

## PRISONERS OF POVERTY.

### INCREDIBLE CRUELTY.

From *The New-York Herald*.  
A series of articles has been published in *THE NEW-YORK TRIBUNE*, based upon careful investigation, showing the lamentable condition of the sewing women of the great city. It is almost incredible that such oppression should exist in a civilized country, or that such a life of slavery and want for so many thousands could be tolerated in the City of New-York. The sharp competition in ready-made wearing apparel is the reason assigned for this heartless cruelty. The demand for cheap clothing is met, not by diminishing the margin of profits, but by stinting the sewing women to the very border of starvation, and the people who buy cheaply are carrying with them the evidence of this system of oppressing the poor. The tendency every year is to avoid the care and labor of "making up goods," because ready-made is so much cheaper, and yet for some "not cheap enough," without one thought about those worn-out and starved workers. . . . In all large cities the best charity is that which helps the poor to the means of obtaining an honest livelihood by labor and economy, and by forming public sentiment that will make it a reproach to give employment upon such conditions as are represented to be the rule among the manufacturers of New-York.

### THE MANUFACTURER'S SIDE.

From *The Clerk, Suit and Ladies' Wear Review*.  
Mrs. Helen Campbell is writing for *THE TRIBUNE* under the heading "Prisoners of Poverty" some very pathetic articles concerning the condition of the women wage-workers in this city. The writer is evidently a sincere and earnest woman, whose accounts are undoubtedly trustworthy. A few Sundays ago the "Evolution of a Jacket" was narrated—a tale of the direst poverty and the hardest kind of a struggle for existence. How the condition of the people described is to be ameliorated, we do not know; it is a question that deserves the attention of philanthropists and political economists. It is only fair, however, that the side of the manufacturers should be given, against whom a feeling seems to be entertained that they really are to blame for all the poverty and distress of the people employed to make the garments. Manufacturers of cloaks and suits are no more hard-hearted, no worse and no better, than the majority of manufacturers. They are misled and by the keen competition of trade. Should they ignore these principles they would be ruined. They desire to receive a profit on the capital invested in their business; but they are not, as a rule, oppressors of the poor.  
Unfortunately, the class of people who are mostly employed as laborers on women and men's clothing are, like "the heathen Chinese, peculiar." They have no repugnance for dirt, and it seems natural to them to live in squalor. Many of them have accumulated quite a little wealth and still remain in the unhealthy quarters described by Mrs. Campbell. All this makes it difficult to know their true condition.

### AN ANGEL IN DISGUISE.

From *The Boston Herald*.  
Mrs. Helen Campbell, who is doing such noble work for underpaid and starving working women in New-York, in *THE TRIBUNE*, is described as an "angel in disguise" by one who has already felt the benediction of her timely utterances. Mrs. Campbell is under a great physical and mental strain in preparing these papers, for her sympathies are keen and sensitive, and the suffering she encounters everywhere not only grieves her womanly heart, but almost unites her for the subsequent labor of writing what she knows of the injustice of humanity. She is, indeed, a noble woman, and while it cannot fail to pain the reader, her articles should be thoroughly read throughout this civilized country.

### TOO GREAT SCORN OF "SERVICE."

From *The Boston Herald*.  
There is a class especially bred in the American spirit of the age. This is the class that wears out in factories and shops, because it acorns "service," when, if it only knew it, that kind of employment is the very essence of service. In fact, about all one does feel in this life is a service, the only difference being the amount of personal independence attached to the hateful condition.

### WHY GIRLS DISLIKE DOMESTIC SERVICE.

From *The Rochester (N. Y.) Post-Express*.  
The papers of Mrs. Helen Campbell in *THE TRIBUNE* on the "Prisoners of Poverty," are creating some discussion, and the revelations which she makes in regard to the hardships endured by those women who take to sewing and work shops in large cities arouse general sympathy for them. We are inclined to think that the antipathy of working women to domestic service lies chiefly in the fact that it is service. A woman wants some share of freedom. She has the property instinct and the home instinct much more strongly developed than man has, and until such time as she can have a husband of her own, a house of her own and children of her own, she wants at least a room of her own and the right to do her own mistress for a part of her time. Nobody has a right to say to her that it is her destiny to be somebody's servant all her life, to have a mistress watch over her down-sifting and her up-sifting, to go out at somebody else's permission and come in at a set hour. Service is honorable for those who perform it in the right spirit, but we doubt if the heat of the girls engaged in it look to nothing else. It would be well to have more and better prepared women in domestic service; but such a change is not likely under existing conditions, with the demand for the labor of women in other directions increasing. It was often said during the anti-slavery agitation by advocates of the peculiar institution that the negroes in the South were in many respects well off, that they had comfortable clothes; that they were well fed, fairly housed, and carefully attended in sickness, and that they had few cares or anxieties. The relation between employer and employed was the ideal one, it was said, for cheapness of production. There was much truth in these statements and without doubt the physical condition of the slaves was much better than the physical condition of the peasantry in various parts of Europe; but no miserable Italian starving on potatoes, no Irish center living on potatoes, no Scotch crofter in his hovel would have changed places with the slave. It is not what we have that makes our happiness so much as what we feel, and sentiment is of more account in human affairs than the political economist dreams of in his philosophy.