts varying from \$12 to \$18 a month. The figures, however, show much variety, ranging from \$8.50 to \$27. As rent is usually the one item which must be paid monthly in so large a lump sum, it is the cause of much anxiety in many of these households, especially in those whose income is so likely to shrink in dull seasons.

The contribution of girls to their families is not limited to their wages, for in the evenings they are obliged to help with the housework, to sew, and to wash their clothes. "Men don't have to work as

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hard as women," said a married woman who after a nine-hour day in a shop makes her children's dresses at home at night. Two young Russian flower makers, refugees from Odessa, whose mother was dead, did almost all the housework in the evening for a household of six, including their father, who was a painter, their grandmother, a younger sister of school age, and a boarder. In Russia, they said, they were not accustomed to such hard work. Their father had had a grocery business and they had owned their home in Odessa. During the "revolution" they became refugees, and hid for two weeks in a cellar. They sold their home for half its value and fled to America. Here the mother died. She had been greatly distressed that her girls should go out to work and that there should be no money to send the boy to a dental school. In spite of the housework at night one of the sisters had taken a course in a public evening school. The other has always wished to go, but for the first two years after reaching America she brought flowers or feathers home from the factory to work on at night, and since her mother's death, washing clothes, cooking, and cleaning have filled her evenings.

It is by no means unusual to find the girls in the family leaving school to go to work in order to give their brothers a chance to have a better education. One Italian girl, now earning \$10 a week in busy season as a rose maker, left school and began to learn the flower trade six years ago at the age of

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thirteen. Her mother made flowers at home. In supporting the family these two women were co-workers with the father, a cutter and colorer in a flower factory. There were two brothers neither of whom had ever earned money regularly. One of them, a boy of sixteen, was in the second year of high school, hoping later to go through a medical school. The older brother had just obtained his M. D. degree. His education had been a heavy tax on the family. His sister said that during those years while he was in the medical school, she had brought home flowers from the shop at night and had worked sometimes until four or five o'clock in the morning. "When he graduated," she said, "I cried all day and was as happy as though I had graduated myself. I often say to my mother that we treat my brother as if he were a king,—but I can't help it."

In the same spirit the oldest daughter in a Russian family left normal school after the second year in order that her elder brother might attend college. Her father was a tailor. Two younger children were in school. She explained that she wanted to go back to normal college, but for her brother a college education was "a matter of a life position," while for her it was not.

Practically all these flower makers who live at home turn their entire earnings into the family purse. The mother or the head of the household then uses it for living expenses, giving the girls the money which they must have for carfare and

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lunches. Rent is the first item to be paid. The remainder is stretched as far as possible over food, clothing, insurance, and other important items, and an occasional expenditure for a trip to Coney Island or a ticket to a moving picture show. We found no flower maker living at home who did not give the bulk of her earnings to the household. In other words, we found no "pin-money workers." Low wages paid to these women who live at home have far more serious consequences for the community than the loss of the finery for which working girls are sometimes supposed to be spending their strength in factories.

Judging then by the home conditions of these flower makers, not only they but others in the trade as well as many wage-earners' families in other industries, are forced at some period of their history to depend largely, if not entirely, upon the earnings of women. These families may be poverty stricken for no other reason than that their oldest children happen to be daughters rather than sons. Many signs of economic pressure have thus been noted in the group of flower makers whose home conditions we have been studying: fathers unable to contribute enough to support their families, mothers forced to earn wages, young girls obliged to go to work as early as possible to help in the support of younger brothers and sisters, and the family income still too small to provide the minimum space required for wholesome living.

The flower maker's income, like that of workers

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

in many other trades, is subject to a variety of influences beyond her control.

First, the processes of work are not uniform but vary with the style of flower. Each time a flower of new design is ordered the labor cost must be determined, and each new adjustment of that sort gives the employer an opportunity to shave off the wages. He can see to it that variations in wages shall have a downward rather than an upward tendency. The more serious the girl's home responsibilities the less able will she be to resist these small reductions.

Second, as has been indicated, each girl makes her own labor bargain, and her knowledge of other girls' earnings in her own shop or elsewhere, depends on chance conversations. Here again the employer has the advantage over her.

Third, as will be shown later, the shop worker must reckon always with the home workers' low earnings, for in the home-work system the manufacturer has another chance to push wages downward. "Home workers don't make so much fuss about the price," said one.

Fourth, different nationalities of the workers produce different home standards and thus prevent a demand for a uniform minimum living wage.

Fifth, the busy seasons in this industry are variable; they may begin at any time, according to the vagaries of fashion. This loss of time means loss of income. It means also that for several months each year the number of flower makers in

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New York is far in excess of the demand for their work. Going from shop to shop in search of a job they then begin to underbid each other.

To list these factors influencing wages is easier than to measure them, for uncertainty is their characteristic and therein lies the kernel of the wage problem in the flower trade. The vital phases of the conditions of work are subject to forces beyond the flower maker's control. She has no voice in their determination. The difficulties in the way of improvement are increased by the fact that at least half the workers are outside the shops making flowers at home, and that the conditions of their employment, to be described in the following chapter, are such as to be a menace to the standards of work and wages throughout the industry.

## CHAPTER V

### A GROUP OF HOME WORKERS

**M**ORE than half the trade of flower making in New York City is carried on in tenement homes. Of the 114 firms investigated only 24 stated that all their manufacturing was done in the workroom. The remaining 90 reported that they gave out part of their work to home workers. The statements of 76 of these firms showed that they had on their payrolls between 2,200 and 2,400 families who made flowers at home. They had no records of the number of individual workers represented in these families, but judging by our investigation of a group of home workers three in a family is a low average. Thus, according to the reports of employers, home workers in this trade in New York must number about 7,000 and are more numerous than employes in the shops.\*

In spite of the evident importance of home work in the flower trade no official figures are published showing its location or its extent. Nor is this information given for any other industry. Both

\* In general it is the process of making which is given out. Starching, cutting, and dyeing, and the final process of branching can be more conveniently done in the shops. Forty-six employers stated that they gave the same grade of work to home workers as was done inside; forty said that they gave out a cheaper grade; four did not report on the subject.

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the United States census and the New York state department of labor count only shop employes. The department of labor, it is true, publishes a bulletin of the addresses of tenements licensed for home work, but this bulletin does not give figures to show the number of home workers living in these tenements or the different trades in which they are occupied. The department does, however, possess a list of the names and addresses of individual home workers, since the law requires manufacturers who give out work to furnish such lists to factory inspectors on demand. Nevertheless, only 37 flower manufacturers had furnished such lists to the department in 1910, and the total number of names of workers on record was but 471. These lists we were allowed under certain conditions to tabulate,\* and while as a measure of the home-work problem the figures they contained were wholly inadequate, they threw some light upon the location of factories giving out home work and the districts in which the out-workers lived, and confirmed our own observations on these points. None of these flower shops were north of Fourteenth Street. Of the 37 shops which had filed their lists of out-workers, four were on Broadway, two east of it, and 31 west of it,—all south of Fourteenth Street. The 31 located on the lower west

\* The tabulation was made by special permission of the commissioner of labor on condition that no individual names and addresses of workers be copied and that the tabulating sheet should be so planned that the identity of individual firms should be known only to the secretary of the Committee on Women's Work and one assistant.

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

side furnished 391 of the 471 names of home workers.

Our investigation proved to us that the neighborhood in which home workers in the flower trade live is on the lower west side of the city in a section bounded by Christopher Street running diagonally along the northwest, Canal Street on the south, the Hudson River on the west, and a broken line along Sixth Avenue, West Fourth Street, and West Broadway on the east. This district adjoins that in which the flower factories are situated. It is quite natural that the workers should live near the shops, as they are obliged constantly to carry large boxes of finished flowers from their homes to the factories, and their earnings are too small to make it worth their while to lose time and spend carfare in a long journey. The lists of the labor department showing the neighborhoods in which the 471 out-workers lived indicated substantial agreement with our statement of boundaries.\*

In the neighborhood whose boundaries have been described we made a detailed investigation of 110 families of home workers. It seemed unnecessary to increase the number to much more than a hundred, as this group of households, containing 371 members who worked on flowers, was

\*Of the total 471, 12 of the addresses were outside Manhattan, 16 in Manhattan above Fourteenth Street, while 409 lived in the neighborhood bounded on the north by Christopher Street from Hudson River east to Sixth Avenue, and by Canal Street on the south. The remaining 34 lived also south of Fourteenth Street but not within the boundaries sketched.



A HOME WORKER CARRYING VIOLETS TO THE FACTORY IN SCHOOL HOURS



DELIVERING FLOWERS MADE AT HOME



## A GROUP OF HOME WORKERS

evidently typical of a larger number. They had been chosen at random, and the information given about their earnings, their work, and their homes was in the main uniform enough to indicate typical rather than exceptional conditions. As an added proof of their representative character, it was discovered in the final tabulation that the flower manufacturers for whom these families worked numbered 36, or more than a third of the total number of 90 firms who had reported to our visitors that they employed home workers.

The facts about these families of flower makers are significant not only as part of a study of women's work in this industry, but as a contribution toward the discussion of the home-work system, which prevails not only in the flower trade but in the manufacture of men's clothing, neckwear, millinery, passementerie, underwear, women's and children's dresses, and a long list of other occupations. This form of manufacture has become a most threatening aspect of the sweating system. In it the labor of young children is utilized, and advantage is taken of the urgent need of their mothers to earn money without leaving their homes and their children. Pressed by this need they have become, in the words of an English report on home work, "cheap and docile" workers. To the buyer and the general public goods manufactured in these crowded tenement homes may carry disease not recognized as the result of the home-work system. But even more threatening

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

is the effect on the standards of industry, the lowering of the prevailing rates of wages paid in the shops. To discover conditions among home workers in the flower trade is to secure evidence which should help the community to get rid of the evils of a system which is undermining the standards in the most important trades in which women are employed in New York.

Four large questions are pertinent. Who are the workers making flowers at home? How much do they earn? In what type of family are they found? Is the system good for the workers, the trade, and the community?

These questions were answered for the flower trade by interviewing family after family, and then gathering together in statistical tables the information which they gave. Perhaps, then, the clearest way to present the results will be to follow the method by which they were secured; that is, to describe a number of families whose circumstances were representative of the group, and then to follow this description with statistics giving the composite picture of conditions as we found them in this phase of the industry.

In a tenement on Macdougall Street lives a family of seven—grandmother, father, mother, and four children aged four years, three years, two years, and one month respectively. All excepting the father and the two babies make violets. The three-year-old girl picks apart the petals; her sister, aged four years, separates the stems, dip-

## A GROUP OF HOME WORKERS

ping an end of each into paste spread on a piece of board on the kitchen table; and the mother and grandmother slip the petals up the stems.

"We all must work if we want to earn anything," said the mother. They are paid 10 cents for a gross, 144 flowers, and if they work steadily from 8 or 9 o'clock in the morning until 7 or 8 at night, they may make 12 gross, \$1.20. In the busy season their combined earnings are usually \$7.00 a week. During five months, from April to October, they have no work. They live in three rooms for which they pay \$10 a month. The kitchen, which is used as a workroom, is lighted only by a window into an adjoining room. The father is a porter. Both he and his wife were born in Italy but came to New York when they were children. The wife when a child, before she was able to work in a factory, made flowers at home. Later she worked in a candy factory. "That's better than making flowers," she said, "but we can't go out to work after we're married."

Another family of five—mother, father, and three children—lived in two rooms nearby on Sullivan Street; rent, \$10. The father was a bootblack earning \$3.00 to \$4.00 a week. In the previous month they had paid only half of the rent. The mother was born in New York, but her parents were Italian. She had attended a public school and then found work in a shop where veils were made. After her marriage she worked at home making flowers. When visited, she was working

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on yellow muslin roses for which she was paid 25 cents a gross. There were five petals of different shapes, and each must be put into its right place. The first one was twisted around the "pep" to make the bud. Then paste was smeared upon another petal which was slipped up the wire stem. Two others were pasted on and then the tube stem slipped over the wire, and the flower hung on a line above the kitchen table to dry. With the help of the mother-in-law, who lived next door, and a small son aged nine years, who worked after school, it was possible to make two gross, 288 roses a day, for which they received 50 cents, or about \$3.00 in a week. During four or five months in the summer they had no work.

"Making flowers at home is poor work, especially if you have only a few children to help you," was the comment of a worker in a family whose combined weekly earnings from home work were never more than \$4.00. The father and mother are Genoese Italians. The children, aged thirteen, twelve, seven, and five, were all born in New York. They go to school and all work on flowers after school hours until as late as 10 o'clock at night. They make poppies, pasting on two petals, one silk and one muslin, and inserting the pistil into the stems which have been branched in the factory. The price is 6 cents a gross and "if we work all day and all night too," the mother said, "we can make 10 gross," 1,440 separate flowers, for which they receive 60 cents. "The girls in the

## A GROUP OF HOME WORKERS

shop wouldn't work on such cheap flowers, but they don't give out the fine roses." The father is a hod-carrier, earning \$3.00 a day, but working usually less than half the year. They have a woman boarder who works in a factory. These seven persons live in three rooms for which the rent is \$15 a month.

In another tenement nearby is a young married woman who, working alone at home, can earn the exceptional wage of from \$8.00 to \$12 in a week. She is a skilled brancher and represents the experienced worker who has learned the trade in the shop, an unusual type among home workers. She had made flowers for fifteen years before her marriage. Her wages from home work usually equal those of her husband, who is a porter in a saloon. Her mother-in-law does the housework and takes care of the eleven-months-old baby, thus leaving the mother free to work without interruption. The flowers given her are made abroad and branched or bunched here. Manufacturers usually do not give out such work unless they are sure that they can trust the worker's skill. In a day she can branch about two gross of the kind upon which she was engaged at the date of our visit. "But it's all according to the work," she said. "Sometimes I can make \$1.50 and sometimes \$3.00 a day. You can't count home work by the day, for a day is really two days sometimes, because people often work half the night. When the boss asks me how many flowers I can make in a day I say

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I cannot tell, but I know how many I can do in an hour. Some girls are so foolish. I've heard them praising themselves and telling the boss that they did the work in a day. They're ashamed to say they worked in the night too. But they only hurt themselves, for the boss says if they earn that much in a day he can cut the price." In the summer this woman works on feathers, which her employers give her in order not to lose track of so skilled a home worker during the dull season of the flower trade.

For two reasons, this woman thinks the flower trade a good one. The girls in the shop can make extra money by taking work home at night, and they can make flowers at home after they are married. From a larger point of view, however, these two reasons might be considered unfortunate rather than desirable for the worker or the trade. This woman's story is emphasized because by contrast it shows the lack of skill and the excessively low earnings in other households. Even in her case, the variety in earnings should be noted, and the fact that her skill would command higher pay per hour in the shop than at home.

In the district known as Greenwich Village is an Italian family of 10—father, mother, and eight children—who, through home work, gain but the scantiest supplement to their regular combined earnings of \$16.50. These earnings include the \$7.00 a week made by the father selling lunches in a saloon, \$6.50 made by the oldest daughter

## A GROUP OF HOME WORKERS

in a box factory, and \$3.00 earned by the sixteen-year-old son as a "wagon boy." Four children are in school and there are two babies at home. Every member of the family except the father and two babies helps to make flowers. The mother works irregularly during the day, the school children after school hours, and the box-maker and wagon boy in the evening. They make three-petaled violets at 7 cents a gross, earning a total weekly wage of \$3.00. They live in three rooms and pay \$12.50 a month.

These stories are not chosen because of startling features but because they give a fair impression of what our investigators have seen in many other cases. They show the work of little children; the prolonged hours of young girls after the day's labor in the factory; the pressure compelling the mother to make some contribution to the family income even when her husband is working; the irregular hours; the short seasons; the scanty earnings of a whole group of home workers; the general level of inefficiency which the system tends to foster; and the overcrowded homes. Omitting for the moment any discussion of dark, dirty bedrooms used as workplaces of flower makers ill with tuberculosis, of women and children afflicted with bad cases of skin disease and handling the flowers with no thought of the possibility of infection, we would emphasize rather the economic conditions represented by the homework system, testing it from the point of view of its

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efficiency as an industrial method, the return which it makes to the worker for her labor, and the degree in which it measures up to certain recognized standards of industry.

First among these standards, recognized in New York state since its first factory act was passed in 1886, is the prohibition of the labor of little children. No child under fourteen may work in a factory in New York state and none under sixteen may work without an employment certificate. Yet when an artificial flower manufacturer gives out work to be done in a tenement home, the spirit of the child labor law breaks down, and babies of three and four years enter the employ of the firm as part of the family group.

**TABLE 20.—AGES OF HOME WORKERS IN FAMILIES  
MAKING ARTIFICIAL FLOWERS AT HOME**

Age	HOME WORKERS OF THE AGES SPECIFIED	
	Number	Per cent
Under 8 years . . . . .	38	10.2
8 years and under 14 years . . . . .	101	27.2
14 years and under 16 years . . . . .	42	11.3
16 years and over . . . . .	190	51.3
Total . . . . .	371	100.0

Table 20 and the accompanying chart show the age grouping of the 371 workers who made flowers at home in the 110 households investigated. Of these 371 home workers nearly half,



ALL THE FAMILY WORK



FLOWER MAKING AFTER SCHOOL



## A GROUP OF HOME WORKERS

181, were children under sixteen years of age. About two in five, 139 in all, were under fourteen. Stated in greater detail, 38 had not yet reached their eighth birthday, 101 were between eight and fourteen, and 42 between fourteen and sixteen.

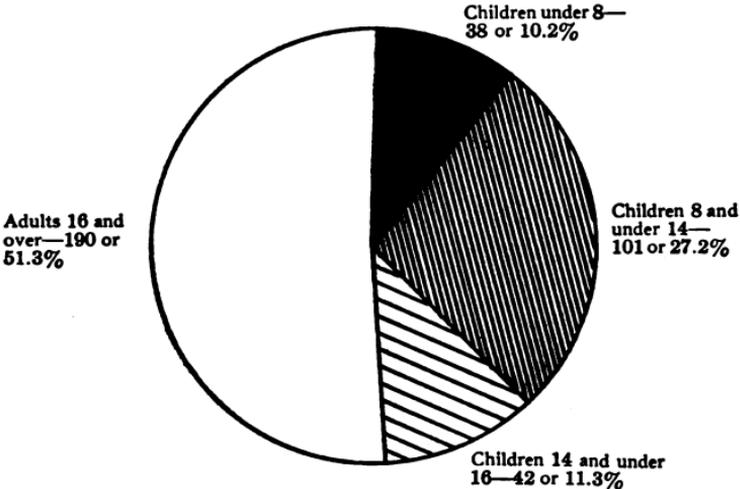


CHART III.—AGES OF 371 HOME WORKERS IN 110 FAMILIES MAKING ARTIFICIAL FLOWERS AT HOME

Nine of those between fourteen and sixteen, were at work in factories, where their hours of labor were limited by law to eight in a day; yet in the evening, unprotected by law, they made flowers at home. The youngest child worker was eighteen months old. He was just learning to pick petals apart to make them ready to be pasted on the stem. Less startling, but probably more serious in its effect, was the labor of the 145 school children who worked at home in the morning before school hours and again in the afternoon and evening.

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Questioning the effect of home work upon the ability of the child to keep up with his class in school, we made a tabulation of the school grades and the ages of 122 of these children.\*

**TABLE 21.—AGES AND GRADES IN NEW YORK PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF CHILDREN MAKING ARTIFICIAL FLOWERS AT HOME AND ALSO ATTENDING SCHOOL<sup>a</sup>**

Age	CHILDREN OF EACH SPECIFIED AGE, IN GRADES								Total
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	
5	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
6	1	3	..	..	..	..	..	..	4
7	..	6	..	..	..	..	..	..	6
8	..	5	3	1	..	..	..	..	9
9	..	3	7	1	..	..	..	..	11
10	..	1	4	4	2	1	..	..	12
11	..	3	1	4	5	2	..	..	15
12	..	..	3	3	6	6	..	..	18
13	..	..	..	4	4	5	3	..	16
14	..	..	1	1	5	4	5	5	21
15	..	..	..	..	..	..	2	..	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>Number over-age</b>	..	7	9	12	15	9	7	..	59

<sup>a</sup> Of the 145 children in the households investigated who were making artificial flowers and also attending school, two, who were seven years of age, were still in the kindergarten, five were in special classes and 23 did not supply information.

\* An effort was made to secure directly from the schools the facts about the grades and ages of these children, but it proved time-consuming and often impossible, largely because of differences in spelling foreign names. One principal refused the information. Nevertheless, 51 of the 122 cases tabulated were verified from school records, while for the remainder the data are based on the statements of the children and their parents or brothers and sisters.

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More than half the number were above the normal age for the grades in which they were enrolled. This estimate is based on the accepted standard of age in relation to grade in New York City schools.\* According to this standard the proportion of over-age children among all the school children of New York is 30 per cent. That the corresponding proportion among a group of children who work at home should be 51 per cent raises important questions as to the effect of home work on the child. That these children cannot keep up as they should in their school work is doubtless due both to the direct effect of work after school hours and to the indirect influence of home work in lowering the family standards of comfort, health, and cleanliness. Absorbed in work the mother can be neither a vigilant mother nor a careful housekeeper.

In other ways, too, the home-work system injures children. Work in the crowded, badly ventilated rooms (which we found to be an almost universal condition among home workers) weakens them physically in two ways, directly by lowering their vitality, and indirectly by endan-

- \* First grade, 6 years and under 8 years
- Second grade, 7 years and under 9 years
- Third grade, 8 years and under 10 years
- Fourth grade, 9 years and under 11 years
- Fifth grade, 10 years and under 12 years
- Sixth grade, 11 years and under 13 years
- Seventh grade, 12 years and under 14 years
- Eighth grade, 13 years and under 15 years

Tenth Annual Report of the city superintendent of schools, New York, 1908, p. 60.

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

gering their health through depriving them of the opportunity to spend play hours out of doors. Furthermore, by demanding continuous and monotonous attention, whose motive is not the normal one of interest but the nervous spur of financial necessity, this unskilled work in the home is likely to retard mental development.

The home-work system also offers an escape from all restriction on the hours of work of young girls and women. And, gauged by the most important of all tests,—the wages paid,—the home-work system in the flower trade does not measure up even to the prevailing rate of earnings in flower shops. It cannot even be said that there is a standard rate of wages for home work, so greatly do these vary from season to season, from shop to shop, from household to household.

If you ask an employer to tell you the wages which he pays to home workers, he will probably reply, "What they earn. It's all piece work." If you prevail upon him to show you his payroll, with its record of weekly payments to one family, amounting to \$3.58, \$5.70, \$7.20, or even \$10, and ask him how many workers there were in each group, he will tell you that he does not know. If you question the workers as to earnings you will find it equally difficult to secure exact information. Several factors enter into these difficulties. First, flowers change their fashion from season to season. Not only the style but the material determines the price. Therefore you cannot record a fixed

## A GROUP OF HOME WORKERS

rate per gross for violets, or roses, or orchids, or for any other product of the trade. Second, no limit is set to the hours of labor, and no two days are alike in the amount of time spent in making flowers. Therefore you cannot record the earnings per hour. Furthermore, the group of workers changes. One may work, as she says, "steadily." Another may help for a few hours one day and none the next. Therefore the earnings per capita elude investigation. All these difficulties, of course, emphasize a condition which is characteristic of the absence of organization or bargaining power among workers; namely, the lack of a standard.

Nevertheless, the difficulties can be overcome by recording the wages or range of earnings usually received by the family, and by indicating also the number of workers whose combined effort is rewarded by such a wage. In Table 22 this plan was used, and no attempt was made, therefore, to take account of the hours of labor or the earnings of individuals.

Thus more than half (65) of the family groups earned from home work a weekly wage of less than \$5.00; although in 85 of the families there were two or more home workers. The average weekly earnings were \$4.92.\* The tabulation of average earnings classified according to the number of workers in each group well illustrates the chaotic

\* According to those reports which showed a definite range of pay, the average of the minimum earnings was \$4.62; the average of the maximum, \$5.22.

ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

TABLE 22.—WEEKLY EARNINGS OF FAMILIES FROM HOME WORK ON ARTIFICIAL FLOWERS, BY NUMBER OF HOME WORKERS IN EACH FAMILY <sup>a</sup>

Weekly earnings	FAMILIES REPORTING WEEKLY EARNINGS AS SPECIFIED, BY NUMBER OF HOME WORKERS							All families
	1 home worker	2 home workers	3 home workers	4 home workers	5 home workers	6 home workers	7 home workers and less than 10	
Under \$2.00	4	2	1	1	..	..	..	8
\$2.00 and under \$3.00	..	1	3	2	..	..	..	6
\$3.00 and under \$4.00	6	5	5	7	4	2	3	32
\$4.00 and under \$5.00	4	1	4	5	2	1	2	19
\$5.00 and under \$6.00	2	1	1	3	2	1	..	10
\$6.00 and under \$7.00	..	3	2	1	2	1	..	9
\$7.00 and under \$8.00	..	2	2	3	..	1	..	8
\$8.00 and under \$12	1	1	2	1	1	..	..	6
\$12 or over	..	1	..	2	..	..	1	4
Total	17	17	20	25	11	6	6	102
Average weekly earnings	\$3.68	\$5.62	\$4.61	\$5.49	\$4.87	\$5.08	\$5.08	\$4.92

<sup>a</sup> Of the 110 families investigated, eight did not supply information.

## A GROUP OF HOME WORKERS

nature of the system. The earnings seem to have no consistent relation to the number of workers.

If now we analyze the group of workers, we have a surprising revelation of the relation of the work of children to the earning power of the family. In 76 families children under sixteen years of age were at work. In the remaining 34 families the workers were all adults. The average weekly earnings of the families in which children were employed were \$4.72. The average weekly earnings of the families in which no children were employed were \$5.44. This was true, notwithstanding the fact that the average number of adult workers in the families where child workers were found was 1.8, while in the families where no children were at work the average number of adult workers was 1.6. To draw definite conclusions of universal application from these figures is, of course, unwise; but at least they raise the question, whether the presence of children does not actually decrease the efficiency of a group of home workers.

The difference between these family earnings and the wages of individual shop workers, as they were described in the preceding chapter, is striking. The average for the group of shop workers whom we investigated was \$6.72. For the girls in this group who were sixteen years of age or over, the average was \$7.24. The United States census in 1905 recorded \$6.20\* as the average weekly earnings

\* United States Census. Bulletin 93, Earnings of Wage-Earners, Manufacturers, p. 98. 1905.

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

of women sixteen years of age and over, in factories manufacturing flowers and feathers. In April, 1907,\* an inspector of the New York state department of labor who collected wage statistics in flower shops, by tabulating payrolls in a representative group of establishments, reported that 50 per cent of the women received less than \$6.80, while 50 per cent earned more. These statements were all based on individual earnings, while the average of \$4.92 recorded for our group of home workers represents combined earnings for an average group of more than three workers (371 workers in 110 families) half of whom were more than sixteen years old. These comparisons indicate a scale of remuneration for home work distinctly lower than in the shops.

Furthermore, these wages considered with reference to yearly income are subject to great reduction because of the long slack season in summer months.† Over two-thirds of the families (57 of 84 investigated on this point) lost from three to six months in the year. For these family groups the average weekly wage distributed throughout the year would be from 25 to 50 per cent less than the wage in busy season, or roughly, would range

\* New York State Department of Labor, Bulletin No. 33, June, 1907, p. 151.

† The gas bill is another item of reduction of earnings to be considered. It varies from 25 to 50 cents a week in the busy season when the family group work until late at night. The greater part must be charged to home work, for without it economy in light would be possible. Then, too, it is because of low wages and lack of system that the working day is prolonged into the night.

## A GROUP OF HOME WORKERS

from \$2.40 to \$3.70.\* This amounts approximately to a yearly income varying from \$125 to \$190, a wage which even the most economical would declare to be far less than a living income for one person, whereas it actually represents the combined earnings of all the home workers in a family. "No cause can justify a wage that will not subsist the worker," declares a writer of a report published by the United States department of labor regarding the work of women and children in Great Britain.† Gauged by such a standard the home-work system certainly falls far short of a just wage scale.

That prices in home work not only vary but tend downward rather than upward, is a statement frequently made. Positive evidence could be secured only by a comparison of present and past rates duly checked up by facts showing the comparative purchasing power of a dollar at the corresponding periods. As no such data are available the opinions and the experience of workers on this subject are interesting. Their own words are quoted for their cumulative value as first hand testimony.

"Prices are lower than they used to be," said one woman. "They're about half. I've figured

\* The New York State Labor Department in 1902 reported \$2.70 as the average wage of home workers in the artificial flower trade allowing for loss of time. New York State Department of Labor, second annual report, 1902. Vol. I, p. 19.

† United States Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of Labor, Bulletin No. 80. Woman and Child Wage-earners in Great Britain, p. 39. Washington, Government Printing Office, 1909.

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

it out. I used to make \$12 a week. Now I can only make a dollar a day." One woman who was pasting stems on leaves for 2 cents a gross said that the price five years ago for the same work was 5 cents a gross. "Some people take work cheap and the rest of us are forced to it. Two women came to our shop the other day and offered to make flowers at home a week for nothing if the boss would give them work." "Flowers is cheap work now," said another. "The boss used to pay much better. But there's always poorer and poorer people, and they'll do it for less. They have a lot of children, and it don't take them long to make a dollar. So they do it for less than us."

Underlying these opinions are statements of the causes which influence the wages of home workers. The remarks of other workers give further testimony on these points. "The price isn't enough," said a violet maker who received 6 cents a gross for violets of three petals, one velvet and two silk. "But the man can't pay more. If you don't want to take it he says there's somebody else outside who will. There are too many peoples waiting for it." "They couldn't get any girls in the shops to do such cheap work," said another. "They couldn't make anything on it—maybe \$3.00 a week. So they give it to us, because we can't go out to the shops. It's too cheap work for anybody but us." "We make nothing on these flowers," said a married woman who had been a home worker when a child. "There ought to be a strike like on

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shirtwaists. The other day the boss wanted me to do some violets, five pieces and reversing them too. He offered me 15 cents a gross. I said I wouldn't do it for that and then another woman beside me took them."

That necessity makes weak bargainers is suggestively illustrated by classifying earnings from home work according to the family income from other sources. The group of families, 29 in number, whose weekly income from sources other than home work was recorded as less than \$12, earned an average of \$4.48 a week by making flowers at home. The 37 households whose income from other sources amounted to \$12 or more averaged \$4.74 from home work. As the families from whom accurate information on this point could be secured numbered only 66, conclusions are not safe, but the group considered is at least illustrative. Apparently the greater the need, the lower the weekly earnings from home work. The larger the income from other sources, the larger the home workers' wages. These figures are not surprising, if it be true that the better the living conditions, the greater will be the vitality, efficiency, and bargaining power of the workers. It is in this close connection between living conditions and bargaining power that we find the reason for regarding family standards as an essential subject of inquiry in a study of the home-work system. From this point of view it would appear that the home worker's hardships are due, in part at least, to low wages

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

and irregular employment in the occupations in which other members of her family are employed.

Contrary to the prevailing impression that the typical home worker is a widow who must support her family unaided, the statistics of this group show that in 98 of the 110 households the father was living, and that in 87 he contributed to the family income. In 25 cases the fathers were in so-called "independent" business, and in 61 other cases they were wage-earners. In one case the work was not stated. In four cases they were temporarily out of work. The weekly earnings of the 41 men wage-earners from whom definite information on this point could be secured indicate how great is the economic pressure which forces the wife to become a contributor to the family income even through such unprofitable employment as the home-work system offers. Of these 41, 32 earned less than \$15 a week, 17 falling below \$10. At best then, assuming steady work, three-fourths of the chief breadwinners of the household could not earn \$800 in a year and nearly half fell short of \$520. When account is taken of the practically inevitable loss of earnings through irregularity of employment, still further deductions must be made from these figures. In more than half the cases reporting on this point, work was said to be "not steady." The occupations of 86 of these heads of households are shown in the following table.



CHILD TOILERS WHO WORK MORE REGULARLY THAN THEIR FATHER



CARRYING FLOWERS FROM HOME TO FACTORY



## A GROUP OF HOME WORKERS

**TABLE 23.—OCCUPATIONS OF FATHERS IN FAMILIES DOING HOME WORK ON ARTIFICIAL FLOWERS <sup>a</sup>**

Occupation of father	Families in which the occupation of the father was as specified
<b>In independent business</b>	
Musician . . . . .	1
Barber . . . . .	1
Shoemaker . . . . .	1
Store keeper, saloon keeper . . . . .	2
Coal man, ice man, "newsdealer," "ice cream man," pushcart man . . . . .	6
Bootblacks . . . . .	13
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Wage-earners</b>	
Factory operatives (candy, tailoring, hats, flowers, feathers, piano strings) . . . . .	20
Porters, elevator men, drivers, watchman, bartender, lunch men, waiters, patrolmen, school janitor, ragman, shoemaker . . . . .	19
Marble cutter, electrician, mechanics, plasterer, brass cleaner, plumber, wood-turner, bricklayer, shipping clerk . . . . .	12
Laborers (hod carriers, dock yard hands, etc.) . . . . .	10
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>61</b>
Home work on flowers . . . . .	1
<b>Grand total . . . . .</b>	<b>86</b>

<sup>a</sup> Of 87 families in which the father was working, one did not state kind of work.

The father was not the only wage-earner in outside occupations. As the boys and girls passed their fourteenth birthdays they too went out to work. In these 110 households were 700 persons,

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

and of these 226 were wage-earners in occupations outside the home.\*

In only three households were there no outside wage-earners, and these families could not support themselves by home work and so were making use of other sources of income. One was using up savings until the children should be old enough to go out to work. The second was said to have a record of a profitable connection with crooks. In the third case the other source of income could not be ascertained. No family was found which was entirely supported by earnings from home work. In 55 households women worked outside the home. In 61, or nearly three-fifths, two, three, or even four or more outside wage-earners were contributing. Counting the home workers, 510 contributed to the support of the family either through work at home or employment elsewhere. Of the 190 who contributed nothing 166 were children.

That home work does not prove to be merely a temporary expedient is indicated by the length of time that these family groups have been at work. The fact that only eight of the 104 families questioned on this point had worked at home less than one year contradicts the theory that the home-work system does not hold its victims very long. Seventeen had worked one or two years, an equal number three or four, 19 five and less than ten years,

\*Of 110 families investigated, two did not supply information with regard to persons working for wages outside the home.

## A GROUP OF HOME WORKERS

20 ten years or longer, while 23 could give no definite answer to the question except "many years."

Nor are home workers all recently arrived immigrants as many suppose. In the artificial flower trade few home workers are of native-born parentage, but that many have been long in the United States is shown by Table 24. ✓

**TABLE 24.—LENGTH OF RESIDENCE IN THE UNITED STATES OF FOREIGN-BORN PARENTS IN FAMILIES MAKING ARTIFICIAL FLOWERS AT HOME <sup>a</sup>**

Years in the United States	FAMILIES IN WHICH THE PARENTS HAD BEEN IN THE UNITED STATES THE SPECIFIED NUMBER OF YEARS	
	Father	Mother
Under 5 years . . . . .	5	8
5 years and under 10 . . . . .	7	12
10 years and under 15 . . . . .	15	14
15 years and under 20 . . . . .	12	15
20 years or longer . . . . .	48	47
Total . . . . .	87	96

<sup>a</sup> Among the 110 families investigated 12 reported the father as dead, four reported the father as native born and 10 reported the mother as native born, seven reported the father as foreign born but did not specify length of residence, and four reported the mother as foreign born but did not specify length of residence.

In only five families had the father been in this country less than five years, while in 75 he had been here ten to twenty years or longer, and in four he was native born.

The fact that the great majority were Italians ✓

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

was doubtless chiefly due to the attitude of Italians toward women and their prejudice against their employment outside the home. "Italians are different from Americans," said one home worker. "They don't like to work out in factories, and the men don't want them to do it. They must take the work home, especially if they are married." Of 110 households investigated the father was Italian born in 105 and the mother in 98. Four of the fathers and 10 of the mothers were born in this country but in all these cases the previous generation came from Italy. In one family the father was Austrian, in one the mother was Hungarian, in another Austrian. The home-work system in the flower trade must be regarded not as an isolated phase of the industry but as an indication of economic pressure in the families of Italians.

It is indeed the increasing necessity that the wives of wage-earning men should become wage-earners which is fostering the growth of the home-work system. In 99, or 10 out of 11 of the households visited, the mother was a home worker, sometimes alone and sometimes with other members of the family. In only nine, or about eight per cent of the cases, had she been a flower maker before her marriage,—a fact indicating that she turned to this work not because she knew how to do it but because under the present order of industry it seemed to be her only resource. We are accustomed to believe that in the manufacturing industries of America few married women are at work, and that

## A GROUP OF HOME WORKERS

we have escaped the problems which their employment has brought to other countries. Yet the predominance of unmarried women in the factories does not prove that married women are not obliged to work. Rather it indicates that factory work with its long hours is impossible for mothers of little children. Studies of the standards of living\* have shown how many wives of wage-earners, not among Italians only but among all nationalities, are seeking employment not in factories but in home work, in office cleaning, in day's labor,—occupations whose one merit is a certain freedom in hours which enables the mother to be at home sometime during the day, while her freedom in this respect is penalized by the wholly inadequate remuneration offered her. The false impression that we have escaped the problem of married women's employment has arisen merely because the organized industries which are counted by the census offer opportunities so ill adapted to the duties of housewives and mothers. This lack of opportunity, combined with economic pressure on women to supplement their husbands' earnings, is the two-fold cause of the growth of the home-work system with its breaking down of family life and industrial standards. Under these conditions it will continue to thrive unless the community can be roused to effective action.

\* Cf. Chapin, Robert Coit; *Standards of Living among Workingmen's Families in New York*. Russell Sage Foundation Publication. New York, Charities Publication Committee, 1909.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE FLOWER TRADE AND THE LAW

**A**RTIFICIAL flower making is one of the 200 or more manufacturing pursuits included within the scope of the factory laws of New York state. The hours of labor of women and children and sanitary conditions in the workshops are restricted by legislative enactment which applies to all factories throughout the state. In addition, the labor laws affect the artificial flower trade through a series of somewhat elaborate provisions regarding manufacture in tenements. Apparently, therefore, artificial flower makers should be well protected. The industry, nevertheless, illustrates some serious shortcomings in the effort so far made to safeguard the health of working women and children.

Thorough inspection of sanitary conditions in workrooms was not attempted in this investigation. It is a field which needs the attention of experts in sanitation, and it seemed desirable for our visitors to confine their attention to trade conditions, hours, wages, seasons, and workroom organization rather than to building construction, ventilation, or protection against fire risks. Nevertheless, certain facts about workroom surround-

## THE FLOWER TRADE AND THE LAW

ings should precede a discussion of the hours of labor.

Two types of workroom stand out prominently: the loft in a tall Broadway factory building, and the single floor of a remodeled dwelling house on the lower west side of Manhattan. Few firms occupy an entire building. The majority rent lofts in factories jointly occupied by a half dozen or more manufacturers in various industries. For flower making does not take much space, and the majority of firms in this industry have a comparatively small force in the workroom.\*

The best lighted space is almost invariably given not to the workroom but to the show room for the display of flowers. In the Broadway loft the typical plan is a long narrow room with windows at front and extreme rear, leaving the middle space badly lighted and not adequately ventilated. The front windows usually light the show room and the firm's private office, and a tall partition, used to shut off the workroom, serves to obstruct the light and air which might otherwise reach the workers.

This sometimes makes necessary the use of artificial light. A lighted gas jet unprotected by any globe or wire guard, placed just above a work table dangerously near the cord on which the workers hang the finished and highly inflammable

\* Of the 114 firms investigated 44 employed less than 25 women, 27 had a force of 25 to 50, 16 had 50 to 75, 10 had 75 to 100, 13 had 100 to 200, one employed 200, and one had 300 women workers. Two did not report.

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

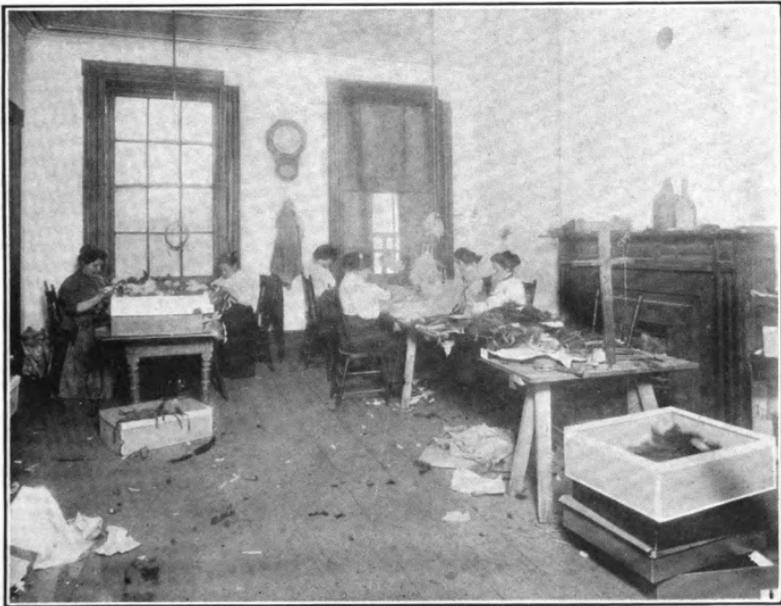
flowers, is a not uncommon sight. Gas is also used in connection with the process of goffering, and in flower shops which have feather departments it is necessary in steaming the feathers. The finished flowers, packed in boxes piled high in the workrooms, are also so inflammable that the fire risk is very grave.

That the larger firms are the ones able to occupy a Broadway location has already been pointed out. About one-third of all the flower shops investigated were located in former dwelling houses planned for different purposes and not satisfactory when used as workrooms. A few were well-lighted and ventilated, much better indeed than the long, narrow Broadway loft; but in many, light was not well distributed throughout the rooms, heating and ventilation were defective, and the wooden floors and stairways were covered with dust. Only the fine old doors with beautifully curved arch of glass above, serve to remind visitors of the high estate from which the house has fallen since the days when it stood proudly in the residence district of the lower West Side. Now it has become a make-shift factory into which as many workers as possible are crowded in the busy season.

Unfortunately the New York labor law does not establish any definite standard of air tests or lighting. Ventilation must be "proper and sufficient," says the statute, and there must be at least 250 cubic feet of air space for each employe. Nothing is said about testing the quality of the



A FORMER DWELLING HOUSE CONTAINING TWO FACTORIES



FEATHER MAKERS

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## THE FLOWER TRADE AND THE LAW

air, nor is any requirement made about lighting. These provisions leave much to the discretion of the inspector, and are not specific enough to prevent the use of buildings not well adapted to factory purposes, nor does either the factory or the building code make definite requirements regarding ventilation and light in the construction of new buildings. This failure to establish a rigid standard of sanitation in buildings to be used for factory purposes is a lost opportunity in New York, for even the most casual glance shows how active building operations are at this time. Some years from now, when public sentiment may have grown powerful enough to demand wholesome conditions in factories, a great obstacle to effective action will be the number of buildings constructed in 1910 or 1912 without careful planning to give light and air.\*

More definite than these discretionary powers are the provisions regarding the hours of work of women and children. In the spring of 1912, a bill limiting women's work to fifty-four hours a week † was passed in New York, to take effect in the autumn. At the time of this investigation of

\* On the subject of ventilation, the Commissioner of Labor wrote as follows in his report submitted to the legislature in February, 1912: "The legislature of 1911 failed to enact legislation fixing a standard of ventilation. This being the case, we have only undertaken in extreme cases to compel factory proprietors to provide means of ventilation and to maintain satisfactory air conditions in work-rooms." Report of the Commissioner of Labor, New York State, 1911, p. 22.

† The following letter was sent to members of the committee on labor and industries of the legislature while this bill was pending. It was the result of a unanimous vote of an Italian girls' club, and was written by a committee appointed by the club after a discussion

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

flower shops, however, the law prohibited the employment of women of sixteen years or over longer than sixty hours in a week. It prohibited work by women under the age of twenty-one between the hours of 9 o'clock at night and 6 o'clock in the morning, thus assuring a rest period at night. It limited the working day to ten hours, but by various "exception" clauses it permitted these ten hours to become twelve as a regular practice not more than five days in the week or as occasional

of factory laws in New York state. Only the signature and some of the spelling have been changed. Otherwise it stands as it was written by the girls themselves without other aid.

### ITALIAN GIRLS' INDUSTRIAL LEAGUE

28 Macdougall Street.

New York, March 7th, 1912.

#### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

We, the members of the Italian Girls' Industrial League, have come to the conclusion that the girls of this state are working too many hours a week and we think that the 54 hour bill ought to be passed and not only passed but enforced. Now in our club we represent all different lines of industry. We have the flower trade, we have the hair trade, the embroiderers, the book binders, the cloak makers, childrens' dresses, shirt waist makers, dress makers, sales ladies, candy makers & a good many other trades & also a brush maker. We also know of girls that work in candy factories that go to work at 7 in the morning and work through until seven in the evening, with only  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour for lunch & only get 7 cents for the extra hour & in the flowers the girls have to work so hard & when they are busy they have to work overtime & also take work home. They do not care whether a girl is sick or not, she has to work, but when they are slack they do not care whether a girl needs work or not, she is laid off. We could tell you so much of other trades but it would take up too much space. We think it would be a very good idea if some of you gentlemen would go & visit some of the different factories and see for their selves, & I do not think they would be very long in passing that bill. We do also want to speak about the canneries up state. We think it an outrage that those people have to work such long hours not only for the girls and women but for those innocent little children who have to work so hard when they ought to be at play.

from  
MRS. MARIA GONZAGA, President.

## THE FLOWER TRADE AND THE LAW

overtime not more than three days. The new law limits the week to fifty-four hours, and the day to nine, with exceptions permitting a maximum of ten hours.\* By an amendment † passed March, 1913, legal provision was made for a rest period between 10 p. m. and 6 a. m. for women employed in factories. Women under twenty-one must still stop work at 9 p. m. Children under sixteen cannot legally be employed in factories before 8 in the morning or after 5 in the afternoon, or more than eight hours in any one day.

In the discussion of the application of this law to any trade it is necessary to distinguish between the normal schedule of hours and the length of the working day when it is prolonged by overtime in the busy season. Table 25 shows the total daily hours of work in flower shops when the normal schedule prevails.

By far the largest group of shops,—79, or about seven in every 10,—employing 3,581 women, or 71 per cent of the total normal force, had a working day of nine to nine and one-half hours. Only about one woman in 11, 470 in all, worked in a shop whose day was eight hours or less. None were found whose normal schedule exceeded the legal limit of ten hours daily, but 100 women, 2 per cent, worked nine and one-half to ten hours. It should be remembered that in measuring the

\* For opinion of the Supreme Court of New York as to the validity of this law, see Appendix B of this volume.

† For text of new law, see Appendix D of this volume.

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

**TABLE 25.—DAILY HOURS OF WORK, WHEN NOT WORKING OVERTIME, OF WOMEN EMPLOYED IN ARTIFICIAL FLOWER SHOPS<sup>a</sup>**

Daily hours of work	Shops in which hours of work were as specified	WOMEN EMPLOYED IN SHOPS IN WHICH HOURS OF WORK WERE AS SPECIFIED	
		Number	Per cent
8 hours or less . . . . .	6	470	9
More than 8 hours, less than 8½ hrs. . . . .	3	80	2
8½ hours and less than 9 hours . . . . .	21	782	16
9 hours and less than 9½ hours . . . . .	79	3,581	71
9½ hours and less than 10 hours . . . . .	3	100	2
Total . . . . .	112	5,013	100

<sup>a</sup>Of 114 firms investigated, two did not supply information. This table shows the hours in effect on regular working days, not on Saturdays.

**TABLE 26.—HOURS AT WHICH WOMEN EMPLOYED IN ARTIFICIAL FLOWER SHOPS BEGAN WORK<sup>a</sup>**

Hour of beginning work	Shops in which work began at time specified	WOMEN EMPLOYED IN SHOPS IN WHICH WORK BEGAN AT TIME SPECIFIED <sup>b</sup>	
		Number	Per cent
7:45 a. m. . . . .	1	60	1
8 a. m. and before 8:30 a. m. . . . .	96	4,059	81
8:30 a. m. and before 9 a. m. . . . .	15	884	18
Total . . . . .	112	5,003	100

<sup>a</sup>Of 114 firms investigated, two did not supply information.

<sup>b</sup>Of the 96 shops beginning work from 8 to 8:30 a. m. one did not report number of women employed.

THE FLOWER TRADE AND THE LAW

length of the working day the time allowed for meals is deducted, so that the period between the time of beginning work and the time of ending—the whole period when the worker is really responsible to the shop—is longer than the statement of daily hours indicates.

Between 8 a. m. and 8:30 a. m. was the opening time for 96 shops, employing 4,059, 81 per cent of the women workers. Only one shop opened earlier, while 15 began the day at 8:30 a. m. or later.

TABLE 27.—HOURS AT WHICH WOMEN EMPLOYED IN ARTIFICIAL FLOWER SHOPS LEFT WORK WHEN NOT WORKING OVERTIME <sup>a</sup>

Hour of leaving work	Shops in which work ended at time specified	WOMEN EMPLOYED IN SHOPS IN WHICH WORK ENDED AT TIME SPECIFIED <sup>b</sup>	
		Number	Per cent
5 p. m. and before 5:30 p. m. . . . .	1	20	1
5:30 p. m. and before 6 p. m. . . . .	54	2,664	53
6 p. m. . . . .	56	2,304	46
Total . . . . .	111	4,988	100

<sup>a</sup> Of 114 firms investigated, three did not supply information. This table shows the hours of closing on regular working days, not on Saturdays.

<sup>b</sup> Of the 56 shops in which the hour of leaving work is 6 p. m., one did not report number of women employed.

Slightly more than half (53 per cent) of the women, or 2,664, worked until sometime between 5:30 p. m. and 6 p. m., while 2,304, 46 per cent,

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worked until exactly 6 o'clock. Only one shop closed before 5:30 p. m. Between the time of beginning and ending work only one rest period was allowed—the noon recess.

**TABLE 28.—LENGTH OF NOON RECESS OF WOMEN EMPLOYED IN ARTIFICIAL FLOWER SHOPS<sup>a</sup>**

Length of noon recess	Shops in which noon recess was as specified	WOMEN EMPLOYED IN SHOPS IN WHICH NOON RECESS WAS AS SPECIFIED <sup>b</sup>	
		Number	Per cent
Thirty minutes . . . . .	39	2,083	42
Forty-five minutes and less than sixty . . . . .	9	563	11
Sixty minutes . . . . .	63	2,342	47
Total . . . . .	111	4,988	100

<sup>a</sup>Of 114 firms investigated, three did not supply information.

<sup>b</sup>Of the 39 shops in which the noon recess was thirty minutes, one did not report number of women employed.

In 39 shops, employing more than 2,000 women, the noon recess was only half an hour long. The law provides for a one-hour lunch period but unfortunately allows this time to be shortened by special permit from the labor department. A large number of factories in all industries secure this permit. That 63 flower shops, employing 2,342 women, 47 per cent, gave an hour at noon is, therefore, rather surprising. The probable explanation of allowing this full hour in so many flower factories is that these are the shops nearest to the homes of the workers, and the location

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enables the girls to go home for lunch. If they were obliged to eat lunch in the workroom they would probably prefer a shorter recess and an earlier closing hour at night. This tendency on the part of employers and workers to cut down the noon rest period is a dangerous one for the workers' health.

Many establishments have a slightly earlier closing hour on Saturday, so that the length of the working week is not always six times the working day. Thus, one more table is necessary to show the weekly hours of labor of flower makers.

TABLE 29.—WEEKLY HOURS OF WORK, WHEN NOT WORKING OVERTIME, OF WOMEN EMPLOYED IN ARTIFICIAL FLOWER SHOPS <sup>a</sup>

Weekly hours of work	Shops in which weekly hours were as specified	WOMEN EMPLOYED IN SHOPS IN WHICH WEEKLY HOURS WERE AS SPECIFIED	
		Number	Per cent
48 hours or less . . . . .	7	552	12
Over 48 hours and less than 50 . . . . .	2	40	1
50 hours and less than 52 . . . . .	17	633	13
52 hours and less than 54 . . . . .	57	2,625	55
54 hours . . . . .	14	357	7
Over 54 hours and less than 56 . . . . .	3	440	9
56 hours and less than 58 . . . . .	5	150	3
Total . . . . .	105	4,797	100

<sup>a</sup> Of 114 firms investigated, nine did not supply information.

In 57 shops, 2,625 women, 55 per cent, worked fifty-two to fifty-four hours in a week. This

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group represents the majority. Twenty-two shops worked longer, while 26 had a shorter week. The shops working longer than fifty-four hours were the ones affected directly by the fifty-four-hour law. None, however, worked regularly the sixty hours permitted by the law in force at the time of this investigation, so that it was possible for all employers to lengthen the normal hours of work more or less in busy season without exceeding the limit of the law. Thus there are two kinds of overtime, legal and illegal.

To secure accurate information about overtime, especially when it exceeds the legal limit, is not so easy as to ascertain the normal working day. Employers are not willing to make full confession of violating the law, and employes fear that if they give this sort of information they may be found out and discharged. The cases of which we have record must be regarded, therefore, as illustrative rather than a measure of the extent of overtime. Nevertheless, employers in as many as 72 of the shops investigated reported that they were accustomed to prolong the workday at certain seasons,—although not in all cases to an illegal excess,—while only 40 stated that they never had any overtime. Two did not report.

In interviewing employes, card records were made not only of the girl's trade history but of the details of her report of shops in which she had been employed, and whose conditions she could remember most accurately. A tabulation of 47 of

## THE FLOWER TRADE AND THE LAW

these reports made by girls who had actually worked overtime gives an indication of violations of the law in this trade. If the numbers seem small it should not be forgotten that each report represents not one worker only but others employed under the same conditions in the same shop. Four reported that they had worked between ten and eleven hours in a day; 21 had worked between eleven and twelve hours; and 12 had worked exactly twelve hours, exclusive of time allowed for lunch and supper. Three had worked more than twelve hours in a day. Seven others reported overtime, but the time of stopping work was so irregular that no definite statement of the length of the workday could be secured.

It was entirely possible to keep within the legal daily limit of twelve hours and still have not only a very long day but an excessively long week. For example, one flower maker, seventeen years old, reported that normally she worked from 8 a. m. until 5:30 p. m. with a half hour at noon, and on Saturday stopped at 5 p. m.—nine hours daily except Saturday and fifty-three and one-half hours weekly. But when working overtime she stayed four nights a week until 8:30 with no time allowed for supper, thus working twelve hours a day and sixty-five and one-half hours a week. To have no time for supper was a violation of the law which requires that in cases where employes are to work overtime more than an hour after 6 p. m., at least twenty minutes' recess must be allowed be-

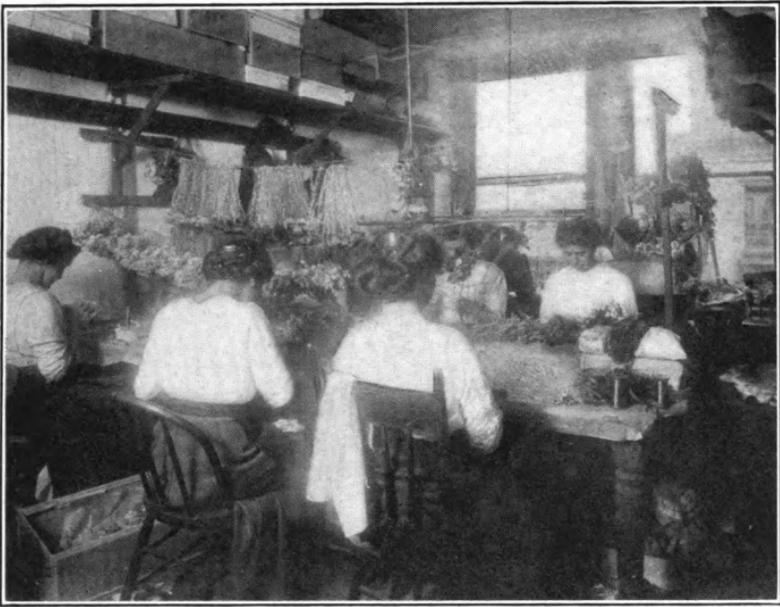
## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

fore beginning overtime work. Furthermore, this case was a violation of the somewhat intricate provision by which "irregular" or occasional overtime must not exceed a ten-hour day more than three days in the week.\* Clearly, however, the long twelve-hour day was possible under the law. Enforcement was made difficult by the fact that a violation is not proved unless it can be clearly shown that the excess over ten hours occurred on more than three days in the week, and unless the total for the week exceeds sixty hours as it did in this case. This girl's report is an illustration of the intricacies † of proving a violation. It also shows the way in which the working week may be prolonged unduly without exceeding the daily limit on any one day.

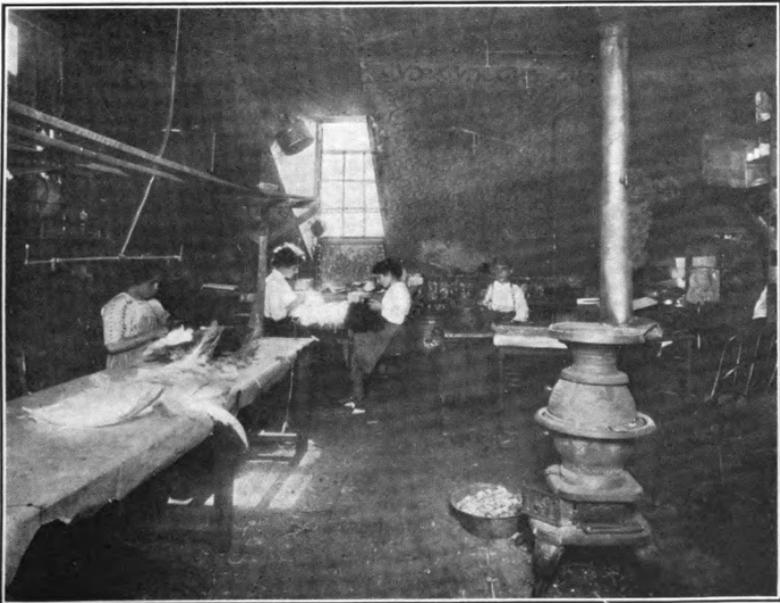
Because of these complications 15 of the 47 reports of overtime did not contain all the necessary facts as to time of beginning and ending work each day, change in Saturday hours, time allowed for lunch and supper each day, and number of days when overtime was worked, to make possible an accurate count of the total working week. Of the 32 records supplying all these facts, however, 20 showed a violation of the sixty-hour law. Of these, eight were reports of more than sixty but less than sixty-five hours, 11 recorded sixty-five

\* See page 122.

† The intricacies were not removed when the fifty-four-hour law was passed, although for the former sixty we must now read fifty-four, for a ten-hour day substitute nine, and for the maximum twelve read ten.



INFLAMMABLE MATERIAL IS HUNG NEAR UNGUARDED GAS JETS



AN ATTIC WORKROOM

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO  
LIBRARY  
1215 EAST 58TH STREET  
CHICAGO, ILL. 60637  
\* 1975 JUN 15 10 10 AM \*  
\* 1975 JUN 15 10 10 AM \*  
\* 1975 JUN 15 10 10 AM \*

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to seventy hours, and one a seventy-two-hour week. The remaining 12 showed overtime above the regular schedule, varying from less than fifty-two to sixty hours, but not exceeding what was then the legal limit. These reports represented 24 shops, of which 17 exceeded the sixty-hour limit.

It may seem at first glance that long hours of work are not serious in such a trade. No heavy work is done by women in flower shops. The materials which they handle are light, and tools held in the hand take the place of the nerve-racking electric power machines of other industries. Yet elements of fatigue are by no means lacking. The flower maker sits at her work all day. Physicians say that to sit continuously may be as injurious as to stand continuously. It has been noted that many of the workrooms are poorly ventilated, and that the air is further vitiated by gas stoves used for heating the tools and sometimes by gas used for illumination. Frequently the dyeing is done in a corner of the same room in which the girls work and the odor of the wood alcohol is unpleasant and even, as many believe, positively injurious. Some girls complain that the hard wire and the heated iron tools tire the fingers and make the hands callous, and others that the colored flowers strain their eyes. More serious is the complaint that certain dyes are poisonous.\*

\* This opinion was expressed so frequently by workers that it seems credible, although no medical examinations have been made to support it. The girls say that they inhale the dust from cheap flowers, and that the color frequently stains their hands and may inadvertently

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Although there are no machines to speed-up the workers, the forewoman aided by the piece-work system frequently takes their place.

"It's an awful grind," said one woman of thirty years' experience in flower shops. "They'd like to take the blood out of you. Work! Work! Work!" The new scientific studies of the physiology of fatigue prove that physical exhaustion results not alone from heavy work which strains the muscles, but quite as surely from long-continued attention directed to one task.\* A twelve-hour day means exhaustion for the flower maker, with as much danger from the now demonstrated poisonous character of the "toxin of fatigue" as would result from prolonged hours in any other occupation.

Employment more than sixty hours a week was not the only violation of the law reported by workers. Table 30 shows other infringements of the regulations designed to protect working women and children.

These reports, again, must be regarded merely as illustrative and not in any sense a measure of the extent of the violations there listed. Nevertheless, if interviews with less than 200 workers revealed 123 distinct cases of disregard of the law,

be rubbed on the mouth or eyes. They dread especially the red color known as Flying Jack, and say that their saliva is red when they have been working on roses of that shade. A special investigation of the physical effects of these dyes ought to be made.

\* Goldmark, Josephine: *Fatigue and Efficiency*. Russell Sage Foundation Publication. New York, Charities Publication Committee, 1912.

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it would seem that if a thorough investigation of 5,000 flower makers were possible the violations

TABLE 30.—VIOLATIONS IN ARTIFICIAL FLOWER ESTABLISHMENTS OF LAWS RESTRICTING THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN <sup>a</sup>

Nature of violation	Violations of each specified nature
<b>Children</b>	
Children under 14 employed . . . . .	5
Children under 16 employed without working papers . . . . .	7
Children under 16 employed more than 8 hours daily . . . . .	14
Children under 16 employed more than 48 hours weekly . . . . .	13
<b>Women</b>	
Women under 21 employed after 9 p. m. . . . .	2
Women employed more than 12 hours daily . . . . .	3
Women employed more than 60 hours weekly . . . . .	20
Women allowed less than 20 minutes for supper when working overtime more than one hour after 6 p. m. . . . .	23
Women employed more than 10 hours daily irregularly more than 3 times a week . . . . .	18
Women employed on Sunday work (with no other day of rest allowed in the week) . . . . .	1
<b>Home work</b>	
Work taken home by shop workers living in unlicensed tenements . . . . .	17
<b>Total</b> . . . . .	<b>123</b>

<sup>a</sup> As reported by workers who had experienced the violations.

discovered would be multiplied to an alarming degree. The tendency to overtime becomes the

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more serious when we realize that home work given to shop employes after their day's work in the shop offers an escape from factory laws, and is often a substitute for overtime in the factory. This home work is really overtime, although in the discussion of hours of work in the shop it has not been so counted. The last violation named in the table, the giving out of work to employes who live in unlicensed houses, is due to this method of prolonging the day's labor. It nullifies factory laws and renders the task of protecting the health of women and girls wellnigh hopelessly baffling. For instance, one girl who reported "no overtime" in her shop, nevertheless told the investigator that excessive night work had "broken her down." She had been sick for several months, and the illness had left her weak and anæmic. She and her sister had worked at home until 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning making flowers brought from the shop after the day's work.

Of the employers interviewed, 86, or three-fourths, stated that they gave work to their employes to take home at night. Five gave no information on this point. Only 23, about one in five, reported no home work for shop employes. Of these 23, 17 said that instead of home work they had overtime in the shop, while only six, 5 per cent of the total number investigated, reported no overtime and no home work. Nearly half, 52, reported both overtime in the shop and home work for shop employes, while 34 said that

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the work at home was a substitute for overtime in the factory.

Contrary to the facts about typical home workers' families, who work at home only and not in the shop, home work after factory hours is by no means confined to Italians but is quite as common among other nationalities. The reasons for the system are not difficult to discover. The workers' motives may be read in an examination of the statistics of low wages, combined with the statistics of short seasons of employment. The employer is equally willing to give out the work, especially to shop employes whose efficiency he knows, for it saves him the expense of lighting his factory and the trouble of staying there himself to supervise the work, and it frees him from the more or less remote danger of prosecution for illegal overtime.

The writer visited an artificial flower shop exactly at 5 o'clock one afternoon. The employer said that only one girl in the workroom was under sixteen. He pointed her out as she was putting on her hat to go home. He was especially strict on this point, as a factory inspector had recently visited his establishment and instructed him to send children home at 5 o'clock. The next day one of our visitors went to the home of a flower maker, chosen quite at random from a long list. It proved to be the home of the girl who had left the shop so promptly at 5 p. m. Her mother corroborated the statement that she never worked

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overtime in the factory. Instead of that, she said, she brought work home at night and worked until 10 p. m. There is danger, indeed, that the more strict the regulation of hours within the factory, the greater will be the tendency to have the work done at home.

( All roads in the flower trade lead to the home-work system. The home workers in their eager competition for work are constantly influencing the wage scale, constantly shortening the seasons by swelling the volume of production to meet immediate market demands, and constantly affording a means of lengthening the hours of work for shop workers as well as home workers. Home work may even prolong the hours of work within the factory in such processes as branching and packing, which cannot conveniently be done at home but are the final processes even on flowers "made" in tenements.) Until the home-work system is dealt with, New York state will never succeed in restricting the hours of work of artificial flower makers even to sixty in a week.

So far, the efforts of New York state to deal with the home-work system not only in the flower trade but also in the manufacture of some 40 other articles of commerce have not met with any marked success. The fear of contagion is the basis of the present attempted regulation of the system. The provisions of this effort to protect the public health are contained in the section of

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the factory law entitled "Tenement-made Articles." In this law 41 products,\* including artificial flowers, are named, and none of them may be manufactured in a tenement which has not been licensed by the department of labor. This license is the essential provision of the law. The other sections describe the method of granting or revoking it. Before a license is granted application for it must be made to the commissioner of labor by the owner of the house. In New York City it is the duty of the labor department to consult the records of the local board of health and the tenement house department to make sure that no orders from those departments are outstanding against the property. An inspector of the labor department must then be sent to investigate the premises. The license may be granted if this inspection and the search of the records of other departments prove that "such building is free from infectious, contagious, or communicable disease, that there are no defects of plumbing that will permit the free entrance of sewer air, that such building is in a clean and proper sanitary condition, and that the articles specified in this section may be manufactured therein

\* "Coats, vests, knee-pants, trousers, overalls, cloaks, hats, caps, suspenders, jerseys, blouses, dresses, waists, waistbands, underwear, neckwear, furs, fur trimmings, fur garments, skirts, shirts, aprons, purses, pocketbooks, slippers, paper boxes, paper bags, feathers, artificial flowers, cigarettes, cigars, umbrellas, or articles of rubber, . . . macaroni, spaghetti, ice cream, ices, candy, confectionery, nuts or preserves."

Text of law, New York State Department of Labor, Annual Report of Commissioner of Labor, 1911, p. 214.

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under clean and healthful conditions." \* If these conditions be not maintained the commissioner of labor has power to revoke the license.

It is obvious that this law has no relation to the real drawbacks of the home-work system as they have been described in the preceding chapter: the encouragement of child labor, long hours of work for women, and a prolonged working day for young girls employed in the shops. Yet these are industrial conditions which the legislature has seen fit to regulate everywhere throughout the state except when the factory is in a tenement home. The provisions of law regarding "tenement-made articles" are practically useless to the workers.

Nor can it be said that the law achieves its main purpose of protecting the health of the consumer. A convincing statement on this point is a tabulation of the number of persons per room in the households of home workers in the artificial flower trade. (See Table 31.)

More than half, 59, of the families investigated lived in such crowded quarters that counting kitchens and each tiny bedroom they averaged two or more occupants per room. The flowers on which members of the family have been working are kept over night in these crowded rooms, each of which becomes a bedroom for two or more persons. Yet only six of the houses visited in this investigation were unlicensed. The number

\* See text of law, New York State Department of Labor, Annual Report of Commissioner of Labor, 1911, pp. 214-219.

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of persons per room, the habits of the family, their cleanliness, or the reverse, are not important factors in securing a license if the building be moderately sanitary. It is true that the law requires that the state of the building be such that articles "may be manufactured therein under clean and healthful conditions," but the standard of cleanliness is not defined, and the observance of such a standard in rooms which are used both as factory and living quarters could hardly be enforced even if an army of inspectors were assigned to the task.

TABLE 31.—PERSONS PER ROOM IN FAMILIES MAKING ARTIFICIAL FLOWERS AT HOME <sup>a</sup>

Persons per room	Families in which the number of persons per room was as specified
Less than one person . . . . .	3
One person and less than two persons . . . . .	46
Two persons and less than three persons . . . . .	49
Three persons and less than four persons . . . . .	8
Four persons . . . . .	2
Total . . . . .	108

<sup>a</sup>Of 110 families investigated, two did not supply information.

These difficulties are frankly stated in the report of the commissioner of labor of New York for the year 1911:

"It would be idle for us to contend that our supervision over manufacturing in tenement houses is up to the standard contemplated in the statute. It never has been and never

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

will be unless a small army of inspectors is provided for and kept constantly at work. Our inspectors are only in these apartments for a few minutes once or twice a year at most, and it would be folly to assume that we are able under such circumstances to observe all that should be known concerning this phase of our industrial life. That conditions are improving will be admitted by the strongest opponents of 'home work' in tenement houses, but that they are far from ideal is also well known and understood by all who have given the subject any real attention." \*

An inspection "for a few minutes once or twice a year at most" is obviously insufficient to prevent work being done by tenants whose standards of cleanliness are menacingly low even though they live in licensed houses; nor can such brief and infrequent inspection give any assurance to buyers that the articles which they buy have not been manufactured by home workers ill with tuberculosis, or tonsilitis, or "sore eyes," or skin disease. Striking evidence of the failure of the licensing system is given in a report on the men's ready-made clothing trade, in one of the 19 volumes containing the results of the special federal investigation of woman and child wage-earners in the United States. The investigators' conclusion is thus summarized: †

"It has been proved impossible, in spite of all existing laws merely regulating tenement-house manufacture, either in the

\* New York State Department of Labor, Annual Report of Commissioner of Labor, 1911, p. 21.

† Report on Woman and Child Wage-earners in the United States. Volume II, Men's Ready-made Clothing, p. 317. U. S. Senate Document No. 645.

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United States of America or elsewhere, to guarantee to the consumer that clothing made or finished in homes is free from disease and vermin. All laws 'regulating' tenement-house manufacture are more or less ineffective in the accomplishment of the principal purpose for which they have been enacted, namely, the preservation of the public health. The New York state laws on this subject are looked upon as models for this class of legislation, and every effort is made for their enforcement, yet it has been found in this investigation that work was being done in homes in the city of New York that, while structurally sanitary, were insanitary from other standpoints, owing to the presence of filth or vermin, or of diseased persons, or that they had become insanitary because of the low standards of the dwellers in them."

Not only has the system of regulation failed to afford any real protection to the consumer, but it has not even proved a check on the spread of the system. The number of licensed tenements in Greater New York in 1906 was 5,261. By 1910 the number was 13,000. At the rate of 2,000 a year, owners of tenements not hitherto licensed in New York City have been applying for the privilege, and at the same rate the task of inspection has been growing rapidly more burdensome. Yet with all the expenditure of effort thus demanded of the department of labor, experience has proved that the inspection of sanitary conditions in the homes of workers has not only failed to check the spread of home work, but also that it has not affected the standards of any industry by any such measure of protection of women or children as is afforded by even the least effective of factory laws.

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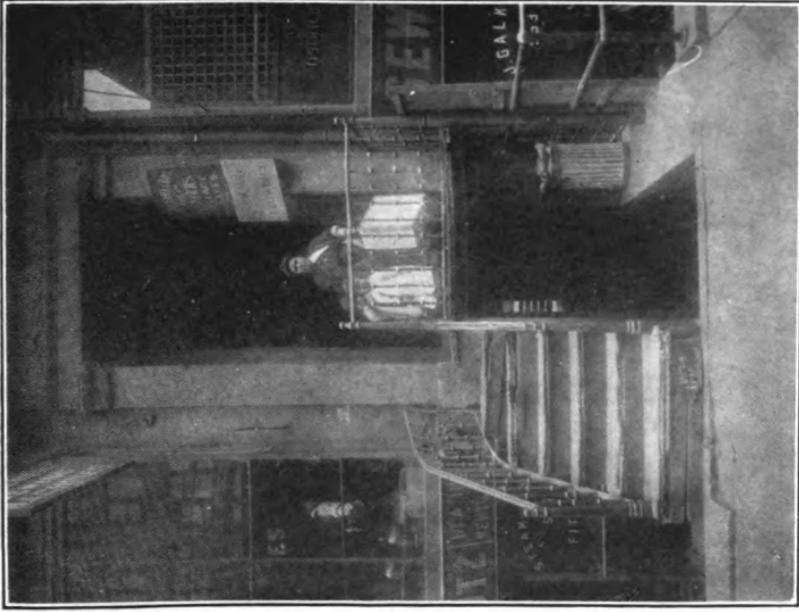
Recognizing that the regulation of sanitary conditions is not an effective method of attack on the real evils of tenement manufacture, sociologists and statesmen both in this country and abroad are seeking a better solution. For example, England is trying a scheme new to English labor laws; namely, the establishment of minimum wage boards. This is in accord with the principle laid down by the select committee on home work in 1908.

"In the opinion of your Committee," they wrote, "the second proposal—for the establishment of Wages Boards—goes to the root of the matter, in so far as the object aimed at is an increase in the wages of Home Workers. No proposals which fail to increase the income of these people can have any appreciable effect in ameliorating their condition."\*

The same point of view was manifest in the action of consumers' leagues at their international conference held in Geneva, Switzerland, in September, 1908, when "it was unanimously voted that all the leagues there represented take cognizance of the experiment which was being undertaken in England to establish a standard minimum wage in the worst paid industries."† This new program of reform serves at least to show that many careful investigators are convinced that the evils of home work can be cured only by direct attack designed to increase the wages paid. (It is an open

\* Report from the Select Committee on Home Work, p. xii. London, Vacher and Sons, 1908.

† Consumers' League of the City of New York. Annual report, March, 1910. Address delivered by Mrs. Florence Kelley, p. 52.



CARRYING HOME THE PETALS TO MAKE FLOWERS



A DARK AND DILAPIDATED WORKROOM



## THE FLOWER TRADE AND THE LAW

secret that many advocates of this plan hope that the home-work system would vanish altogether once it were deprived of the main factor in its growth,—the chance for employers to take advantage of the necessity and poverty of the workers to get manufacturing done at a lower rate than could possibly prevail in a factory. They reason that to get rid of the evils of the system means to abolish the system.) Many are contending that as a health measure manufacture in New York City tenements should be absolutely prohibited by law.

(Certainly in the artificial flower trade no real protection can be given to shop workers so long as home work offers to the manufacturer an escape from all the restrictions imposed by the factory law. This means disaster not alone for the workers but for the industry. So long as more than half the work is done in tenement homes; so long as the standards of the industry with reference to hours of labor, overtime, seasons, and wages, are too low to permit an adequate standard of living and efficiency for the workers; so long must American manufacturers be content with inferior work. No protective tariff will suffice to enable them really to rival the French product.) How closely related are the labor problems in Europe and America, yet how different are some of the conditions affecting the welfare of French and American flower makers, will be set forth in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE ARTIFICIAL FLOWER TRADE IN PARIS

AS the ancient Greeks believed in a fate which they could not control, so the artificial flower manufacturer in New York accepts as an immutable fact the superiority of the Parisian flower maker. The value of imported artificial flowers and feathers in the United States in 1905 was \$2,369,015,\* and in the same year that of the domestic product was \$5,246,822.† Three years later, in 1908, the value of imported flowers and feathers had increased to \$3,747,021. The reputation of the foreign flower, however,‡ is indicated not so much by comparative statistics of the total value of the domestic and the imported product as by the superiority of its position in the market here. Many models come from Paris, and domestic manufacturers are busied with the work of copying these French designs.

These domestic manufacturers gave many reasons for the greater success of the French flower

\* Statistical abstract of the United States Census, 1908, p. 409.

† Ibid, p. 157.

‡ Many flowers are imported from Germany, especially those of small petals, such as lilacs, wistaria, and forget-me-nots. In this chapter, however, the facts given concern French competition.

## THE TRADE IN PARIS

makers. A few spoke of the tendency among French manufacturers to specialize in the making of one kind of flower. This they say results in a far more beautiful product than is possible when a variety of models are made in the same shop as is the case usually in New York flower shops. Moreover, it gives the firm a reputation for a certain specialty. Many referred to the speed with which work must be done in New York. They lamented the absence of an apprenticeship system in the industry here, and complained that the wages paid to New York flower makers were so much higher than in Paris that America was handicapped in competition.

The manager of one of the larger factories said that speed particularly affected the evenness and durability in the production of color. For example, in making certain kinds of flowers four days should be allowed, one for starching the material, two for cutting, dyeing, and drying, and one for the work of making, but manufacturers here are sometimes expected to rush things through in a single day. Artificial heat must then be used to hasten the drying. Abroad, a man takes plenty of time to experiment with his colors, and allows them to dry naturally and then they last. An importer with a large show room on Broadway agreed with this statement and showed the visitor a box of a hundred black quills which he had sent out to be dyed. Every one had been ruined. He believed that it was better to have the work done

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in Europe, even though the duty on prepared work was 60 per cent, and on raw materials but 20 per cent, because he said American colorers could never produce a real black.\*

The owner of a small shop, however, complained that manufacturers here were not given a chance to do good work; that importers went abroad and stocked up with a general line of goods. Later in the season, after a certain flower had grown popular, they expected the American manufacturers to copy it at a moment's notice and for the same price the importer had paid for the flower abroad. In reproducing a certain flower he had had to compete with a Paris firm that makes a specialty of that blossom throughout the season. In another shop the visitor was shown some very beautiful roses which were not for sale but which had been imported for models in the workroom. Material, color, and form were all in marked contrast to the American product. The foreman said that it was impossible to copy the material, the color, or the workmanship, as the manufacturer of these flowers made roses and nothing but roses, all the year round, whether the people wanted roses or not. He knew he would sell them because he had created a name for himself in them. But in New York a manufacturer was obliged to make roses one day, wheat the next, poppies the next, fancy

\* An American dyer said that the difference between the water in Paris and New York accounts for the greater success of the French dyeing.

## THE TRADE IN PARIS

feathers the next, and then very likely some novelty that bore no resemblance to either flower or feather.

In the matter of wages, an American employer who had learned the trade in Paris made the unusual statement that good workmen were not to be found here because skilled flower makers got better wages in Paris and would not come to New York. Others, however, disagreed with him, saying that the American manufacturer was at a disadvantage in competing with French prices because he was obliged to pay higher wages than the Parisian. This opinion was endorsed by the French born wife of a New York manufacturer. She declared also that one of the great difficulties here lay in the lack of any training of the workers. In France, a girl gives three years and her parents pay money for her to learn the trade. In New York fathers and mothers care only about the four or five dollars a week their children can earn and nothing about their learning a trade. If the children cannot earn the money making flowers they send them to a pearl button factory, or a paper box factory, where they learn nothing. Not only are workers better trained in France, she said, but the people are more economical and able to work for lower wages.

French competition, it will thus be seen, was a factor much talked of in the flower trade in New York. We felt, therefore, that our inquiry would be incomplete unless we took this factor into

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

account and weighed the value of the opinions so frequently expressed. To this end we asked Miss Elizabeth S. Sergeant to secure data for us regarding the trade in Paris, and particularly to ascertain the accuracy of the statements of the New York manufacturers that the superiority of French workmanship was due to such causes as the low cost of labor coupled with the low cost of living in Paris, the apprenticeship system as contrasted with our lack of any similar system, the alleged superiority of Parisian design and workmanship, and a steadier season due to the specialization by firms in one kind of flower. We requested her to lay especial stress in her inquiry upon the training of workers.

Miss Sergeant made the investigation in 1910 during the months of May and June. Her sources of information were two: first, her personal investigation of 15 factories, two trade schools, 20 women employed in flower shops, and 16 home workers; and, second, statistics obtained from Mlle. Caroline Milhaud, investigator for the Ministère de Travail, who had made an official study of home work in this trade in Paris and the provinces during 1907-09.\* Miss Sergeant's statistical report, with its descriptive material and her illuminating comments, forms the foundation of this chapter.

\* Miss Sergeant wrote: "The report of the official investigation has not yet been published, is not yet edited *in toto*, so that the giving of statistics to an outsider involved much time and patience on Mlle. Milhaud's part. This investigation was chiefly concerned with Paris

## THE TRADE IN PARIS

In France, as in America, the making of artificial flowers is an urban industry. Paris is its center. Three provincial cities, however,—Reims, Lyons, and Orleans,—include it among their important industries, but it is said in France that only the Parisian has the “chic” which really makes the beauty of a flower’s “cachet” (style). “This style,” said a French manufacturer, “is so subtle and is obtained by so light a turn of the finger that it escapes analysis, yet it quadruples the beauty and the price of a flower. We have branch shops in the provinces but none of our first class work is done outside Paris. You cannot get the style anywhere else.”

No statistics could be obtained regarding the number of flower makers in the provinces and even for Paris the figures in the census of 1900 are not complete. The Employers’ Syndicate, however, includes 500 shops in its membership, and in addition to these, Paris contains many small contract shops and some large establishments which are not admitted to the Syndicate.\* The president of

(211 home workers were visited) and this is the only part considered here.

“To M. Arthur Fontaine, permanent head of the Labor Bureau, are due my chief thanks for his kindness and courtesy in furnishing addresses, introductions to factory inspectors and manufacturers, permits to visit trade schools, etc. French flower manufacturers guard their trade secrets very carefully, are indeed so much afraid of foreign competition that it would have been impossible to visit a single workshop without special introductions. M. Fontaine’s communication through Mlle. Milhaud of the official and unpublished government statistics for the use of the Russell Sage Foundation has given this chapter its value.”

\* *Chambre Syndicale des Fleurs et des Plumes.*

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

the Syndicate estimates the total number of women flower makers working in shops and at home in Paris and its surrounding districts, to be 30,000, while the flower and feather makers' union\* believes that there are 28,000 workers in the trade of whom 3,000 are men and 25,000 women. Of these women 15,000, the union estimates, work at home, and 10,000 work in the shops. These figures show that probably more than twice as many women are employed in the artificial flower industry in Paris as in shops and home work in New York.

We are told that the flower trade began to develop in Paris about the middle of the eighteenth century. Only scattered notes are available, however, to show its beginnings. "A man named Joseph Wenzel," says the report of a French association of flower and feather manufacturers,† "was the first person to manufacture artificial flowers, about 1750, using silk and fine cotton material for the purpose. The novelty had a universal vogue in France from the very beginning. It is said that the Comte d'Artois, who wished to win favor with the Queen, conceived the idea of ordering from Wenzel some white roses of which the petals represented the initials of Marie Antoinette. Great enthusiasm followed; Wenzel was made Merchant to the Queen; this fashion in

\* L'Industrie Florale.

† Société pour l'Assistance Paternelle aux Enfants Employés dans les Industries des Fleurs et des Plumes. Report of May 23rd, 1909.

## THE TRADE IN PARIS

gifts spread to other gentlemen of the Court, and the Queen was so captivated that she went to Wenzel's workroom to ask him to give her lessons in this delicate and difficult art."

The work of the *Bouquetier*, "maker of bouquets," is also described in the *Dictionnaire portatif des Arts et Métiers* (Lacombe, 1756): "His art consists in imitating with taffeta, batiste, paper, feathers, parchment, silk cocoons, and other suitable materials, all kinds of flowers and plants, and in shading them so skilfully that they may be mistaken for real flowers."

Although these accounts describe the early period of the art the methods of making flowers have remained much the same as they were then, except that women now share in the work. The position of the industry as a "Métier de luxe," however, could not last. "Like other industries the artificial flower trade changed, the cheap article was introduced and overwhelmed the market," wrote L. and M. Bonneff in *La Vie Tragique des Travailleurs*.\* "Production became unbridled. In order to extend the market for artificial flowers, millinery was put within the reach of the most limited purse, and the 'artistic creation' had to give way to the 'camelotte' (cheap and nasty). This evolution was far from unfavorable to the manufacturers. Their business increased, and the new openings for the sale of their

\* Bonneff L. and M.: *La Vie Tragique des Travailleurs*, p. 305, Paris, Jules Rauff, 1908.

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

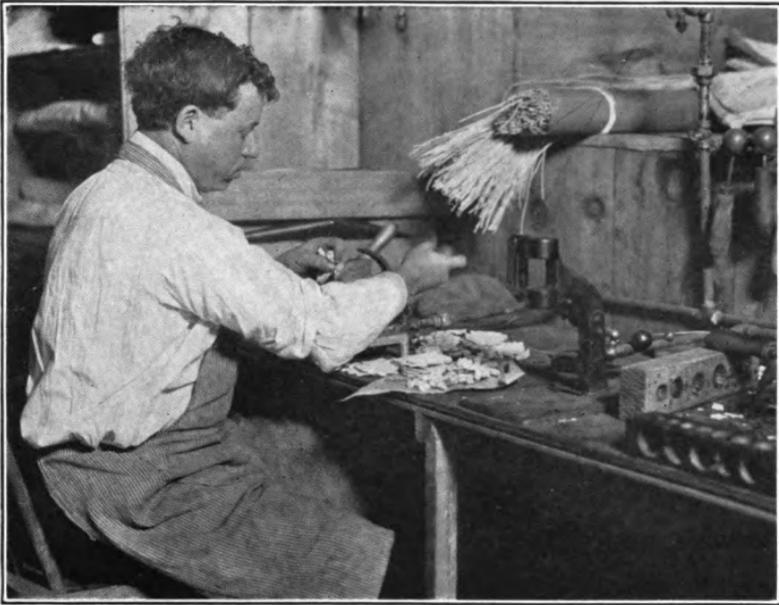
goods made up for the decrease in the sale price. But the workers' wages suffered; it was they who had to pay for cheap millinery. Sub-division of work followed and machinery was introduced."

### PROCESSES AND SHOP CONDITIONS

The main processes of the trade are similar in Paris and in New York. These are starching, cutting, dyeing, preparing, making, branching, and packing, and in name, at least, the division of these tasks between men and women is the same in the two cities. The starching of the cloth, the cutting, and dyeing are done usually by men;\* preparing, making, branching, and packing by women. As in New York, the preparation of such material as stamens, pistils, cloth, and wire, rank as separate trades. The methods of work in the Paris shops, as in New York, vary according to the grade of flower made.

The best "specialties" made are roses and "le naturel," such as hortensea, orchids, peonies, poppies, geraniums, and bachelor's buttons. The other products made are small flowers, such as lilacs, forget-me-nots, heather, and lilies of the valley, foliage, fruit, flowers for decoration, and celluloid and bead flowers for funeral wreaths. Fleurs de luxe, flowers of the first quality, are all

\* One woman dyer was seen at a large factory at work with five other dyers, all men. In one factory all the dyers were women; the employer said that this was because men dyers were heavy drinkers, but the investigator thought that the more likely reason was the lower cost of women's work.



CRIMPING PETALS, NEW YORK



A WORKROOM IN A ONE-TIME RESIDENCE, NEW YORK



## THE TRADE IN PARIS

made in small workrooms, or by home workers employed by them, while fleurs moyennes (middle grade), and fleurs camelottes (cheap grade), are made either in small shops owned by entrepreneurs,—women subcontractors,—or in large establishments of the factory type.

These small contract shops are found in large numbers in suburban districts near the homes of the working classes. But the chief flower factories in Paris are situated in the older business section of the city in the great central wholesale districts. They are housed in old buildings which are often dark and dirty, and their narrow passageways make the fire risk great. The sanitary conditions in 15 shops visited by our investigator, however, were with one exception reported as "fair" or "good," but in the rooms where gas was used in connection with the work the temperature was found to be not always healthful.

The best quality flowers are frequently made in small family workrooms, the husband and wife taking an active part in the business. Often their family has been in the trade for generations and pride in their art is a part of their life. The wife directs the women workers personally, gathering flowers in her garden as models for the workroom. Her husband oversees the dyeing, devising new and secret processes. The workers are few, well trained, comparatively well paid, and employed the year round and often for a life-time. They love their work, which is for them a craft in the

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

best sense of the word. This, it is said, was formerly the typical Parisian flower shop.

In the records of the investigation a small rose shop of this grade is described. Here it is said the most beautiful roses in the world are made. The visitor found Mme. A. and her married sister, both refined, gracious, and well dressed women, sitting each at a daintily arranged little table on opposite sides of the reception salesroom, working, one at a moss rose, and one at a yellow tea rose. The real flowers stood in water beside them. The room was attractive and richly furnished, and there were other flowers in vases. The artificial flowers were kept in sliding drawers in cases against the wall. Mme. A. explained that she had seen the moss rose on the street that morning, and had been eager to reproduce it. She had copied even the crumpled, faded edges of the buds, and it was difficult to say whether her rose or the real rose was the more beautiful. On each table was the usual flat rubber pad, the potato standard into which the stem of the half made rose was stuck, the gas heater, the long-handled goffer with the ball on the end for hollowing the petals, etc., pincers for crimping, and a paint box and brush for retouching the finished roses from nature. These last are found only in establishments of this order. Usually all retouching of the petals is done by the dyer and shader before making. Mme. A. had learned the trade from her mother. She had a married daughter who made

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flowers at home and another who was a sculptress of talent. She said the secret of flower making was the rotary movement of the fingers of the left hand in winding stems and moulding buds. She herself works four or five hours to make a rose (apart from the process of dyeing, etc.), she explained, and added, "You must love flowers and love your trade to succeed; apprenticeship lasts all your life."

In the main workroom of the shop were five women: one apprentice, and four workers of long standing, the one of twenty years' service acting as the forewoman. All were making blue roses, an order from a milliner. Mme. A. said she employed a dozen or so married women at home, all of whom she had trained through an apprenticeship of three years. In two smaller rooms two men and an apprentice boy were working on the preliminary processes of preparing the cloth, cutting petals, and dyeing. Only the finest batiste, nainsook, and organdie, such as are required for fine lingerie, are used. Thick starch paste is made, and after the material is soaked in it the cloth is stretched on frames and dried in a hot closet. When dry it is folded, laid on a flat lead pad, and a die of the required shape slipped over it. This is struck with a heavy hammer, thus cutting the batiste or organdie into petals, great care being taken that the edges shall be finely marked. The dyer was a man of forty-five or fifty, who said he had done nothing but dye flowers since the age of

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seven. The petals are dyed a few at a time, squeezed between the palms of the hands, tinted again with a brush, and then dried on blotting papers. Aniline dyes are not used, but instead the shop has its own special process of preparing colors. At the time of the visit the dyer was tinting yellow rose petals from a real rose that stood in a glass on his table. "You must always have the rose before you or know it by heart," he said.

Nothing not absolutely perfect was allowed to leave these workrooms. Flowers were sold directly to exclusive and fashionable milliners as well as to wholesale agents; often they were unmounted. The workers liked best to make roses from nature, and the shop was full of many beautiful finished products each almost lovelier than nature itself. Except the foliage, all parts of the flower, including the stamens, were made on the premises.

Such a shop has no counterpart in New York, nor are there many in Paris, and even the number of these is said to be decreasing. Nevertheless, they set a high standard of artistic work for French flower makers, and thus their influence is greater than their numbers. The best of our New York establishments resemble more the large commercial shops of Paris, where the medium grade of French flowers are made, the medium grade in France corresponding to the best product in America.

Some machinery and a great deal of home work

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are characteristic of the large commercial shops. It is interesting in a discussion of women's work to note that the wife of the employer often takes an active part with him in the technical phases of the trade as well as in the business management of the shop. Each department has its foreman and forewoman (*première*), the former to supervise the cutting and dyeing, and the latter to take charge of the making and mounting, or branching. The foremen and forewomen supervise all the workers and distribute the work, marking in each worker's book the number of the model, the time of beginning and finishing, the number of gross, and the price. Each shop has at least one dyeing room, a hot closet for drying, a cutting room where machine crimping is also sometimes done, and one or more large workrooms for making and mounting,—sometimes a separate room for each type of flower, as for instance, the "rose room." In the stock room with its counter and shelves, materials are kept to be handed to the forewoman for distribution. Usually adjoining is a large store room where completed flowers are packed in light wooden boxes as soon as they are brought from the workroom.

It is unnecessary to describe the processes in detail but certain touches in the investigator's report are interesting. Each woman makes the whole flower, but branching is done by other workers. The workers wear white linen aprons and sit on stools at long tables, with their various tools

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before them. The rosemakers, when the petals are ready, attach the inner ones to a wire stem, stick its end into their potato standard, and add petals, crimp the edges, and form the flower as it hangs head downwards before them. The fingers are used a great deal, with a characteristic rotary movement of the thumb and finger of the left hand. Because this is considered the first principle of flower making, apprentices are made to practice it every day.

An example of this type of shop was an important establishment in a wholesale district in Paris. It occupied seven floors, with the offices on the first, retail salesrooms on the second, and workrooms and store rooms on the other five. In the busy season 300 workers are employed and in the slack season, 200. The cutting and crimping of fine flowers was done by hand, but the shop was equipped with modern machines for these processes on cheaper flowers of certain types. Usually one worker prepared and made the whole flower, and another did the branching. The workers sat on stools at long tables, on which were placed the rubber pad, and the bowl of paste, potato standard, gas lamp, goffers, and pincers. The factory was clean and light, and the proprietor, smug, hard-faced, and well-groomed, affected great solicitude for the workers. He is a prominent member of the Employers' Syndicate, and takes apprentices from this association. Here once more, as in the rose shop described above, the investi-

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gator was told that the first principle of flower making was the rotary movement of the thumb and forefinger of the left hand, and that apprentices practice it with great regularity. The piece-work rates in this establishment were calculated on a basis of 12 cents an hour. The forewoman got 200 francs a month (\$40) and a percentage on the work done by the girls.

The owner said that home work was unreliable and that he depended upon it as little as possible. He had two branch factories in Paris and others in the provinces. Yet in spite of the excellent physical conditions of this factory and the plausible statements of the owner in regard to home work, comments of the workers cast doubt upon his sincerity. "The place is a boîte," \* said one. "One can't earn her living there." "He is one of the worst of employers." "He gives out an enormous amount of home work, a great deal to convents."

Methods in large factories which produce the cheapest grade of flowers differ from those making the medium grade in that the cloth is prepared elsewhere, and then often dyed in the piece instead of first having been cut into petals. More work is done by machines than in the better grade of shops and the number of home workers is larger. One of these shops is thus described: The work-rooms were situated on two floors around a rather dirty court. They were almost empty at the date

\* Slang for a "horrid hole."

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

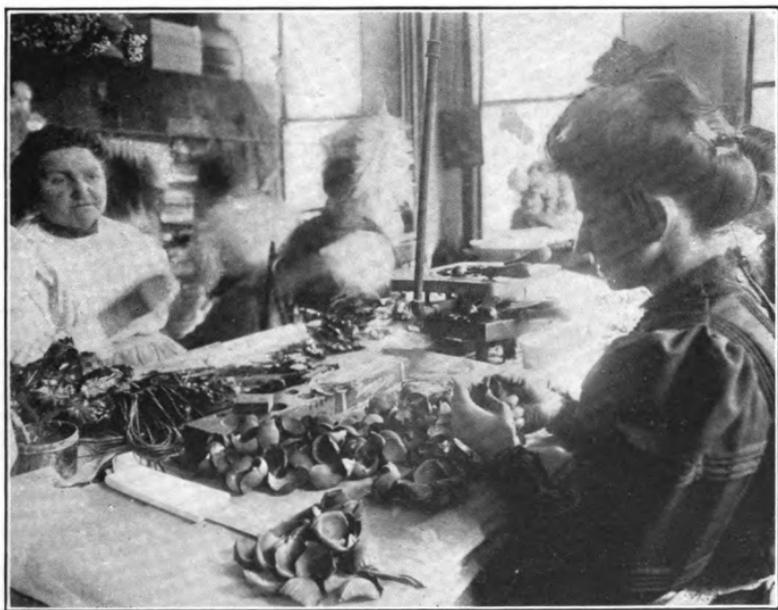
of the visit in July. In the season, however, 50 workers are employed in the shop, and 400 home workers. The employer refused to state wages, but a notice on the wall of the workroom read: "Workers who earn less than \$3.60 per week will be dismissed, prices having been calculated on a basis of 70 cents per day." This daily sum apparently allowed a margin between the daily estimate and the minimum weekly production expected.\* The cloth was bought all prepared, the dyeing being done mostly in the piece, and the cutting and crimping wholly by machinery. The making was all done by home workers, also part of the branching. This factory is considered one of the worst in Paris in regard to wages and workmanship. Good workers cite it as a place where, in spite of the sign on the wall, you cannot earn 40 cents a day, and where no good worker would go willingly. Yet the visitor made this comment on the product of the establishment: "Flowers seen here were distinctly above the level of those in New York tenements and would seem of good quality in America."

The small contract shops conducted by entrepreneurs represent a different type of establishment. Sometimes the owner has been a home worker, who now employs young girls to help her. The only processes done in these small shops are the making and the branching, the petals having

\* This was evidently not a statement of wage rates, but a scheme for speeding up the workers.



ROSE MAKERS, NEW YORK



PREPARING THE PETALS, NEW YORK



## THE TRADE IN PARIS

been prepared, cut, and dyed in the larger shops from which the contractor has received her work.

### SEASONS AND WAGES

The seasons in the flower trade in Paris vary according to changes in fashion, and types of "specialties," and the statements of workers and manufacturers on this subject are by no means uniform. (In some shops of the best grade and in factories where both flowers and feathers were made, manufacturers reported that workers were employed throughout the year. In the medium grade establishments they said that probably a third were laid off, and in the cheap shops, two-thirds or more. As an illustration of the irregularity of employment of shop and home workers alike government investigators cited the fact that of 170 home workers, 111 were unemployed at some time during the year. Of 87 reporting definitely on the subject of loss of time, 31 lost from one to two months; 35, from three to five months; and 21, six months or more. The busiest season precedes the spring millinery trade. Work on flowers for exportation may begin in November, while those for France give employment beginning in January. By Easter or Whitsunday, the spring season ends. Flowers for winter hats are made in July, August, or September, but employment at this time is very irregular, depending upon the fashions. It is becoming the custom now for French flower makers to learn the feather

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trade as a resource for slack season, whereas formerly they could make flowers the year round. Even now it appears that the proportion of workers employed steadily through the dull season is larger in Paris than in New York.)

As in New York, employers during the busy season give out flowers to their shop hands to take home at night and on Sundays. They say they must fill their orders and that this extra work is a blessing to the girls since they must earn what they can when trade is brisk in order to save up for the bad season. The girls give a different explanation, saying they have to take the work or they would lose their places. They complain, too, that employers always give them the most difficult and unsatisfactory models to make at home. They say, however, that they could not support themselves without this extra work, thus indirectly revealing an inadequate standard of wages in the trade.

Information about wages in the shops was not comprehensive. Many persons interviewed, including workers, investigators, and a factory inspector, stated that 40 cents a day was approximately the average wage for the trade as a whole, while for the best specialties the workers received from 60 cents to \$1.00 a day. After three years of apprenticeship a flower maker is expected to earn 60 cents a day in the season, and later, after more experience, \$1.00 or \$1.20. Employers interviewed emphasized the maximum possibilities

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in the busy season. The estimates of five are given.

- |  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| A. Best flowers, maximum earnings....                      | \$14 a week.          |
| B. Best flowers, \$1.00 or \$1.20 a day..                  | \$6.00-\$7.00 a week. |
| C. Roses (average grade), 90 cents or<br>\$1.00 a day..... | \$5.40-\$6.00 a week. |
| D. Medium grade, 12 cents per hour,<br>\$1.00 a day.....   | \$6.00 a week.        |
| E. Feathers and foliage, \$5.00 average;<br>in season..... | \$6.00-\$10 a week.   |

Flower makers interviewed by Miss Sergeant happened all to be skilled workers who had served a three years' apprenticeship. Four reported the following wages:

- |  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| I. Maker of fine flowers; aged thirty-eight; twenty-one years in trade; is now head woman in small factory at \$1.20 per day or....                                  | \$7.20 a week.        |
| II. Ostrich feathers, supplemented by wheat making; aged forty; 60 cents to \$1.00 a day.....  | \$3.60-\$6.00 a week. |
| III. Feathers and flowers; aged thirty; seventeen years in trade and seven years in same shop; counts on 80 cents per day the year round, and on \$1.40 in season... | \$4.80-\$8.40 a week. |
| IV. Rose maker; aged twenty-four; eight years' experience since apprenticeship. Total for twelve weeks, shown in her book of earnings, \$61.86 or about.....         | \$5.16 a week.        |

If we may judge from these few instances, backed by the statements of those familiar with

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the trade, \$10 a week is a rare wage, while a large number doubtless earn less than \$5.00. Nevertheless, United States census figures already quoted showed that about 40 per cent of the workers earned less than \$5.00 in a busy week in the year, while only about 13 per cent received \$10 or more. The census average in the United States for all flower makers sixteen years of age and over was \$6.20. Data about French flower makers' earnings are not comprehensive enough to be comparable and yet they do not prove that the scale in Paris compared with New York payrolls, is as low as the American manufacturers claim.

### COST OF LIVING

In estimating the comparative value of wages it is important to know the cost of living in Paris. While these were difficult data to obtain during so brief and limited an investigation, certain illustrative information was secured as fairly representative of conditions there. The secretary of the women's union in the trade gave the following food budget for factory workers living alone. She called it the budget of the "rush season," implying that food must be reduced when the season is over.

Breakfast.....	\$ .03
Lunch—Soup.....	.02
Cutlet.....	.08
Wine.....	.02
Bread.....	.01
Vegetable and dessert.....	.03
	<hr/>
Total.....	.16

## THE TRADE IN PARIS

Afternoon—Bread and chocolate.....	.02
Dinner—Meat.....	.06
Bread.....	.01
Cheese or fruit.....	.03
Wine.....	.02
Total.....	.12
Total food per day.....	\$.33

This is an estimate based, to be sure, on the sort of reliable knowledge which the secretary of a trade union is likely to possess, but it does not represent actual expenditures. The budget of a woman who made flowers at home is interesting because it is real, and not estimated. She was evidently, however, exceptionally economical, and must have been deprived of many real necessities. She was a widow of sixty-two who earned \$60 a year (20 cents a day) making small flowers, and received in addition \$3.00 per month, or \$36 a year from the city. This "Assistance Publique" had been given her since the death of a brother who had formerly helped her by a small regular contribution. For the love of old associations she lived in an expensive district, but her one room was very small. It was spotless and shiny, for her rent and her soap were her only extravagances. She preferred "to go hungry rather than to do without soap." She never went out except for necessary errands. Clothes were given her occasionally; she never bought them. In the year preceding the interview she said she had made over

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more than two dozen pairs of old stockings. She had bought almost no meat except an occasional four cents' worth for soup, which was her chief diet. Her yearly budget follows:

Bread, 3 cents per day.....	\$10.95
Milk, 2 cents per day.....	7.30
Coffee, 20 cents per month.....	2.40
Sugar, 1 kilo a year.....	1.68
Vegetables, potatoes or cress, 2 cents per day.....	7.30
Cheese or egg, 2 cents per day.....	7.30
Soap, washing soda, 20 cents per month.....	2.40
Kerosene, 3 litres a week, 5 months of a year.....	6.00
Butter, 8 cents per week.....	4.16
<hr/>	
Total expenditure for food.....	<b>\$49.49</b>
Rent per year.....	<b>\$4.00</b>
<hr/>	
Total yearly budget.....	<b>\$53.49</b>
Total yearly income.....	<b>\$96.00</b>

Comparison between the cost of living in New York and in Paris would be impossible with so little data on this subject for either city.

One method of comparison is to ascertain the rank of the artificial flower industry among other occupations for women in the two cities. In New York the flower makers' earnings are approximately equal to the general scale for all manufacturing pursuits grouped together. In Paris, flower making seems to rank among the better paid trades. Dressmaking is the most important occupation for Parisian women. It is said that in the large establishments the majority earn 60 cents a day, and

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the highest daily wage to workroom hands is 80 cents, \$1.00, or \$1.20. The small dressmaking shops pay from 40 to 80 cents. Similar rates apparently prevail in the printing trades and in millinery. In cotton mills the earnings are less. In state factories where tobacco and matches are manufactured the workers are organized and average \$1.00 a day, a wage said to be higher than in other trades.\* The flower makers' earnings apparently do not suffer by comparison with these other occupations except in the case of workers on tobacco and matches in state factories. Of course, in Paris as in New York, the low earnings of women workers are a grave social problem. "In Paris a worker who earns 75 cents a day may be considered well paid" (in comparison with the general level of women's earnings), writes a student of social conditions.† "Nevertheless, if unemployment in slack season (105 days per year including Sundays and holidays) be discounted, the annual earnings for the 260 remaining days do not exceed \$195 or about 53 cents per day. If the woman allows 18 cents each for two principal meals, a low estimate, certainly, if her rent is \$30 per year and her light costs only \$2.50, with certain necessary expenses she will be unable to make the two ends meet at the end of the year.

\* These statements were made to Miss Sergeant by Mlle. Milhaud and were supported by references to L. M. Campain, *La Femme dans les organisations ouvrières*; Milhaud, *L'Ouvrière en France*; Bulletin de l'office du Travail, etc., and P. de Maroussem, *Le Vêtement à Paris*, p. 520.

† Benoist, *Les ouvrières de l'aiguille à Paris*, p. 35.

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

### HOME WORK

( Home workers outnumber shop employes in the flower trade in Paris, as they do in New York; and, as in New York, conditions in the shops cannot be thoroughly understood if the home workers are left out of account. Between the home-work system in Paris and in New York, however, the differences are marked. First is the fact that the French home worker is not at the bottom of the scale from the point of view of skill. Of 211 home workers investigated by Mlle. Milhaud, 147, or 70 per cent, had been in flower shops before working at home; half of these had worked more than five years in shops, in addition to the time of their apprenticeship. The length of this employment is in striking contrast to the practice in New York, where of the mothers found engaged in the industry at home only 8 per cent had ever worked in flower shops. Expert work is by no means uncommon among Parisian home workers, while in New York the typical home work is of the cheapest grade. Home work is indeed more ingrained in life and custom in Paris than in New York. The home worker who has learned a trade before her marriage continues it afterward in a spirit of interest in her work and pride in her skill which prevents many of the evils of "sweating" found among the unskilled workers in New York City tenements.)

The second difference between New York and Paris is the cleanliness and attractiveness of the

## THE TRADE IN PARIS

rooms of the Parisian home workers. This is said to be more noticeable among flower makers than among workers in other industries.

The third marked difference is that (whereas in New York nearly half the home workers investigated were found to be children under sixteen years of age, in Paris the work of children still in school, under twelve or thirteen years of age, was an almost unknown occurrence.) Mlle. Milhaud could recall only one case, a child seven years old, of very poor family, who was kept out of school to work. She knew of a boy of eleven who helped after school, and of two children who helped on Thursday, the day of their half holiday. If these facts are typical (and they are the statements of an investigator of long experience), (this absence of child labor is doubtless due in large measure to the superior grade of work in Paris. It is the cheap quality of the flowers made in the tenements of New York that makes possible the use of the unskilled fingers of little children.)

Of 208 Parisian home workers reporting on this point, 44 were single women, 41 widows, four divorced or deserted married women, and 119 married women living with their husbands. The husbands of 55 of these latter were workingmen, employed mainly in skilled and well-paid occupations, such as jewelry, flower making, machinery, and printing. Their wives' wages were often supplementary and not indispensable. In about 12 cases the workers were the wives of day laborers,

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

and their earnings, although supplementary, were necessary. Statistics were not given for the remainder of the group of married women. Of the 41 widows, 18 shared the home responsibilities with another member of the family, 14 lived alone and were self-supporting, and nine were heads of households with old people or children depending upon them for support. Of the single women, 28 lived at home and their earnings supplemented the family income, eight lived alone and were obliged to be self-supporting, and eight helped in the support of others.

Some home workers secure the flowers directly from the factory, and it is said that piece-work rates for these flowers equal shop rates for the same model. A large number, however, get their orders from the entrepreneur, who "farms out" work, thus saving the employer much time and trouble. The contractor is hated by the workers, who believe that she makes great profits by forcing their wages down. Often, however, the contractor is very poor; her percentage is said to be small and the worker may earn as much as though she had spent time going to the factory for her materials.

Differences in the grades of flowers are so great that a comparison of piece-work rates in New York and in Paris is futile. Unless we know how long it takes to make a flower, the rate per piece is meaningless as a contribution to wage statistics. But a glance through a long list of Parisian rates reveals

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prices very like those reported in New York tenements. For example, home workers in New York frequently stated such rates as 3 cents a gross for cheap violets, and 5, 10, or 15 cents for more elaborate ones. The Paris list showing piece-work rates for violets is as follows:

Quality	Rates per gross
For decoration.....	6 cents
Parma, first quality, large.....	20 cents
Parma, first quality, small.....	18 cents
Parma, first quality, black.....	15 cents
Parma, ordinary.....	5 cents
Russian violets.....	1 cent

In judging the earnings of French home workers, it should be remembered how large a proportion of those interviewed in the investigation had been employed in factories before pursuing the occupation at home, and were considered skilled flower makers. The government investigators in Paris believed that this proportion of women who had worked in shops was typical throughout the home industry, and that the statistics of earnings given on page 172 (Table 32) were representative of home workers generally in this trade.

More than half of the women, 48, earned from \$30 to \$90 in a year; 24, or slightly more than a fourth, earned more than \$100. The report shows in greater detail that one rose maker earned \$360 and one maker of wild flowers (*le naturel*) about \$285, both exceptional. Of the women

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**TABLE 32.—YEARLY EARNINGS OF 85 PARISIAN WOMEN WORKING AT HOME ALONE, ON THREE SPECIALTIES IN ARTIFICIAL FLOWERS**

Yearly earnings	HOME WORKERS WHOSE YEARLY EARNINGS WERE AS SPECIFIED FROM WORK ON			Total
	“Natu- ral” flowers	Roses	Small flowers	
\$30 and not over \$90 . . .	9	21	18	48
Over \$90 and not over \$100 . . .	5	5	3	13
Over \$100 . . . . .	10	14	..	24
Total . . . . .	24	40	21	85

who had fellow workers in making the flowers at home, the government investigator estimated that slightly more than a fourth earned from \$30 to \$90 in a year, and three-fourths earned from \$90 to \$160 or more. All these statistics must be used cautiously, for the difficulty of estimating the yearly income of a seasonal worker is doubtless as great in Paris as in New York. The custom of keeping a book of earnings is, however, very general among French flower makers, and as the data were in many cases secured from these written records, the inaccuracies are minimized. Nevertheless, it is probable that Table 33, showing the daily wages in the busy season instead of a yearly wage, is more exact, as no estimate of lost time is needed in connection with it.

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**TABLE 33.—DAILY EARNINGS IN THE BUSY SEASON  
OF 79 PARISIAN WOMEN WORKING AT HOME  
ALONE ON THREE SPECIALTIES IN  
ARTIFICIAL FLOWERS**

Daily earnings	HOME WORKERS WHOSE DAILY EARNINGS WERE AS SPECIFIED FROM WORK ON				Total
	"Natural" flowers	Roses	Small flowers	Others <sup>a</sup>	
20 cents or less . . . . .	1	1	4	3	9
Over 20 cents and not over 40 cents . . . . .	3	8	9	6	26
Over 40 cents and not over 60 cents . . . . .	3	11	2	4	20
Over 60 cents and not over 80 cents . . . . .	7	4	1	4	16
Over 80 cents and not over \$1.00 . . . . .	2	3	..	1	6
Over \$1.00 . . . . .	..	2	..	..	2
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>79</b>

<sup>a</sup> Includes foliage, fruit, feathers, and flowers for decoration, celluloid and bead flowers.

The "median" wage,—half the workers earning less,—according to this table, is between 41 and 60 cents a day, or more specifically, according to the detailed data, between 41 and 50 cents. These figures would indicate roughly a median weekly wage of \$2.40 to \$3.00. The corresponding median wage in New York lies between \$4.00 and \$5.00, and that not for one worker but for a household. The Paris figures show individual earnings.

Details of the earnings and the experience of one or two of the workers included in these tables are

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illuminating.\* One was that of a girl, twenty-eight years old, who made the best quality roses. She had worked for eleven years at Maison M., an excellent house, which employs 60 workers. The best workers are paid at the rate of 14 cents per hour in the shop. This girl decided to work at home because she was over-tired. Her brother was a traveling salesman, and her mother, whom she helped to support, a widow. She earned in a year less at home than in the factory, but explained this as due not to differences in rates but to a bad year for the trade, ill health, and lack of the overtime she would have had in the workroom. Statements of her earnings follow.

### MONTHLY EARNINGS AT HOME OF A PARISIAN FLOWER MAKER FROM NOVEMBER, 1907, TO OCTOBER, 1908

1907	{	November .....	\$32.14
		December .....	
1908		January .....	29.29
		February .....	29.00
		March .....	29.65
		April .....	20.00
		May .....	13.00
		June..... (No work)	
		July .....	14.00
		August..... (No work)	
		September.....	11.17
		October (1 week).....	7.54
Total earnings for the period.....			\$185.79

\* Miss Sergeant interviewed a home worker who made bead flowers and thus described the conditions of her home and her work:

"Mme. L.: Pretty woman, twenty-eight years old, living in tiny apartment of three neat rooms, near the cemetery known as Père-

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During the period of nearly a year this flower maker worked only 31 weeks. Her average weekly earnings when at work were, therefore, \$5.99.

### SAMPLE MONTH, SHOWING WEEKLY EARNINGS AT HOME OF THE SAME FLOWER MAKER

1908 Week of January 4th.....	\$3.30
Week of January 11th.....	8.40
Week of January 18th.....	8.54
Week of January 25th.....	9.05
	\$29.29
Total for January.....	\$29.29

### MONTHLY EARNINGS IN WORKROOM OF THE SAME FLOWER MAKER FROM DECEMBER, 1906, TO OCTOBER, 1907, INCLUSIVE

1906 December.....	\$28.88
1907 January.....	25.69
February.....	26.10
March.....	25.55
April.....	21.75
May.....	13.03
June.....	21.92
July.....	36.51
August..... (No work)	
September.....	28.98
October.....	9.61
	\$238.02
Total income for 11 months.....	\$238.02
Average monthly wage (excluding August)	23.80

Lachaise. Husband earns \$1.00 per day; Mme. L. earns from 20 to 60 cents per day in making bead flowers for funeral wreaths. Says pay for leaves and wire frames is so poor that when, as sometimes happens, she has a private order for a wreath, she buys them ready made. She works on Sundays and holidays. Whole family is asleep by 7:30 p. m. and up at 5:30 a. m. Counts on nine or ten hours' work per day. Five children under seven years (two boys, three

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Thus she earned sometimes as little as \$3.30 in a week, and at other times more than \$9.00. Her case reminds one of the skilled brancher interviewed in New York whose wages at home approached shop rates more nearly than is usual among home workers, but whose income from home work tended to fluctuate just as did the earnings of this Parisian girl.

Another was a woman forty-five years old, whose husband, a tinman, earned \$1.00 a day. They had a daughter of eighteen, a vestmaker, who had earned 45 cents a day during the six weeks just passed but who before that had earned only 30 cents. There were three other children—a boy of sixteen years whom the parents supported, a boy of thirteen, apprenticed, and a boy of four at school. The total family earnings were \$501.52, and of these slightly more than \$100 was earned by the mother by work at home on flowers. The figures on the opposite page show her monthly earnings, making foliage and occasionally lilacs.

These earnings seem to be approximately equal to the wages of home workers in New York, except that the work was steadier throughout the year than is usual here. To make flowers all summer would seem exceptionally good fortune to a New York home worker.

girls; two are babies too young to walk) and another on way. Old invalid mother, who was formerly a washerwoman. Two elder children in school but return for lunch. Two boys sleep in room (separate beds) with grandmother; mother and father and three youngest (in cribs) sleep in larger bedroom. In tiny kitchen they live and work. Rooms are so clean that they are attractive."

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### MONTHLY EARNINGS OF A PARISIAN HOME WORKER ON ARTIFICIAL FLOWERS FROM NOVEMBER, 1907, TO OCTOBER, 1908, INCLUSIVE

1907	November.....	\$8.58
	December.....	13.90
1908	January.....	13.92
	February.....	8.50
	March.....	6.35
	April.. ..	7.74
	May.....	8.34
	June.....	10.50
	July.....	8.81
	August.....	6.95
	September.....	7.21
	October.....	6.18
Total earnings for 12 months.....		\$106.98
Average weekly wages.....		2.06

The hours of work are always so variable when a woman works at home that they defy statistical treatment. Nevertheless, the French investigators report the following on this point:

**TABLE 34.—DAILY HOURS OF WORK OF PARISIAN  
HOME WORKERS ON ARTIFICIAL FLOWERS**

Daily hours of work	WOMEN WORKING AT HOME THE NUMBER OF HOURS SPECIFIED	
	Number	Per cent
Less than 10 hours . . . . .	69	42
10 hours and not more than 12 hours . . . . .	77	47
More than 12 hours . . . . .	18	11
Total . . . . .	164	100

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Hours of labor in flower shops seldom exceed ten. This is the legal limit. No woman and no minor under eighteen may work more than ten hours a day or after 9 p. m. because night work, in the words of a French decree, "ruins health and disorganizes family life." Formerly an exception to this law was permitted in dressmaking, millinery, lingerie, and the fur trade, whereby women over eighteen in these seasonal trades might work until 11 p. m. sixty days in the year, but by a decree in 1910, this exception is now limited to mourning millinery and mourning clothing for women and children.\*

The law provides for one full holiday in seven days, and a rest period of one hour in each day's work. The employment of children under twelve is prohibited and children who work before they are thirteen must have secured a school certificate and a doctor's certificate. Other sections of the law concern ventilation, cleanliness, guarding of machinery, and indemnity for accident. The manufacturer of artificial flowers is not tempted to violate the law by lengthening the day in the shop. It is more convenient to have the work taken home, and the workers may, and do, continue to make flowers "until midnight or later."

Legal regulation of the home-work system in France is brief in the telling. The government

\*United States Department of Commerce and Labor. Bulletin of the Bureau of Labor, No. 89, p. 154. July, 1910.

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neither regulates nor inspects the conditions in these home workrooms, except when outsiders are employed for wages. This does not mean, however, that no regulation is needed. That intelligent and thoughtful workers, at least, realize that home work is a dangerous factor in their trade, is indicated by one of the small notices printed and distributed by the flower makers' union which reads: "Avoid women contractors and work in the workroom. Your earnings will increase."

## TRADE UNIONISM

Trade union organization is not a popular idea among French flower makers. They are said to share with milliners the reputation of being the most light-headed and frivolous of the working women of Paris. Nevertheless, a few at least have shown themselves capable of devotion to the cause represented in the labor movement.

Two labor unions exist in the industry in Paris. The largest and most important, l'Industrie Florale, is called the men's union though theoretically for both sexes. The women members, however, are few. In 1896 a women's union, Fleuristes et Plumassières (flower and feather makers), was founded with the aid of l'Industrie Florale. It is directed by two intelligent flower makers, but its membership is not increasing. Between this organization and the men's union is a difference of opinion as to whether it is better to have men and women organized together in one union. The

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women consider that fewer women would join and that in any case their interests would suffer in uniting men and women in one organization. The men do not agree with them and in support of their contention that women should be members of the men's union they cite the decision of the socialist congress of Amiens that only one union in a single trade might join the labor exchange. The women's union has been weakened by this contention, and also by its failure to maintain a co-operative work-room which the women had organized after long planning and for which they had raised the sum of a thousand francs. Its financial failure after brief trial was attributed by some of its critics to lack of capital, by others to lack of unity of action and business training among the women organizers. Few in number as the union members are, however, and discouraging as some of their efforts have been, they are much in earnest in their desire to help other women.

Mademoiselle B., a leader in the women's union, was one of the organizers of this co-operative factory. She also taught a trade class for apprentices under the auspices of the union. She is now, after twenty-one years' experience, earning \$1.20 a day. Her advanced ideas, she says, have never hurt her chances for employment. She has adopted a child of eight, who is destined by her to be a flower maker and "to help the cause of women."

A pretty girl of twenty-four, Mademoiselle M., is another flower maker who is absorbed in social

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ideas. Although highly skilled, wrote the investigator who met her, very "serious," and spending nothing on frivolity, she has never been able to be wholly self-supporting. Her parents have always provided her with clothing. They now live in Algiers and she might live there and not work, but she prefers to support herself in Paris, and "help her fellow workers to liberate themselves." She occupies a small room with a girl who is studying at the Sorbonne. Her food costs her 50 cents a day.

Of the workers' attitude toward the employers the investigator wrote, "All workers interviewed say that they live in terror of the employer, and don't dare to protest against a bad model,\* or complain if they are not earning enough. Madeline, a pretty girl who believes in unions, told how she once persuaded her fellow workers to refuse to make a very bad model; that is, one on which the piece rates were unfair. The forewoman, secretly sympathetic, encouraged them in rebellion. Madeline described the harrowing day in which they all sat idle and trembling, the electric bell constantly ringing to call the forewoman to the office, the

\* The models are created by the employer, by the forewoman, or sometimes by a clever worker. The commissionaire, or wholesale agent, then examines it, and if he accepts it a piece rate of payment for making it is fixed in consultation between employer, forewoman, and commissionaire, according to the time taken by the most skilled worker to make it. The slower workers always suffer in consequence. In this connection it is interesting to recall the plan used in a book-binding establishment in New York. At the suggestion of the women's trade union, the piece rates on a new job are fixed not by timing the most rapid worker, but by averaging the rate of production of three workers, one rapid, one slow, and one of average speed.

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employer finally coming up to swear at them. He was in the end obliged to yield, but not before he had made the forewoman confess that she had supported the girls in their insubordination. Even when obliged to leave because of low pay, the girls are afraid to give the reason to employers." Yet in spite of the helplessness of the individual woman worker and the courageous effort of the stronger among them, the "pretty and frivolous" and the "sweated" workers (sometimes these are one and the same) are quite unconvinced of the desirability of joining the union.

The demands made by the union are shown most clearly in small notices, "papillons," 2 by 3 inches in size, which are distributed widely by the men's union, in their effort to educate the workers in ideas of organization and solidarity.

"Flower makers, foliage makers, feather workers! If you wish to see your condition improve, the only method is to organize yourselves."

"Instead of doing bad work (sabotage), let us do artistic work."

"Everything is going up but our wages; let us bestir ourselves."

"English workmen work slowly. Let's follow their example."

"Every birth in a worker's family increases the sum of producers and of misery."

"Every birth in a rich man's home increases the number of parasites."

"Let's limit the number of our children unless—[a manufacturer's name] will provide them with nursing bottles."

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"A porter [in a factory] likes beefsteak as well as a dyer does, and a dyer likes it as well as his employer."

"We must limit the number of apprentices and young untrained workers" (*petites mains*).

"Every Union member should also be a member of a co-operative society."

"We are laid off because we work too hard in the good season."

"Avoid women contractors and work in the workroom. Your earnings will increase."

"When we are obliged to work overtime we must demand 50% more."

"Union makes the strength of Capitalism. Solidarity amongst the workers will counter-balance this."

"Workrooms must be periodically disinfected."

"No trade is more adapted than ours for earning money, for nothing is more poetic than Flowers and Birds? ? ?"

"Socrates drank out of his hand. When we are laid off we have a glass, but nothing to put in it."

## APPRENTICESHIP AND TRAINING

The interest of the women's union in the establishment of a class for apprentices shows how important, from the workers' point of view, is the opportunity to be well trained for the trade. It is in the variety of opportunities to secure this training that Paris conditions offer the greatest contrast to New York. In France a young girl may learn the trade in one of four ways: by apprenticeship in the workroom, by an apprenticeship to a sub-contractor, by learning from her flower-making parents, or by attending a class, a school, or a convent. Of 199 home workers questioned on this point by Mlle. Milhaud only 21

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had served no apprenticeship. Of the remaining 178, 77, or about two in five, had learned in the workroom; 55, or nearly a third, had been taught by sub-contractors; 34, or nearly one-fifth, by parents; and only 12 had learned in classes, schools, or convents.

Classes for flower makers are held in two municipal trade schools. The pupils are chosen by competitive examination at the close of the *École Primaire*, at the age of twelve or thirteen years. Instruction is free and the course lasts three years. Small scholarships are provided for some of the pupils. General school work is given in the morning and trade work in the afternoon. The teachers of the two classes visited had been in trade but had had no recent workroom experience. The teacher of one class said that the three years in the school were equivalent to one year in the workroom, but that although on first entering the trade their pupils did not compare favorably with apprentices who had had three years of shop practice, later they were likely to outstrip them, because of the better foundation given in the school work. These classes in flower making attract fewer pupils than other classes in the school. Employers have nothing good to say of them. All who were interviewed regarded them as worthless. "Some statements are open to discussion," said one, "but this is as invariable as the fact that day follows night." Nevertheless, Mlle. Milhaud's conclusion, after completing her

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investigation, was that statistics proved the teachers' contention that their pupils made rapid progress in the trade.

The convent classes which train flower makers are regarded with bitterness by many of the workers, for the work is done by charity children who receive no remuneration and the manufacturer pays the convent but a small price for it. Of five home workers trained in convents, Mlle. Milhaud, who interviewed them, reported that three were at work on badly paid specialties.\*

Apprenticeship to a sub-contractor is a form of workroom training but it is considered undesirable because of the cheap grade of flower handled by sub-contractors. The form of training which employers believe to be most valuable is that given in a flower factory where it is possible to see a variety of models, to measure up to real trade demands, and to acquire speed.

This workroom training is a definite system in the trade in Paris, and employers appear to have given much more attention to the problem than in New York where even the word "apprentice-

\* Miss Sergeant thus reports her interview with two home workers trained in convents:

"One was a concierge who had made nothing but forget-me-nots all her life. Learned in convent which worked for M. Now works for a contractor ten hours per day, earning 25 cents per day; i. e., 25 cents per gross of sprays. This includes making, mounting each spray, five blossoms and one leaf. The other home worker was of Italian extraction. She and her two sisters learned to make violets in a convent. Makes only fine black Parma violets at 15 cents per gross. As she has housework, several children, and a lame husband to attend to, she earns only 10 cents to 15 cents per day."

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ship" is practically unused in the trade. In Paris, in some flower shops though not in all, an unwritten and informal agreement regarding the conditions of a child's apprenticeship is made, and usually kept, between parents and employer. Learners receive 10 cents a day for the first six months, with 5 or 10 cents raise each succeeding six months; 40 cents at the end of two years; and usually 40, sometimes 50 or 60 cents, after three years. The forewoman takes charge of the learners, usually placing them next to experienced workers. Each process is taught, and care is taken to give practice in the deft movement of the left thumb and forefinger. Later the apprentice may become a specialist in some one type of flower. Although this method of training prevails in many establishments, workrooms are now found where "learners" are simply unskilled hands taking part in the production of cheap flowers. Fortunately for the French worker this condition, so usual in New York, is still exceptional in Parisian shops.

To preserve this careful system of training and to extend it, the Employers' Syndicate in 1866 organized the *Société pour l'Assistance Paternelle aux Enfants Employés dans les Industries des Fleurs et des Plumes*. "The object of the society is to insure a good trade apprenticeship and to look after, help, and influence for good by all means that it esteems useful, children employed as apprentices in the flower and feather industries." Apprentices are placed in workrooms and their

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training is supervised by delegates of the society. Free courses are offered in elementary instruction and design for all apprentices in the flower and feather houses. Competitive contests are held and honorary prizes are awarded to employers, teachers, workers, or any others who further the purpose of the society. Private boarding houses are maintained for young girl apprentices whose parents cannot provide for them.

The contract between employer and apprentice, drawn up by this society, carefully defines the details of training and its conditions.\* The employer undertakes to teach the trade "freely and fully" so that at the expiration of the specified term the learner will be able to practice it. He may not require any other tasks nor send her on frequent or distant errands. He must supervise her conduct and treat her gently like a good father ("un bon père de famille"). He must provide her with tools and make it possible for her to take part in the yearly trade competition of the industry. Moreover, he must accept the supervision of a delegate appointed by the society.

The apprentice agrees "to receive with attention, respect, and docility, the lessons and orders of her master." If during her apprenticeship she loses time exceeding a fortnight, for illness or any other cause, she agrees to make it up after the end of her term. Her guardian undertakes to use his

\* See Appendix D, for copy of contract and description of society.

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

authority to keep her in the workroom throughout the period named in the contract, to allow her to be under the supervision of the delegates of the society, and generally to see that she carries out all her obligations under the contract. The first two months are a trial period during which the agreement may be annulled by either side.

The president of the society thus sums up its achievements (1909): "Last year at this same date we declared at this same place that the apprenticeship crisis had been less serious in our manufacture than anywhere else, and we found the principal cause of this consoling state of things to be not only in the absence of machinery, but above all in the forty-three years of constantly renewed effort that our society has made to create for our industries an army of workers and artists, perfectly equipped and always organized for the struggle against foreign competition. We have the great pleasure of announcing that our recruiting has been really excellent this year. Our repeated appeals have found an echo in the homes. It is thus that the number of our apprenticeship contracts has notably increased, and that we have 300 children now under the protection of the society."

Workers of the independent type, however, heartily detest this society. They object to its paternalism and suspect that it is run in the interest of the manufacturers, who fear unionism and wish to check the freedom of the workers.

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The workers themselves, in 1890, organized an evening class to supply the training, which they say is too often neglected in the workroom. The class was held one evening a week and usually numbered about 20, the teacher, who was a flower maker, and her pupils coming direct from their work. They labored under the usual disadvantages of an evening class. At present it has been discontinued, but it was significant as voicing their opinion that the training of workers needs more attention than it receives at present.

As to the fourth method of training, that given to children by flower-making parents, its value must necessarily depend upon the skill of the parents. The method emphasizes, however, the element of tradition which is a marked characteristic of the industry in Paris. The worker brought up to love the trade, to understand its possibilities, will have an efficiency far greater than the drifter who happens to enter a flower shop because she has no preference for any other occupation. "The Parisian succeeds," said one of the French employers interviewed, "because of her exquisite taste. Taste is the most important requisite of success. Good taste and patience and love of the trade—those are the Parisian tradition." These words are a summary and an explanation of the difference between flower making in New York and Paris. Unquestionably the French excel us in the making of a flower and in love of artistic work in this industry. Nowhere

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is this difference seen more clearly than in the methods of teaching learners. It is upon this training of each new generation of workers that the prosperity of the trade in New York or in Paris must depend.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE TRAINING OF FLOWER MAKERS

**I**N contrast to the various methods of supervising apprentices in the artificial flower trade in Paris, the training of flower makers in shops in New York is usually of the most haphazard kind, nor do the workers in New York display that love of their art which is characteristic of the Parisian flower maker. In the majority of establishments here the learner's career is left to chance, and no uniformity of method is found even in the same shop. Only in unusual instances are careful plans carried out. These facts are well known to employers, but no concerted action is taken to remedy the situation. "The trouble with the trade in this country," said one of them, "is that too many are in it who really know nothing about it." He had in mind employers who give more attention to business management than to workmanship. Yet unlike some industries in which learners can find no place, employers in this trade are generally willing to engage green hands, particularly during the "rush" seasons, partly because their employment reduces the labor cost on some of the processes for which no skill and very little practice is needed. "We

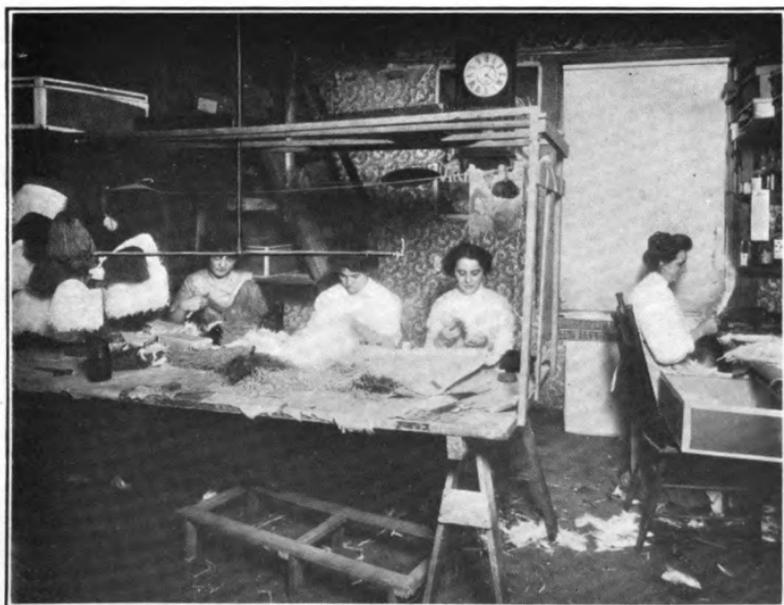
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have to take learners for small cheap work," said a forewoman. "If we have tubing to cut or small violets to make, we cannot put a good hand at them; the cost would be too great." These girls can scarcely be called learners, for to do all the odd jobs in a flower shop which require no experience will not develop a skilled flower maker.

As methods of teaching vary so, they can best be described by discussion of certain representative shops and the workers' reports of their experiences as learners. A large flower and feather factory on Broadway, for instance, had a workroom so organized as to assure closer supervision of learners than we found in any other shop. One hundred and fifty girls were employed, organized into groups of three, one experienced flower maker having charge of two less experienced assistants who prepared the petals for her. The same girls learned fancy feather making when the flower season was over. Learners were paid \$3.00 a week with an increase of 50 cents in two weeks. The forewoman said that they usually received \$5.00 at the end of the first season and that it was possible to do fairly good work at the end of the year, but that it took two years to make an expert. Occasionally she engaged a girl of fourteen, and although it was easier to teach one of fourteen, she preferred girls of sixteen because the factory laws requiring that children under sixteen must stop at 5 o'clock, a half hour ahead of the other workers in the shop, "upset the workroom."



A LEARNER BRINGING LUNCHES TO THE WORKROOM



THE PROCESSES OF FEATHER MAKING



## THE TRAINING OF FLOWER MAKERS

The piece-work system was not adopted in this shop, because of the dissatisfaction it occasioned among the workers. When the styles change, a girl paid by the piece has difficulty in earning full wages until she gets used to the new mode, and as changes are frequent complaints would be many. It was probably due to the careful system of supervision that the automatic "speeding," which the piece-work system is said to accomplish, was found to be unnecessary. Although this group organization has the appearance of the contract system which has proved so great an evil in other trades, it differed from it in the very important detail that wages were paid not by the head worker of the group but directly by the firm.

In an interview with Jennie, one of the workers who had been employed in this shop for two years, an interesting account was given of the methods practiced. She repeated from her point of view the facts previously told us by the forewoman. She said that the work was carefully planned; that the experienced flower maker who taught the two girls was responsible for their work. She was called their "lady." "When we take our work to the forewoman she asks us who is our 'lady' and we tell her. If the work is not right it is she who is scolded." Jennie's sister worked with her for the same "lady." As Jennie had been there longer, however, she did more of the difficult work. Of late she had been making buds for flower centers, and crimping chrysanthemum petals and rose

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

leaves, while her sister crimped only the petals of simple flowers. Their "lady" put the petals together and branched the flowers. Jennie earned \$3.00 a week when she began. After two years she was earning \$4.50. She hoped soon to be a "lady." Visited later during the summer she and her sister both said that they were then working on feathers. The work was organized in the same way as it had been for flower making, the two sisters doing the preparatory processes of stemming, steaming, and pasting.

How rare is the careful organization and method of teaching of the firm just described is indicated by the testimony of a number of other Broadway employers. "I will tell you how it is," said one of them. "In this country you take a girl to learn because you want help—you want to get out the goods. Now when you are paying her \$3.00, and you have a worker teaching her who receives \$15, you naturally have the learner do the odd jobs like the slipping-up and the crimping that must be done on the orders you have on hand. When the girl goes to another place she says she is experienced. They give her a rose to make. Does she know how? Certainly not. She did not have that to do for us. Then she loses her job. That's how we are obliged to teach in this country." A second employer said that it took two years to learn the trade thoroughly, but that girls now-a-days were not taught the whole process. "They learn to be pasters, preparers, slippers-up, etc. Not one girl

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in 10 now knows how to paper wires and formerly learners were always given this work. It pays the firm better to let a girl do but one thing. Sometimes she will be kept at it a whole season, since she gets more speed that way." This view was corroborated by a second employer who said, "The trouble with the trade at present is that if a girl is put at crimping at first she is likely to be kept at that task the whole time she is in business. It isn't that we don't want to teach her, but we must fill our orders." This man's method of engaging and discharging learners showed the ruthlessness of a system that prevails quite generally throughout the trade. At the beginning of the season of 1910 he had taken in a number of new hands, 20 at one time. At the end of the month he discharged all but four. He considered this number a good average, so many are the drifters among the inexperienced. No system of training or supervision encourages them to continue, and the firm plans to get rid of them as soon as its rush weeks are over.

In a shop where different workers were employed for different processes the employer expressed the opinion that such specialization is inevitable. "It's the American way. A girl who does one thing all the time does it better and faster than if she combined them all and made the whole flower." Girls, on the other hand, complained bitterly of this method saying that it was monotonous and gave them no chance to get ahead.

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They said that the fault lay with the forewomen who found it inconvenient to teach girls thoroughly and so kept them at a single task when once they had learned it. While this method seemed as a rule to be acquiesced in by employers because it was the "American way," nevertheless, some of them deplored the narrowness of such training and complained of the difficulty of getting "all round" workers. Some of them distinctly disagreed with the theory that a high degree of specialization was profitable. "You get in a certain order," said one, "and then your girls can't do the work. They ought to be taught everything. But we never can do tedious work in this country. We have to produce fast."

Some girls had had practice in the simple but unskilled processes of making cheap flowers in home work, before going into the shop. For example, one who had been employed in a shop for three years had worked at home after school, Sundays, and holidays, ever since she was a baby. Her case was in fact a practical illustration of how little young home workers learn, for it was not until she went into a shop that she had ever worked on flowers of a high grade. Consequently in the workroom she was regarded only as a learner, although her family had been home workers for the same shop twenty years, and her home had been a factory ever since she was born. She had worked in the real factory for a year at \$4.00 a week without increase of pay.

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Notwithstanding the haphazard methods found to exist in the majority of shops, some women of marked native ability and interest in their work do succeed in becoming skilled flower makers. Probably, however, even these women do not become as skilled as they might under better conditions. On the other hand, many more continue to be mere automatic repeaters of a part of the process of flower making, and an even larger number drift in and out of the trade without acquiring any skill in it. Their brief and profitless experience serves only to make them irresponsible workers in danger of losing the capacity to succeed in any occupation. Yet all these girls have been in contact with an industry which might be made a true art, as we have seen is the case in some shops in Paris, and which might actually educate its workers by giving them a thorough fundamental knowledge of the growth and structure of the flowers they are copying, as well as the principles of line and color.

The need for such fundamental knowledge has been suggested to us more than once by employers and workers. But in the rush of production for the millinery industry in New York City, employers do not yet see the problem as a large one to be solved by united action. They go no further than to complain of the difficulty of securing competent "hands," and do not plan for the future by working out any careful system of training in the workrooms. Even though an associa-

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tion of employers \* has been organized it has not taken up this question in any fundamental way. That the association regards the problem of securing experienced workers as fundamental, however, has been proved by the fact, already mentioned, that one of their first resolutions provided for a plan to prevent girls tempted by offers of higher pay from going from one workroom to another during the busy season. The same resolution provided for piece work in the workrooms,—unfortunately an enemy of careful, artistic work.

Individual employers, however, do make an effort to supply their need for experienced workers by engaging learners every season. Of the 113 firms visited who reported on this subject, 100, or 88 per cent, took learners; 13, or 12 per cent, refused to employ them. Of the 100 shops that took learners, 63 were willing to employ fourteen-year-old girls, while 33 would engage none under sixteen. Four made no statement as to the minimum age. Contrary to the practice in Paris, firms here pay learners from the first week of their employment. Table 35 shows the wages paid to learners in New York.

From 88 of the 100 firms willing to take them, learners received less than \$4.00 a week. The records of the interviews with these employers indicated that the sixteen-year-old learner had no higher pay than the fourteen-year-old. This is not true in all industries, but in flower making,

\* The Association of Flower Manufacturers. See page 56, footnote.

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from the point of view of the value to the firm, deftness of touch is the important thing, rather than the superior physical strength of a girl of sixteen.

**TABLE 35.—ARTIFICIAL FLOWER SHOPS EMPLOYING WOMEN AS LEARNERS, BY WEEKLY WAGES OF LEARNERS <sup>a</sup>**

Weekly wages	Shops paying learners the weekly wages specified
\$1.00 and less than \$2.00 . . . . .	2
\$2.00 and less than \$3.00 . . . . .	24
\$3.00 and less than \$4.00 . . . . .	62
\$4.00 and less than \$5.00 . . . . .	7
\$5.00 . . . . .	1
Total . . . . .	96

<sup>a</sup> Of 100 firms employing women as learners four could not state weekly wages, as the learners were put directly at piece work.

It is usually the girl who sits next to a new hand who teaches her the process. Sometimes this arrangement is systematically planned by the management, but usually whether a new girl learns the different processes or not depends upon the willingness of her neighbor to teach her. Some flower makers object to doing this because they believe that there are enough girls already in the trade. Others, who are piece workers complain that they teach at their own expense, since every moment lost from their work reduces their earnings. The influence of the attitude of older workers toward the learners is quite as important

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as the employer's plans for teaching new recruits. Furthermore, the interest of the learners themselves in their trade, their reasons for choosing it, and the more indirect influence of their school careers in developing in them habits of industry and application, are noteworthy factors in the problem of industrial education in this trade. In the workers' statements of their reasons for attempting to learn flower making, the sort of traditional pride which the Parisian manifests toward her art is conspicuously lacking. A few comments chosen at random from the record cards are illustrative.

A Hungarian woman who had worked four years in flower shops had made a negative choice, so to speak, by a process of elimination of other occupations. Nor was her enthusiasm great for the trade which she had selected. The investigator who interviewed her reported that she went into flower making because she knew that in saleswork the hours were always long and \$7.00 about the maximum wage. She couldn't stand machine operating on account of the noise, and didn't care for dressmaking. She had been watching the newspapers and had seen a great many advertisements for flower makers. Now that she has tried it she thinks it is as good as any other trade. It is better than vest making, for instance, where the girls have to work with men. Still, she says, many people think that flower making is not a very healthy trade. The doctor had told her that she

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must leave it if she became anæmic. It is bad for the girls if they must work in the same room where the coloring is done, as often happens in smaller shops.

Celestine, an Italian girl, had made flowers at home since the age of ten. The visitor had chanced to talk with her a short time before she left school to go to work and Celestine had declared that she would never go into the flower trade. "That is no trade," she had said. In a later visit it was found that she had gone to work in a flower shop, and she was asked how it happened. She shrugged her shoulders and replied, "I couldn't do anything else, so I had to make flowers."

Even more casual was the choice of Anna, a flower maker of Russian parentage. When she left school she decided she would like to get into a department store. So she went up to Sixth Avenue and asked a policeman where the different stores were. He pointed them out to her and she applied as cash girl, salesgirl, stock girl, and so on, but nobody wanted her. As she was walking home, down Broadway, she noticed a sign out for artificial flower makers. She had heard that girls often worked at this trade. So she went in and applied for a "situation" and was told to come the next day.

Not all flower makers have been employed in that occupation at the beginning of their trade careers. Many have drifted into it after attempt-

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ing other work. Of the group whom we interviewed, about 60 per cent had found their first positions in flower factories, and about 10 per cent in feather making, while the remainder had been previously employed at candy making, sewing, work in stores, or the following miscellaneous occupations: Trimming turnovers, making ruchings, packing embroidery, packing passementerie, learning to make passementerie, assorting buttons, painting buttons, crocheting buttons, labeling ribbons, bolting ribbons, learning machine operating on underwear and children's dresses, working at millinery, making neckties, sewing labels on men's clothing, "putting rings on overalls," working on handkerchiefs, examining waists, painting pipes, labeling groceries, doing housework, and working in a bakery.

These were the first positions found after leaving school. How young the workers were is shown in Table 36, which gives their ages when they left the class room and went into the factory to earn a living.

Thus 77, or exactly half, left at the age of fourteen years, and 145, or more than nine out of every 10, left before reaching the sixteenth birthday.

No systematic effort was made in the investigation to find out why the girls left school so early, but the subject was frequently discussed, and the comments made by some of them in this connection were illuminating. One girl had worked

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in a flower shop in the summer vacation intending to return to school in the fall. She carried out this intention for one week, but she found that her friends had left and when she met them in the evenings they teased her with questions as to why she wanted to keep on going to school. So she went back to the flower shop. Another expressed great regret to the visitor that she, too, left because her friends urged her to stop, although it was not necessary for her to go to work until a year later. Another had been eager to continue but she went to work to enable her brothers to get a professional education, an impossibility without even the small earnings which she could add to

**TABLE 36.—AGE AT LEAVING SCHOOL, OF WOMEN EMPLOYED IN ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKING<sup>a</sup>**

Age at leaving school	WOMEN EMPLOYED IN FLOWER MAKING WHO LEFT SCHOOL AT THE AGES SPECIFIED	
	Number	Per cent
Never attended school . . . . .	1	1
Under 12 years . . . . .	10	6
12 years . . . . .	10	6
13 years . . . . .	15	10
14 years . . . . .	77	50
15 years . . . . .	32	21
16 years . . . . .	3	2
17 years . . . . .	5	3
18 years . . . . .	1	1
Total . . . . .	154	100

<sup>a</sup> Of 174 women, 20, chiefly women who had attended foreign schools only, did not supply information.

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her father's wages. In spite of the fact that flower makers belong to families in which the struggle to gain a living is very real, the comments of the workers and their families indicated that it had not always been extreme economic pressure which had driven them from school to work at the age of fourteen. The immediate reason often repeated was "because my friends left" or "I was tired of school, and my friends all asked me why I stayed."

Only in a minority of cases had they stayed in school long enough to graduate from the elementary grades. Of 171 who gave information on this point, one had never attended school, 133 reported that the last day school attended was in New York City (13 in parochial or privately supported schools and 120 in public schools), while two had been to school in some other city of the United States and 35 reported that the last school attended had been in foreign lands. Of the 120 from New York public schools, 112 reported the grade reached, and of these nine left before reaching the fifth grade, 12 left while in the fifth grade, 24 the sixth, 38 the seventh, 14 the eighth, 11 graduated, and four went to high school but did not graduate. Thus the proportion who left before they graduated from the elementary grades was 87 per cent.

Several facts stand out prominently in these data regarding the schooling of flower makers,—the large proportion who leave school at the age

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of fourteen, the failure to graduate even from elementary school, and the trivial reasons for leaving. The fact that so many of the flower makers receive their final school training in the public schools throws on these schools some of the responsibility for conditions in this trade and gives them an opportunity for influence. How they are to meet this responsibility is a large question. Conditions in the flower trade show the need for skilled workers able to do a high grade of work. Facts about the age at which flower makers leave school suggest that their capacity for skill would be greater if their childhood could be prolonged by staying in school until they were older. Whether the day schools or the evening schools might exert a more direct influence by organizing classes for training flower makers was one of the most important questions discussed in the course of this investigation.

Such facts as those already described in connection with the training of flower makers are more or less typical of conditions in other trades today. The situation has aroused many persons to advocate the establishment of trade classes in public schools to perform the task now so sadly neglected in the workrooms, and to give the training an educational value, which it is commonly supposed it never could have under shop conditions alone. In all our interviews with employers and workers we made careful inquiry about their opinions concerning the desirability of estab-

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lishing such classes either in day or evening schools. Their comments are a summary of the many practical difficulties that now confront the advocates of industrial education. Roughly these comments divided themselves into two groups,—those concerned specifically with the desirability of training girls for the artificial flower trade, and those concerned with the desirability of the trade school method in general. The employers' attitude may be defined by the following classifications:

In favor of trade classes.....	52
Opposed to trade classes.....	22
Indifferent.....	27
Doubtful of its success.....	10
Opinion not given.....	3
Total.....	114

Less than half favored trade classes, while 22 were opposed, and 27 were indifferent. Ten were doubtful of the success of such a plan. Their opinions threw light not merely upon the value of trade classes and their practicability, but also upon many conditions in the industry which affect the training of learners. Wages, methods of organizing the work, seasons, nationality and age of the worker, and the home-work system,—all these are factors in the problem of developing efficient workers. Favorable comments are quoted first.

The owner of one of the best flower shops in

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New York was enthusiastic over the possibility of a class for training workers. He believed that the flower trade had a future in America and saw no reason why we should not be able to produce flowers as fine as the imported models. Moreover, he thought that to take a girl from one of the machine trades, which are known to be overcrowded, and put her into the flower trade would also benefit the girls in the machine trades by lessening the number in their ranks. Another owner of a shop who was much interested in the idea of a class, said that, it would be very desirable for the employer. He pointed out how wasteful is the present system of learning, as only about two girls out of every 12 "learners" become flower makers. Their ideals of good workmanship too would be stimulated. "Now-a-days girls always ask first, 'How much do you pay?' not 'How much will I progress?'" He thought, however, that two serious difficulties before such a class would be to dispose of the product, and to pay the cost of the materials which he estimated as \$4.00 or \$5.00 for every \$1.00 spent on labor.

In a shop where 75 girls were employed, both the forewoman and a member of the firm greeted the idea of a class with enthusiasm. Nevertheless, their statement of the case might be regarded by true educators as an argument against such a plan. "If the schools could get the girls started," they said, "as you get a machine well oiled-up and

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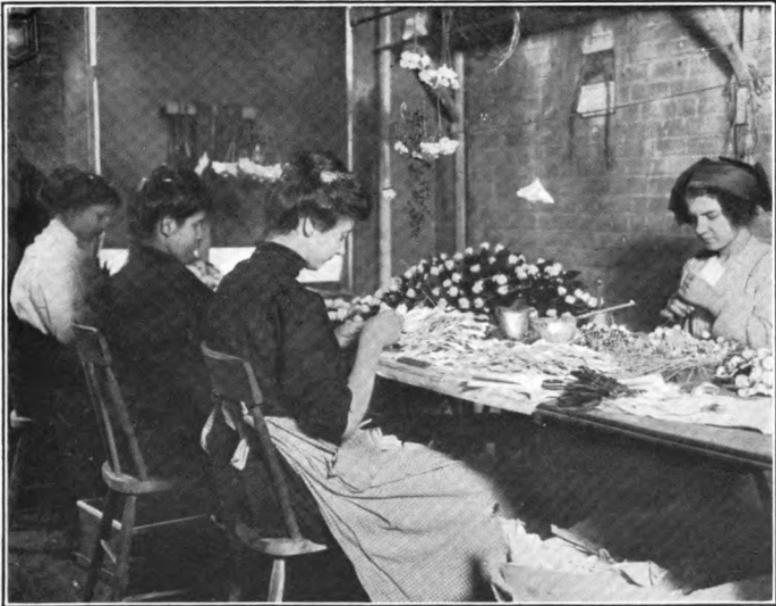
set going, it would be a fine thing for us." To feed industry with ready-made workers is not, however, the aim of those interested in industrial education. This employer gave further evidence that his idea was not to develop really artistic work but merely to supply market demands as they now exist, without making any effort to change them. In answer to the suggestion that pupils in a flower makers' class ought to use real flowers as models, he replied, "It would not be worth while. If you want the really artistic flowers you must send to France. There a girl works six or eight hours on one flower, but here we must get out the orders quickly. We cannot change the market. The people who buy from us want cheap flowers, so we make them."

"It's a poor trade," said another. "We have to follow the methods of our competitors, and the result is that we can hardly pay these girls a living wage. It takes a girl two years to learn it and during that time she works for about \$4.00 a week. Time was when we made as good a flower as Germany. Now we can't compete even with Germany. All the cheap and mediocre flowers come from there. The artistic work comes from Paris; labor is cheap there. But it isn't only competition from the other side, and it isn't bad times here,—it's the fashion. If women wanted flowers they'd have them, hard times or no hard times, but some seasons they don't want them."

Aside from doubt of the practicability of a trade



MAKING WILLOW PLUMES



ROSE MAKING AND BRANCHING



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class, employers who expressed unfavorable views often based their opinion on bad conditions in the trade. "It is not a staple product," said one, "and the wages are low. It is a trade where ignorant girls can be used. It is not the place for those who are ambitious. I would rather see a girl drift into any occupation but flower making. The seasons do not last more than four months now-a-days." Others pointed out the same objections; namely, that the styles change often, that the sale of flowers fluctuates too violently to predict the prosperity of the industry from season to season; that the demand in the trade is for cheap labor and, therefore, young girls are needed; and that the wages ahead for experienced workers are too low to make it worth while to train them in a school.

Of the practicability of such a class many doubts were expressed. These were centered about the difficulties involved in securing equipment; having starchers, dyers, and cutters to prepare the material for the pupils' work; disposing of the product afterward; and obtaining practical and competent teachers. To supply the right materials to work with in sufficient variety for thorough practice would be a heavy expense. Furthermore, if the teaching were not fundamental and practical it would not be successful. As an example, one employer referred to a flower maker in his workroom who had been trained in an evening class. "She is a good worker now,"

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he said, "but they did not teach her in a practical way. They taught her to make clover blossoms, but clover blossoms are imported so cheaply that it does not pay to make them here. They taught her how to crimp poppy petals, but this crimping can be done by machinery in the shop." He added, however, that a school could teach certain fundamental principles of flower making. To curl rose petals is not only good practice in rose making but a means of acquiring the deftness needed in many other processes of the trade. To know something of botany, and to learn the construction and growth of a flower, is to become the sort of intelligent worker greatly needed now in the industry. This demand for general intelligence as an essential equipment was voiced by the efficient manager of the flower department of a very large wholesale millinery establishment. He opposed a trade class for training flower makers for the same reason that he opposed vocational courses in high schools,—because he was skeptical of the efficiency of either school or college courses which aim to serve as substitutes for practical industrial or business experience. "It is better," he said, "to give the good, old-fashioned general education."

The fundamental objection to the organization of flower makers' classes in New York public schools today is not, however, the impracticability of the plan, but the possible effect of such classes on conditions in the trade, and the undesirability of

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training girls for an industry which does not yet insure the wellbeing of all its employes. Lack of skill in the worker is not the only obstacle to the prosperity and happiness of wage-earners, and a preliminary training in deftness and in knowledge of trade processes will not remove all, or even a goodly proportion, of the industrial evils which now oppress the workers. If the schools, for example, give a number of girls a thorough practice in the initial mysteries of artificial flower making, will wages increase, seasons lengthen, and home work disappear? Or will the employers, finding a supply of trained workers knocking at their doors each year, feel less and less the necessity for giving steady work even to a few of the best hands? Will the workers be better able to bargain for just wages, or will they be told that if they ask too much they can leave and other girls from the trade school will take their places? Will the causes of home work be removed or its evils lessened by a trade class?

Those employers who opposed the idea of training flower makers in public schools on the ground that conditions in the trade did not justify it, were voicing one of the most serious obstacles to the development of industrial education. For low wages, short seasons, cheap work, haphazard methods of training, long hours, and an extensive home-work system all directly prevent the development of efficient workers. The responsibility of the school for solving educational problems grow-

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ing out of tremendous changes in social and economic conditions cannot be denied, but a direct effort on their part to train workers for a trade like flower making would be of doubtful wisdom. True efficiency cannot be secured by the schools alone unless the conditions in the industry be so changed that they shall develop rather than repress the capacity of the workers.

## CHAPTER IX

### SUMMARY

**T**O readers of magazines and newspapers, who have become familiar with accounts of child laborers in tenements, the mere mention of the artificial flower trade recalls a picture of a three-year-old toiler picking apart the petals to be pasted together in the shape of a violet or a rose. Thus, paradoxical as it may seem, artificial flowers have become the very symbol of a method of nullifying the law, outwitting the reformers, and exploiting childhood in the midst of a city in which public opinion has expressed itself in no uncertain terms against the employment of children in any wage-earning occupation. But the blight of the home-work system falls not only upon the workers. The exploitation of the unskilled, whether they be children or their mothers and grandmothers, means bad workmanship, and bad workmanship will inevitably undermine the prosperity of the industry. It would be a pity to destroy an occupation capable at its best of attracting so artistic and cultivated a worker as Mme. A, the Frenchwoman whose exquisite copy of a moss rose fresh from the garden has been described as typical of the most efficient Parisian workmanship.

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The chief problem of the flower trade, then, is how to raise the standards of workmanship. The trade, however, is not a machine industry in which the development of new mechanical devices is the chief factor in production. The work is hand work, and we have learned from France that the beauty of a flower is created by a subtle deftness of touch, gained only by long practice. Thus the future of the trade depends not upon mechanical equipment but upon the skill of the workers. For the sake of the future of their trade artificial flower manufacturers of New York greatly need an efficiency engineer, with an artist's training, to set in order their house of industry.

In order to raise the standard of workmanship, labor conditions must be improved. Certain external facts about the industry must be passed in review to give a picture of labor conditions. Although flower making is a handicraft, the craftsman who sells her product direct to retail customers is as rare a figure as in any industry which has been revolutionized by the introduction of machinery. Flower manufacturers sell not at retail, but at wholesale to milliners, and it is this wholesale production which has led to the use of the factory system with sub-division of labor, piece work, contractors, and the sweating system.

In the United States the flower and feather trade has become essentially a city industry, three-fourths of it concentrated in New York City, and by far the greater number of New York workers

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and firms congested in a small district on the lower west side near the salesrooms and factories of wholesale milliners. Moreover, since flower making is a subsidiary industry, dependent for its existence upon the amount and type of personal decoration that fashion may decree or money permit, it is one of the first to feel a change of mode, financial depression or abnormal seasonal conditions. When the country is prosperous, the weather good, and large or medium-sized flowers are in vogue, artificial flower makers will have a good season. If very small flowers are preferred, forget-me-nots or lilacs, imports from Germany will increase and fewer workers will be employed in New York flower factories. If the weather is cold at the time of the spring "openings," or warm when the autumn models are first displayed, the whole trade will be depressed. When hard times come, women will forego the luxury of having extra hats. Finally, to cap the climax of uncertainty, just as the manufacturers are reveling in signs of the popularity of flowers, some manipulator of fashions will succeed in catching the popular fancy with a new device of feathers or ribbons and for the remainder of the season these will be the only conceivable trimming for the hats of the fashionable.

To the large shop equipped to manufacture feathers and millinery supplies as well as flowers, these uncertainties may cause only considerable inconvenience; but to the small owners, who are in

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the majority in this industry, they frequently mean failure. The worker, whether she be employed in a large workroom or a small one, may find herself suddenly out of work at a time which she expected to be the height of the season. Those who suffer least are the women who have learned also to make feathers and who are employed in establishments with several departments.

The frequent failures of small firms and the sudden reductions in the force at the end of each season in both large and small establishments, result in revolutionary changes in the personnel of the workers. Such variations mean that the workers will have no standards of production in common, since they are for the most part newcomers in the workrooms, without a traditional love of flower making or constant practice in the art. Moreover, in New York City, the trades in which conditions are most variable reflect most quickly changes in immigration. Occupations in which three-fourths of the positions are filled anew each season will attract those whose foothold in industry is least sure,—foreign-born adults and the children of foreigners, young workers fresh from school whose prospective wages seem so important to their families that they must take the first possible job, and married women bidding desperately for a chance to supplement a meager family income through work at home. Employers constantly complain that their workers “care more about an extra dollar than about a

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chance to learn the trade." They say that a girl who has learned but one process will give up a chance to learn more in order to make higher wages in some other factory where her specialization will be more valuable, even though her future as a skilled flower maker may be jeopardized. Employers who complain of this condition might find it explained by the fact that an unstable occupation must always utilize the labor of workers economically the least stable. These will not be likely to develop the highest type of efficiency. The effect of the seasons on the personnel of the workroom force was voiced by the employer who said, "There are plenty of girls in the trade if the work could be spread over the whole year, but the trouble is that too many are wanted at one time for only a short period."

Not only do these conditions prevent the organization of a permanent force in the trade, but the rewards of experience are too small to balance the uncertainties of the occupation. Figures copied from payrolls of flower factories in the United States by the census enumerators in a busy week of the year revealed the fact that at the height of the season only about one woman in sixteen (6.7 per cent) received as much as \$12 or over, while twice as many (13.3 per cent) earned less than \$3. The average wage of all workers, excluding forewomen, interviewed by us was \$6.37 a week. The average for those who were eighteen years of age or over, including forewomen, was only \$8.28.

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We have seen, too, that chance seems to control the wage scale. Processes vary and piece-work earnings must be readjusted with each change in the product. The workers, unstable as they are likely to be and heterogeneous in nationality, have never succeeded in organizing a trade union to compel forewomen or employers to consider their interests in the wage bargain. Furthermore, for every worker in the shop at least one woman or child is working at home, members of a scattered industrial group without the least sense of common interests or power to ask for higher pay. All these uncertain elements influence wages and prevent the establishment of a standard. Until wage standards of some kind are recognized, personal efficiency will not be properly rewarded. Until conditions in the trade are so changed that adequate payment will be made for work well done, skill will be increasingly rare.

No single element is producing chaos in the wage scale so disastrously as the home-work system. It is the greatest enemy of artistic work. As an industrial method it stands condemned not only because it thrives through exploitation of the very poor, but because it represents the most extreme form of unscientific management, which if unchecked may eventually ruin and even "kill" the industry. Take an illustration from an allied trade. In 1910 feather manufacturers were making and selling willow plumes at a high price. Suddenly some small employers

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began offering them at a third the usual price, being able to do so because they had transformed willow-plume making into a tenement industry with no standard of wages, exploiting little children in the families of the poorest Italians. The manufacturers who had been selling the products of their own workrooms gave up making willow plumes, and bought them from the small employers who had become the parasites of the tenements. "I went every day in my automobile to the home-work district to buy," said one employer, his experience still vivid in his mind. "I saw sights worse than any described to the Factory Investigating Commission."\* The result was to make willow plumes so numerous, so common, so cheap, and the wearing of them so abhorrent to right-minded people, that less than three years later their manufacture in New York tenements was practically an extinct occupation. In addition to the disastrous effect upon family life and health, home work depresses the wage scale, shortens the seasons by swelling the volume of production, and lowers the standards of American workmanship by flooding the market with cheap and badly made products.

Thorough study of conditions of the trade in Paris, where flower makers unquestionably, as yet, excel us in artistic spirit and craftsmanlike

\* Conditions of tenement work were revealed in testimony before the Factory Investigating Commission of New York State, in public hearings held in New York City in December, 1912.

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work, would no doubt throw much light on the industry in this country. Even though the facts which we have secured about the trade in France are illustrative rather than conclusive, they are illuminating. The home worker there has usually received a thorough training in the factory, and the work she does is highly skilled. Her children do not help her; they are not skilled enough. In the factories employers have given much attention to training learners, and in those of the better grades the seasons are long enough to prevent constant loss of workers. In Paris as in New York large numbers of girls are paid less than a living wage in this as in other trades. Nevertheless, the trade in Paris ranks among the better paid occupations open to women, while in New York the proportion of low paid workers is large in flower making as compared with all industries considered together. Even in Paris, however, the industry is changing, the factory system is being extended, inartistic work is not uncommon, the contractor is an important figure, the seasons are less steady and the necessity for learning both flower making and feather making seems to be increasingly felt. Yet the distinctive features of the Paris flower trade are its artistic possibilities, the workers' choice of it as a life craft, their pride in creating a beautiful object, and, most of all, their traditional love of good workmanship. The French flowers sold by New York milliners tell the story of the skill of their makers. Some beautiful flowers are made in New

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York, and skilled workers are found in the trade; but we cannot rival France unless the whole atmosphere of the industry is changed, unless a new spirit of joy in workmanship enters in; and, more fundamental still, unless the standards of labor conditions are so changed as to make possible permanence in the workroom force, suitable rewards for expert work, and the thorough training of learners.\*

The problem, however, is by no means hopeless. We cannot take the trade apart like a house of cards and rebuild it in an hour. An industry is an organism whose development is vital and not mechanical. But much depends on nurture and environment, and the American people are just beginning to recognize the possibility of legislative action which shall strengthen the growth of a trade under conditions favorable to the best interests of all who are engaged in it. The establishment of minimum standards below which no single manufacturer may fall to the detriment of his fellow manufacturers, serves to re-enforce the

\*These requirements illustrate the problem which advocates of new methods of industrial education must face. A higher grade of skill is needed, and this can be developed in flower making more easily than in machine industries, because quality has not given place to quantity as the inevitable test of skill, and efficiency still depends more upon intelligence than upon mechanical speed. France excels us in a way to stir our pride to achievement. Is the time, then, ripe for co-operation between the public schools and the trade? A public school official in New York who read this report decided that it was not. His reasons were that the pay was too inadequate, standards of workmanship were too low, and home workers too numerous. The schools can accomplish little in co-operation with any trade until within the trade itself there is a demand for efficiency and a disposition to pay for it.

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efforts of the best workers and employers within the industry. The growth of legislation, however, should be as vital and organic as the growth of a trade. It must be based on knowledge of conditions, it must be uncontrolled by special interests, and it must be vigorously and fearlessly enforced.

Prohibition of the employment in factories of children under sixteen would relieve the artificial flower trade of its undue proportion of young workers. The strict enforcement of the law regulating the hours of work of women would protect them against excessive fatigue during the busy season. But neither child labor laws nor legislation limiting the hours of work of women which apply only in factories will suffice to secure proper conditions in the flower trade, so long as the home-work system makes possible the employment of babies at home, and prolongs the hours of labor for factory hands when the day's work in the factory is over. In this trade the first line of attack to improve conditions in the factories must undoubtedly be against the home-work system.

Opinions, however, differ as to the most effective method of attack. The newest suggestion is the establishment by law of a minimum wage board for the trade, containing representatives of employers, workers, and the general public. The purpose of such a board would be to introduce the machinery of collective bargaining with reference to the minimum wage rates to prevail in the in-

## SUMMARY

dustry. If established by law, the recommendations of the board would become legally binding on all employers in the trade. Advocates of this plan believe that to require the payment of a fair minimum rate would result in limiting home work, since home work thrives through under-payment.

Others who have studied the home-work system believe that it should be attacked more directly by a law absolutely prohibiting any manufacture in tenement homes. They argue that the evils of this system—unlimited hours, the employment of children, and the forcing down of wages—are due to the fact that the work is done in homes where the workers are isolated and where the conditions of their employment cannot be supervised. Regulation of such conditions is impossible. The experience of New York illustrates the difficulty of attempting it. A few employers, especially in the larger establishments, have expressed themselves as in favor of absolute prohibition of flower manufacture in tenement homes because it would relieve them of the competition of the small firms which thrive through the home-work system. But such a prohibition would do more than relieve these employers of competition. It would make possible a better product, and this would increase the demand for good workmanship and thus improve labor conditions.

A trade like artificial flower making, the product of which is a luxury and not a necessity, is one in which such legislative experiments may well be

## ARTIFICIAL FLOWER MAKERS

tried, especially when the facts show so convincingly that the welfare of workers and the future prosperity of the industry are bound together. With so much of the trade centered in New York, it is within the power of the state legislature to take action which should determine the future destiny of the whole industry in this country.

## APPENDICES



**APPENDIX A**  
**RECORD CARDS USED IN THE**  
**INVESTIGATION**

1. Worker's Record.
- 1a. Worker's Record (Reverse).
2. Worker's Report of Artificial Flower Factory.
- 2a. Notes on 2.
3. Investigator's Report of Artificial Flower  
Factory.
- 3a. Notes on 3.
4. Record of Family of Home Workers.
- 4a. Notes on 4.

The numerals in parentheses on the face of each card refer to corresponding notes on the back of the card.

Names and addresses have been changed in these records.

# 1. WORKER'S RECORD

NAME	ADDRESS		TRADE
Albino, Theresa	75 Thompson Street		Floor Artificial Flowers
SCHOOL	PS 38	6/-08	6A
Place No.	Date of leaving	Grade	TRADE OF TECHNICAL SCHOOL NONE (1)
TRAINING IN WORKROOM		By whom given	Kind of work
RELATIONSHIP TO HEAD OF FAMILY		DAUGHTER	MATIVITY US 2/8/94
REGULARITY OF WORK		2 weeks	0
COMPARISON WITH PRECEDING YEAR		1 1/2 weeks' pay lost on 4 legal holidays and half days Saturday in summer.	1 1/2 weeks 0

NO.	DATE EMPLOYED (YR. MO.)	NAME OF FIRM	ADDRESS	TRADE	KIND OF WORK	WEEKLY WAGES TIME PAID	HOW FOUND	TIME IDLE AFTER LEAVING	REASON FOR LEAVING
1	9/-08	Harry Smith	75 Vandam	Candy	Floor girl carrying plats running errands	\$ 2.90 (3)			
2	9/-09	Gallo & Feiss	533 W. Bway	Artificial Flowers	Preparing Branching	\$ 4 5	Frd		To advance
POSITIONS									
Name of school: Dept: Date admission: leaving: Certificate: Remarks:									
Name of school: Dept: Date admission: leaving: Certificate: Remarks:									
Name of school: Dept: Date admission: leaving: Certificate: Remarks:									

# 1a. WORKER'S RECORD (REVERSE)

FAMILY: <b>Italo Vitali Y Y</b>	f '91	M '02	71b18, 217, b14, b9, 63, 64, 63.	None	OTHER PERSONS LIVING WITH FAMILY
NATIONALITY	YEAR OF COMING TO NEW YORK CITY		NUMBER & AGES OF CHILDREN AT HOME		
OTHER WAGE-EARNERS IN FAMILY: <b>Father, brother, mother, laborer, wagon boy, homemaker.</b>					
OCCUPATIONS					
WORKER'S HOME	<b>Yes</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>\$15</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Old ramshackle, dirty</b>
WITH FAMILY	NUMBER OF ROOMS	RENT	TOTAL PERSONS	HOUSE CONDITIONS	CONDITION OF APARTMENT
IF BOARDING	FURN., RM., TENEMENT, OTHER				
WEEKLY COST OF ROOM, LUNCH, OTHER MEALS					
DISPOSITION OF EARNINGS: <b>All</b>					
MONEY GIVEN WEEKLY TO HOME		WEEKLY CARFARE		MONEY SAVED YEARLY	
CHURCH, TRADE UNION, CLUB, CLASS MEMBERSHIP: <b>Roman Catholic Church. No club and no place to go.</b>					
APPLICATIONS AT A. E. B. <b>None</b>					
DATES		KINDS OF WORK		PLACEMENTS	
REMARKS: <b>(1) Has often thought of going to evening school, but "it was this way," she says. When it gets busy in the trade we have to take work home, and I knew I would have to stop then, so what was the use of starting?"</b>					
<b>(2) Began making cheap flowers when she was five. When a friend found her work in the flower factory, she told them she had had experience.</b>					
<b>(3) Nominal wage at first \$3 and later \$4, but a deduction was made because she was under 16 and legally could work only 8 hours while the older girls worked 10.</b>					
<b>(4) "I had no friend to take me. I just went alone and asked."</b>					
<b>(5) Family do not know what he earns.</b>					
Remarks: <b>Theresa is very pale, with black rings about her eyes. Looks very tired. Said, "It is awful to work so hard and not to get more pay." Finds the night work very tiring.</b>					
DATE <b>4/26/11</b>		INVESTIGATOR <b>L.C. Odenorantz</b>		SOURCE OF INFORMATION <b>Girl and family in home.</b>	

## 2. WORKER'S REPORT OF ARTIFICIAL FLOWER FACTORY

<b>NAME OF FIRM</b>	<b>ADDRESS</b>	<b>TRADE</b>
Gallo & Peiss	533 West Broadway 3d Floor	Artificial Flowers
<b>NAME OF WORKER Albino, Theresa</b>		<b>DATE OF ENTERING: LEAVING</b>
Address 75 Thompson Street		9/-09
<b>KIND OF WORK Branching, making, preparing, etc.</b>		
<b>POSITION AT WORK Sits</b>		
<b>WEEKLY WAGES</b> TIME <b>\$4 (1)</b> PIECE	<b>TIME</b>	<b>PIECE</b>
	LAST IN THIS ESTABLISHMENT	IF STILL HERE, WAGES IN LAST 4 WEEKS
<b>FINES</b> Yes (2) None	None	CHARGES FOR SUPPLIES None
<b>LITRESS</b> SPOILED WORK OTHER		
<b>SEASONAL WORK</b> 2 weeks	0	1 1/2 week. (3)
<b>TIME IDLE IN LAST 12 MO.</b> BECAUSE OF BLACK REASON	VACATION WITH PAY WITHOUT PAY	ILLNESS OTHER CAUSES
<b>HOURS OF LABOR</b> 8 A.M. 6 P.M. 6 P.M. 6 P.M.	MOON	9 1/2 HRS. 55 1/2 HRS.
<b>NORMAL BEGIN</b>	<b>SATURDAY</b>	<b>TOTAL DAILY</b>
<b>OVERTIME</b> None (4)	P.M. P.M. MIN.	HRS.
<b>NUMBER OF TIMES PER WEEK</b> CLOSING HR. SATURDAY	<b>SUPPER</b>	<b>TOTAL WEEKLY</b>
<b>HOME WORK</b> Same as in shop.	<b>SEASON OF OVERTIME IN YEAR</b>	<b>DATE OF PAY</b>
<b>WORK ROOM</b> Goes home for lunch	Yes	Until 10, 11 P.M. Maximum, one week 8 1/2 (5)
<b>LUNCH ROOM PRIVILEGES</b>	DRESSING ROOM	HOURS
	Odenorants	Fairly clean
<b>DATE</b> 4/26/11	<b>INVESTIGATOR</b>	Daylight and gas (6)
		TOILETS
		LIGHTING
		<b>SOURCE OF INFORMATION</b> Girl in home

- (1) When her friend arranged with the forewoman about her coming, she said that Theresa ought to get \$4 even though she worked the shorter hours required by law for children under 16 years. Theresa gets 50% raise every year.
- (2) If late half an hour, is fined. If late often, may be fined for a few minutes.
- (3) Is paid for Christmas and New Year's day, but not for other holidays or for half holiday on Saturdays in July and August.
- (4) No overtime is allowed as homework is more convenient for the employer.
- (5) One week last winter made \$8.50 with the night work. (Her wages at the time were \$4.)
- (6) When branching, she works by the window where it is light. When preparing, she works by gas light. "It is awful to work by gas in the day time."

Remarks

8 girls employed at present. The 'big' girls get \$8 to \$9 a week. No piece work. Theresa said that she does as much work as the 'big' girls, and yet they get more pay. The forelady never cares who does the work as long as it gets done. Theresa would like to leave and take up feather work, but is afraid she may not get steady work. When I suggested that it might be well to stay over the slack season, and look for a better position in the fall she said that she wouldn't like to leave "them" just when they were busy and needed her.

Much of the work is given to home workers. Theresa's mother has had work from this shop for many years.

Theresa says there is no union. When asked if it would be a good idea to have a flower makers' union, she replied, "Gee! Wouldn't it! They have a union in sewing and look how much money they get. But ours is a scab place."

### 3. INVESTIGATOR'S REPORT OF ARTIFICIAL FLOWER FACTORY

NAME OF FIRM	ADDRESS		TRADE	DEPARTMENT INVESTIGATED
Gallo & Feise	533 West Broadway		Artificial Flowers	Factory - Women's Department
KIND OF WORK FOR WOMEN	Number	Weekly Wages Time	Position at Work Sit	Remarks
Preparing } Making } Branching }	10	7-9	f	Nationality-Italians. "In our other branch (2 blocks away) they have Jews, but they don't work well with Italians."
Learners: Yes	16(1)	\$3 (2)	Other girls. "Everything" (3)	Indefinite
Minimum Age	By Whom Trained		Kind of Work	Length of Training
Indifferent to the subject	Desirability of Trade School Training			Age Preferred
Sign on door.	Yes		Indifferent	Preliminary or Continuation
Methods of Securing Experienced Workers	Satisfactory?		Attitude Toward Employment Bureau	Yes (4)
Seasonal Work: Sept. through Apr.	10		Months of Minimum Employment	Scarcity of Workers
Hours of Work: 8 A.M. - 6 P.M.	6 P.M. - 4 P.M.	9 1/2 Hr.	55 1/2 Hrs.	10 (5)
Normal	End Saturday	Noon	Total Daily	Minimum Force of Women
Overtime	Very little (7)	P.M.	Total Weekly	(Note Variation from Normal Schedule)
Number of Times per Week, Closing Hr.	Yes	Saturday	Total Daily	Hrs.
Homework: Sept. through Apr.	Yes	Same	60 families.	Season of Overtime
Seasons	Inside Workers	Grade of Work	Outside Workers	Inferior (8)
Workroom: Did not see.	Lighting	Ventilation	Space	Is Homework Desirable?
Date: 2/23/10	Investigator: Van Kleeck	Source of Information: Forewoman	Cleanliness	Dust
Committee on Women's Work.	Form 2, 10—Factory			

- (1) "We have one now who is 15 years old, but she will be 16 on Saturday."
- (2) Receive an increase at the end of 6 months.
- (3) Learners are taught to slip-up, make, and branch.
- (4) Only in rush seasons.
- (5) "We keep the force through the summer on part time."
- (6) "In our other branch the hours are from 8 to 5:30 with  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour at noon. The girls there live on the East side and don't go home for lunch. The girls here live near by and like to have more time at noon and then work later in the evening."
- (7) "They take work home instead."
- (8) The work given to home workers is principally the making of children's wreaths and small flowers of cheap grade.

## 4. RECORD OF FAMILY OF HOME WORKERS

NAME		TRADE							
ADDRESS		FLOOR							
Albino		1, whole							
75 Thompson		Artificial flowers							
KIND OF WORK <b>Wreaths of June roses, 40 flowers in a wreath, 4 pieces to each rose.</b>									
GIVEN OUT BY <b>Gallo &amp; Feiss</b>									
ADDRESS <b>533 West Broadway</b>		Mother fetches it							
SEASONAL WORK <b>Sept. through May</b>		Means of Securing Work							
Busy Season		None							
EARNINGS <b>\$3-5</b>		Other. Homework in Past 12 Months							
Weekly Earnings of Group		None							
No. of Months Without Work in Past Year		HOURS <b>After school, till 10 p.m. (1)</b>							
Rate of Pay per Piece		Per Day							
NAMES OF ALL WORKERS	Relationship to Head of Family	Age	Kind of Work at Home	Where Trade was Learned	Time Working in Home	Work Outside Home or School Attendance in Past 12 Months	Wages	Months Unemployed	
Joseph	Head	45	None	-	-	Day Laborer (2)	7.50	Casual	
Laura	Wife	42	Flower making	At home	15 yrs	None	?	(3)	
Phillip	Son	18	None	-	-	Wagon boy	5	Steady	
Theresa	Daughter	17	Flower making	At home	12 yrs.	Flower maker	5	3 1/2 wks.	
Frank	Son	14	"	"	Always	PS 8, grade 7A (4)	-	-	
Tony	Son	9	"	"	"	PS 38, grade 2B	-	-	
Katie (5)	Daughter	6	"	"	"	PS 38, grade 1A	-	-	
None				None		None		None	
Other Sources of Income		Number and Ages of Other Children at Home		Where Trade was Learned		Occupation of Mother Before Marriage		Reference	
F. Y. M. Y.	F. Italy-Rome	M. Italy-Rome	F. 20	M. 19(6)	F. 20	M. 19(6)	Richmond Hill House	Richmond Hill House	
Living Nationality (District)		Years in U. S.		Other Persons Living with Family		Cleanliness		Total Persons	
House Conditions <b>Yes</b>		Bldg. Lic. Number of Rooms <b>3</b>		Rate <b>\$15(7)</b>		Other Persons Living with Family		9	
Room Used for Work <b>Kitchen</b>		Room		Good-2 windows to street		Lighting		Dirty	
Date <b>4/26/11</b>		Investigator <b>L.O. Odenerants</b>		Source of Information <b>Family in home.</b>		Cleanliness		Family in home.	
Committee on Women's Work, Form 4-10, -Homework		Investigator		Source of Information		Cleanliness		Family in home.	

- (1) The mother works by day with the help of the children who are too young to go to school. The school children work after three and in the evening, when Theresa also helps. On the evening of the visit the family sat down to work immediately after supper. The three-year old girl worked as steadily as any of the others. Theresa said, "My mother works all the time-all day, Sundays and holidays, except when she is cooking or washing. She never has time to go out or she would get behind in her work."
- (2) Employed near by, pumping water, \$1.25 a day. Sometimes makes \$1.50 to \$1.60, but wages are going down and it's hard for an old man to find any work."
- (3) This boy is on probation and has to report every Thursday. Got into bad company and was induced to sign a false name to a receipt for a package, which he turned over to another fellow to sell. The family do not know how much he earns. He gives \$3 to \$4 a week to his mother. Theresa gives all her earnings. "But you know how it is with a boy," she explained. "He wants things for himself."
- (4) He is considered a bright pupil in school, and hopes to stay until he graduates.
- (5) Also Annie aged 4, and Lizzie aged 3. The family complain that Annie is lazy and wants to play so that she makes less than Lizzie.
- (6) Within this period the family went back to Italy for a year.
- (7) An uncle leases the whole house and they rent their apartment from him. The house is a three-story frame building with tall brick buildings on either side.

## APPENDIX B

### OPINION OF THE SUPREME COURT OF NEW YORK ON THE FIFTY- FOUR HOUR LAW

SUPREME COURT—SPECIAL TERM, KINGS  
COUNTY. JANUARY, 1913.

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK *ex rel.* WILLIAM HOELDERLIN, relator, *v.* THOMAS KANE, as Warden of the City Prison of the Borough of Brooklyn, City of New York, respondent.

The provision of section 77 of the Labor Law, as amended in 1912, limiting the hours of labor of minors and women in factories other than canning establishments to nine hours a day and fifty-four hours a week is not invalid, either as to minors or to women over the age of twenty-one years, because interfering with the constitutional guaranty of liberty. Minors of both sexes are wards of the State and a distinction may legitimately be drawn under the police power as to permissible hours of labor between adult women and adult men.

The exemption from the general operation of this statutory provision of contracts for labor in canning factories from the 15th day of June to the 15th day of October does not deny the equal protection of the law.

Alfred J. Talley (Denis R. O'Brien of counsel) for relator; James C. Cropsey, district attorney (Hersey Egginton, assistant district attorney, of counsel), for respondent.

BLACKMAR, J.—This is a proceeding on habeas corpus said to be brought to test the constitutionality of the law limiting

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the hours of labor of minors and women in factories other than canning establishments to nine hours a day and fifty-four hours a week. The respondent returns that he holds the relator under three commitments for the violation of section 77 of the Labor Law; one for employing a male minor under the age of 18 years more than fifty-four hours a week; another for employing a female minor under the age of 21 years more than fifty-four hours a week, and another for employing a female over the age of 21 years more than fifty-four hours a week. The return was traversed, alleging the unconstitutionality of section 77 of the Labor Law, as amended in 1912, and the district attorney, appearing for the defendant, demurred to the traverse.

The case might be summarily disposed of on the ground that, whatever may be said regarding the validity of the law limiting the hours of labor of adult women, it was competent beyond question for the Legislature to prescribe such limitations in the case of minors, who are wards of the State, and that such provisions of the law are plainly severable. I shall not, however, place my decision on that ground, but shall consider the very question argued orally and in briefs, viz.: Whether it is constitutional for the Legislature to make it a crime to employ an adult female to work in a candy factory more than fifty-four hours in a week.

It is claimed, *first*, that the constitutional guarantee of "liberty" is violated in that the law in question abridges the right of both employer and employee to contract for labor, and, *second*, that the exemption of contracts for labor in canning factories during the summer season violates the principle that laws must be uniform in their application and the provision in the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution forbidding any State to deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the law.

I propose to rest this case on the authority of reported decisions of the courts, with a few prefatory remarks as to their relative value.

Prior to the adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution each State decided for itself the question of the limitation of the police power. It was a ques-

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tion of the domestic policy of the several States and the decisions of their tribunals upon it were final. Since the adoption of the amendment the liberty of the individual is protected by the United States Constitution against action by the States. All judicial questions of the power of the several States to restrain liberty by the exercise of the police power are thus finally brought to the arbitrament of the United States Supreme Court. On this class of questions that is the court of last resort and its decisions are the supreme authority. Since the enactment of that amendment the courts of all the States, with reference to the rights therein secured to individuals, have become courts of co-ordinate jurisdiction. Whether the decision comes from Maine or Oregon, from Minnesota or Louisiana, if it sustains a statute of the State limiting liberty in the exercise of the police power, it is subject to review by the Supreme Court. The courts of all the States are working together with equal powers in this field of law. The decisions of the United States Supreme Court upon the police power are therefore controlling, and those of the courts of sister States may no longer be regarded as decisions of foreign tribunals; but they are entitled to that degree of deference which is yielded to courts of equal authority administering not similar laws, but the same law.

Bearing this principle in mind I proceed to an examination of the authorities. *Muller v. Oregon* (208 U. S., 412) decided that an act of the Legislature of Oregon prohibiting the employment of females in any mechanical establishment or factory or laundry more than ten hours during any day is not unconstitutional so far as respects laundries. The case differs from the one at bar, for in this case the employment was not in a laundry, but in a candy factory, and the legal limit is not ten hours a day, but nine hours a day and fifty-four hours a week. That case, however, decides the fundamental proposition that for the purpose of the application of a law under the police power the Legislature may establish a class composed of women alone, and may limit the hours of labor of the individuals composing that class.

In *State v. Somerville* (Washington, 122 Pac. Rep., 324, decided in March, 1912) a law limiting the hours of labor of

## FIFTY-FOUR HOUR LAW

women to eight hours a day was held constitutional as applied to paper box manufactories.

In *Commonwealth v. Riley* (210 Mass., 387), decided January 1, 1912, an act limiting the hours during which women may be employed in manufacturing and mechanical establishments to fifty-six hours in one week and ten hours in one day was upheld.

In *Ritchie & Co. v. Wayman* (244 Ill., 509), decided April 21, 1910, the courts of Illinois upheld legislation forbidding the employment of females in any mechanical establishment, factory or laundry more than ten hours a day.

In *Withey v. Bloem* (163 Mich., 419) a law prohibiting the employment of women in factories more than ten hours a day and fifty-four hours a week was held not violative of the United States Constitution.

For other cases in which like legislation has been held to be constitutional see *Wenham v. State of Nebraska* (65 Nebraska, 394), *Commonwealth v. Beatty* (15 Pa. Sup. Ct. Rep., 5), *Commonwealth v. Hamilton Mfg. Co.* (120 Mass., 383).

I find practically nothing against all this weight of authority. *Ritchie v. People* (155 Illinois, 98) has been distinguished to the point of being overruled by the later case of *Ritchie & Co. v. Wayman* (244 Illinois, 509). *Matter of Maguire* (57 California, 604) was a case of the employment of a woman in a bar-room, and a statute prohibiting it was declared unconstitutional as violating section 18, article 20, of the California Constitution, which provided that "no person shall on account of sex be disqualified from entering upon or pursuing any lawful business, vocation or profession." This case obviously is no authority for the relator. *Burcher v. People* (41 Colorado, 495) was also decided upon the peculiar wording of the Constitution of Colorado.

The relator appeals to *Lochner v. New York* (198 U. S., 45). This is the famous bakeshop case. It holds that the State of New York cannot limit the hours of employees in bakeries to ten hours a day without infringing the liberty of the individual to contract for his labor guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. The case is exceedingly interesting. It arose in the County Court of Oneida County, in this

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State, and progressed through the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals and the United States Supreme Court. Twenty-two judges participated in the several decisions. The only unanimous decision was by the County Court, where there was but one judge. In the Appellate Division the justices divided three to two; in the Court of Appeals, four to three, and in the United States Supreme Court, five to four. There were nine separate opinions written. Of the twenty-two judges twelve were of the opinion that the law was constitutional and ten that it was not. The opinion of the minority prevailed because five of the ten judges who thought the law unconstitutional were members of the court of last resort. What does this remarkable divergence of opinion suggest? I do not find in the nine opinions any reason for thinking that there were any differences as to the rules of law governing the case. The power of the State to enact laws for the welfare of the people, notwithstanding the constitutional guarantee of the liberty of the individual, was not questioned. The difficulty was in determining whether the law in question was in furtherance of public welfare. The courts were approaching a question of political economy. So Judge Edward T. Bartlett, of the Court of Appeals, speaks of a "coming day when the Legislature, in the full panoply of paternalism," &c. Justice Peckham, of the United States Supreme Court, says "statutes of the nature of that under review, limiting the hours in which grown and intelligent men may labor to earn their living, are mere meddlesome interferences with the rights of the individual"; and Justice Holmes says "this case is decided upon an economic theory which a large part of the country does not entertain," and again "but a constitution is not intended to embody a particular economic theory, whether of paternalism or the organic relation of the citizen to the State or of laissez faire." The fact that economic theories entertained by the judges influence their decisions as to the limits of the police power should not be excluded from the mind while studying the subject. Neither can such decisions be regarded as landmarks permanently defining such limits. Laws which may be meddlesome interferences with the liberty of the individual in a primitive state may, in a highly organized society,

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become essential to public welfare or even to the continuance of civil liberty itself. The pace at which courts move in sympathy with fast developing economic ideas may be illustrated by *Lochner v. New York*, the hesitating utterances of divided courts in 1905, followed by *Muller v. Oregon*, the confident pronouncement of a united bench in 1908. Whatever may be said of *Lochner v. New York*, it is so distinguished by the later case of *Muller v. Oregon* that it is no authority for the relator in the case at bar.

Neither does *People v. Williams* (189 N. Y., 131) sustain the relator's claim. That case decided only that it was not competent for the Legislature to prohibit a woman from working in a factory before 6 in the morning and after 9 o'clock at night. The act had no relation to the number of hours of labor. To work a half hour or less in a factory before or after the forbidden hours violated the law, even if that were the extent of the whole day's work. The case is decided largely on the authority of *Lochner v. New York*, and *Muller v. Oregon* forbids our drawing therefrom any general rule that labor legislation for women alone is unconstitutional. The remark therein made that women are not wards of the State is unquestionably correct. This wardship depends on presumed (in the case of infants) or proved (in the case of lunatics) mental incompetency. No one claims that the differentiation of women from men, as subjects of legislation, depends on mental conditions. The justification for legislation special to women rests, as is said by Justice Brewer in *Muller v. Oregon*, on the fact of common knowledge that women's physical structure and the performance of maternal functions place her at a disadvantage in the struggle for existence. The element of invalidity in the statute under consideration which was developed in *People v. Williams* is plainly severable.

The authority upon the question seems complete. The power of the Legislature to create a class, consisting of women only and limit their hours of labor is established in *Muller v. Oregon*. That the limitation may be to fifty-four hours a week is decided by *State v. Somerville* and *Withey v. Bloem*, and in these two cases the regulation was held valid as applied to the manufacture of paper boxes and seals for locking freight

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cars, occupations apparently as light and innocuous as candy making.

But the relator claims that the exemption of the work in canning factories from the 15th of June to the 15th of October renders the law unconstitutional. A law is a rule of conduct. It must apply alike to all under like conditions. Nor can any State deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the law. A law, therefore, cannot make an act criminal as to one person which is innocent in another under like circumstances and conditions. But as circumstances and conditions differ, classification of those subject to the law may, and often must, be made for the purpose of securing that very uniformity which is essential to law. The precise question in this case is whether the Legislature may, for the purpose of regulating the hours of labor therein, establish a class consisting of factories, as defined by the law of New York, except canning factories. This depends on whether there is a difference in conditions which warrants the classification. Resorting to authority, we find that this very question has been decided in *State v. Somerville* (Washington, 122 Pac. Rep., 324), and in *Withey v. Bloem* (163 Michigan, 419) and in *Mt. Vernon, &c., Co. v. Frankfort, &c., Co.* (Maryland, 75 Atl. Rep., 105). These are all cases in which canning factories have been exempted from the operation of laws fixing the hours of labor for women and children in manufacturing establishments.

The relator has presented to me a record of evidence taken this year before a committee of the Senate of the State of New York. It is claimed that this record shows that conditions in canning establishments are more injurious to the health of women and children than in many other factories, for instance, than the candy factories. But this is a subject upon which the court cannot take evidence. Classification for the purpose of confining the operation of laws is a legislative function. Every statute presupposes a finding by the Legislature of the facts necessary to bring the act within its powers. In ascertaining these facts, the Legislature is not limited to the narrow field of legal evidence. It may draw its information from any source open to mankind. If the courts may review this finding of the Legislature, with the

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aid of such limited means of knowledge as legal evidence affords, an act might be held constitutional in one case and otherwise in another, dependent upon the industry with which the evidence was collected and the skill with which it was presented. In *State v. Somerville* (*supra*) evidence was offered that the work was light and harmless, and the court held it irrelevant, saying: "Courts in passing upon the reasonableness or unreasonableness of a statute, and deciding whether the Legislature has exceeded its powers to such an extent as to render the act invalid, must look at the terms of the act itself, and bring to their assistance such scientific, economic, physical and other pertinent facts as are common knowledge, and of which they can take judicial notice," and again, "in all cases pertaining to the police power the Legislature is supreme, unless the general application of the law does violence to the common knowledge of men, in which event a court might properly intervene." What matter of common knowledge instructs me that conditions in canning factories require the limitation of the hours of women therein in the same measure as in other factories? They may or may not. I do not know. Neither can I take evidence on the subject. I may read the act and bring to my assistance matters of common knowledge, such as a court may take cognizance of without evidence, and unless it thereby appears that there is no reasonable basis for the exception, I must trust to the wisdom of the Legislature and uphold the act. The information received by the court in *Muller v. Oregon* (see 208 U. S., p. 419), such as the statutes of other States and foreign nations, reports of committees, bureaus and commissions, proceedings of medical societies, and matters of that kind, are legitimate means of ascertaining what are matters of common knowledge. Such things I may receive, but not evidence of conditions in certain canning factories such as is offered in this case. If the inquiry now in progress shows that the exception of canning factories is not justified, we may presume that the law will be corrected by the Legislature. But irrespective of conditions in these factories, it is for the Legislature to determine whether the interest of the public in preserving perishable fruits is more important than the health of female and minor employees. However loath

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the courts might be to acquiesce in the wisdom or humanity of such a decision, yet it is a matter of legislative and not judicial cognizance.

I have not thought it necessary to decide the interesting question presented by the district attorney whether an exception introduced into an existing law could have the effect of invalidating the law.

The relator appeals to the court in the name of liberty. He claims that liberty is protected by the constitution, which was enacted by the people themselves, and that none but the people, not even their agent, the Legislature, has dispensing power over it. He claims that the constitution itself, in Article XIII, section 1, requires that every judge before entering upon the duties of his office shall take an oath to support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of New York, and that this means to support them even against the acts of the Legislature. In all this he is right. Such is the law, and such is the duty of all courts. What is the constitutional liberty which every judge is to protect? It is civil or political liberty. Man in a state of nature, as the nineteenth century philosophers were wont to say, has an inherent right, as a free moral agent, to act, think and speak as he pleases. When he becomes a member of society he necessarily surrenders a portion of that liberty in the interest of the rights of others and the welfare of society. The modicum of liberty remaining after such surrender is civil or political liberty. An act of the Legislature in the interest of the health, morals or safety of the community operates within the field of the surrendered rights and does not abridge civil liberty. If, then, the statute forbidding the relator to employ in his candy factory minors under a certain age and women more than fifty-four hours a week is a measure in the interest of the welfare of society, it does not impair his civil liberty, although it does limit his right to contract for labor. I find this decided already by authority and, fully and sympathetically concurring in the reason by which the result was reached, follow the precedents.

The development of the industrial life of the nation, the pressure of women and children entering the industrial field in competition with men physically better qualified for the

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struggle, has compelled them to submit to conditions and terms of service which it cannot be presumed they would freely choose. Their liberty to contract to sell their labor may be but another name for involuntary service created by existing industrial conditions. A law which restrains the liberty to contract may tend to emancipate them by enabling them to act as they choose and not as competitive conditions compel. All these considerations are for the Legislature, and for the Legislature alone. It is only where the statute controls conduct in matters plainly and obviously indifferent to the welfare of the public, or any portion thereof, that the courts can pronounce the act violative of civil liberty. Certainly this is not such a case.

The writ is dismissed and the relator remanded to custody.

## APPENDIX C

### LAW ENACTED MARCH, 1913, PROHIBITING NIGHT WORK FOR ALL WOMEN

An Act to amend the labor law, in relation to protecting the health and morals of females employed in factories by providing an adequate period of rest at night.

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

**SECTION 1.** Chapter thirty-six of the laws of nineteen hundred and nine, entitled "An Act relating to labor, being chapter thirty-one of the consolidated laws," is hereby amended by inserting therein, after section ninety-three-a, a new section, to be section ninety-three-b, to read as follows:

93-b. Period of rest at night for women. In order to protect the health and morals of females employed in factories by providing an adequate period of rest at night no woman shall be employed or permitted to work in any factory in this state before six o'clock in the morning or after ten o'clock in the evening of any day.

**SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect July first, nineteen hundred and thirteen.

## APPENDIX D

### SOCIETY FOR APPRENTICES, PARIS, FRANCE

*Société pour l'assistance Paternelle aux Enfants Employés dans les Industries des Fleurs et des Plumes, Paris.*

With the growth of the floral industry in the middle of the 19th century, employers found themselves in need of apprentices and formed in 1866 the above named society. It is a dependency of the employer's syndicate and "undertakes to place, free of charge, in apprenticeship, with a regular contract, children whom their families want to have profit by the advantages of the society. All its efforts tend to the moralization and perfecting of this apprenticeship, and lay stress on oversight and encouragement."

The object of the society is to assure a good trade apprenticeship and to look after, help and influence for good by all means that it esteems useful, children employed as apprentices in the flower and feather industries.

Its methods are the following:

- a. The placing in apprenticeship of children under the oversight and protection of delegates of the society.
- b. The development of trade efficiency by means of competitive trade contests.
- c. The holding of free classes in elementary instruction and design, open to all flower and feather apprentices (lending library for home use).
- d. The awarding of honorary prizes to teachers, heads of houses, foremen, forewomen, workers and apprentices, and all others who help the society in its task.
- e. The maintenance of family groups (private boarding

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houses) which assure board, lodging and necessary care to young girls, whose parents or employers cannot provide these.

f. A yearly prize day for the distribution of savings bank books and books to the winners of the various competitions.

g. And all other methods which the experience or inclination of members may suggest.

### *Contract.*

Between the undersigned:

1st. Mr.....Address.....  
engaged in the profession of.....  
2nd. The minor.....born in.....  
the.....has obtained her school certificate on.....  
represented in the contract by  
Mr.....Address.....  
who serves as.....

The following agreement has been made:

Art. I. Mr..... agrees to take the undersigned girl as apprentice and to keep her during.....  
.....consecutive years beginning.....  
.....and ending.....

Art. II. To teach her during this time the trade of.....  
.....freely and fully in such a way that she will be able to practice this trade at the end of her apprenticeship; never to employ her for any other work but that of her profession; neither for frequent or distant errands nor for the carrying of heavy burdens. To act in conformity with articles 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, and 14, of the law of November 2nd, 1892, "on the work of children, minor girls and women in industrial employment."

Art. III. To provide her with necessary tools.

Art. IV. To keep her conduct and habits under constant supervision, to treat her gently, like a good father (un bon père de famille) avoiding all corporal punishment or privation of food.

Art. V. To help her to fulfil her family duties, by allowing her to go out on Sundays and Holidays after an agreement with parents or guardian as to hours.

## PROTECTION OF APPRENTICES

Art. VI. To accept the supervision of persons authorized by the society; to inform them of serious faults of which the apprentice may be guilty, and, in the case of serious complaint, immediately to notify delegates of the society and the parents. To notify the latter immediately in the event of the illness of the apprentice, who shall be given all necessary care until she can be sent to her family.

Art. VII. To allow her to take part in the yearly trade competition organized by the "Assistance Paternelle des Fleurs et des Plumes," and to provide her with materials necessary for these competitions. There may be no forfeiture of this article, except by previous contract between the manufacturer and the Executive Council.

Art. VIII. On the other hand, the apprentice agrees, during the time fixed above, to receive with attention, respect, and docility, the lessons and orders of her master, and to make up all loss of time to him at the end of her apprenticeship, whether such loss arises from illness or any other cause, provided it exceeds a fortnight in duration.

Art. IX. The representative of the apprentice promises for his part to use his authority to keep the latter in her workroom until the date of expiration of the contract and to make her hard working, docile, and devoted to the interests of Mr..... and faithful in the execution of the regulations of the society.

He consents besides to allow her to be under the oversight of the society's delegates [here to be indicated the other obligations of the employer or of the apprentice's representative, for food, care, or any other condition; also any particular provisions which the parties may wish to state in the contract, especially *conditions of payment*].

### ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS.

In the present act has intervened Mr....., Delegate of the Society, acting in his own name, by virtue of the powers that have been specially conferred upon him by the Executive Council, to declare that the *Assistance Paternelle* takes under its protection the young..... who is required from this day to enjoy all the advantages, resulting from present or future statutes and regulations.

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The representative of the society, in common accord with the parties, agrees to oversee the legal execution of the present contract; they are entitled to inform themselves of the progress of the apprentice's work, as stated in Art. VI.

The contracting parties promise, in case of disputed points, to have recourse to the arbitration of persons whom the society may name for the purpose, before taking legal action.

In case of non-agreement, the society will use its influence on the side of every effort to fulfil the present contract, although it can never in any respect incur legal responsibility for the same.

No forfeiture may be stipulated by the present act.

In the case where, on the part of master or apprentice, there may be reason for the canceling of the contract, the *Conseil des Prud'hommes de la Seine* (section des tissus) has the sole right to fix the damages that may result from such canceling. (The first two months of apprenticeship are considered as a trial period during which the contract may be annulled by the will of either party. In this case no indemnity will be allowed on either side. Art. XIV of the law of 1851 on Apprenticeship Contracts.)

The present contract is not valid unless signed by the above named delegate and by the president of the society.

One copy shall be placed in the records of the society.

Three copies made in Paris on..... and signed after reading:

Apprentice's Representative.....  
Employer..... Delegate..... President.....  
.....

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# THE SURVEY

A JOURNAL OF CONSTRUCTIVE PHILANTHROPY

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