

WHY JANE WHITAKER IS FIGHTING FOR LIVING WAGES FOR CHICAGO WORKING GIRLS

Being the Story of the Furnace Through Which She Herself Came, Told By Herself.

By Jane Whitaker.

So that the girls for whom The Day Book is fighting may know that there is a real Jane Whitaker, and that there isn't any phase of your side of the question she doesn't understand, I am going to tell you as briefly as I can, of my life.

I was the second child of very poor parents, and of my life until I was nine I remember very little except that I never had a doll, or a Christmas tree, and that one Christmas we had stale bread soaked in warm water, with a salt and pepper seasoning as a dinner, and that mother had three children after I entered the world, each one of which I helped to nurse.

The tragedy of the wage question did not make any impression upon me until I was nine years old. My father, who is a very brilliant man, was re-

ceiving a wage of \$14.00 a week, just \$5.00 more than he received when he married my mother. Not only was he trying to carry along a family of five children, but also to build up a business college. It was shortly before this time that my older sister, a very beautiful girl, was put to work in the mill on piece work that brought a return of three or four dollars a week. I remember so clearly that she had to be at the mill at 7 and worked until 6. And even then, we were not having enough to eat.

One day, just a week before she was 12 years old, she came home in the middle of the afternoon, and complained that she felt sick. That night, we summoned a doctor. Father was paid by the month and the college was not meeting expenses, so there was practically no money coming in. Father explained this to the physician and sometimes I think he meant to be good to us in what he did, though it might have saved a great many regrets had he been truthful, instead. He pronounced my sister's disease as quinzy; it was diphtheria. She lived five days, and the last day before she died, she pleaded with mother for some oysters. Mother wouldn't beg and oysters were a luxury. They were

denied. The next morning at ten o'clock she strangled to death.

You girls to whom I am talking, do you remember the bitterness with which you recognized that there is a poverty so dire that existence is almost impossible, and a wealth so immense that no want goes unsatisfied? I realized it then at the age of nine for the first time, and that ungranted request of a dying child for oysters changed the entire current of my mother's life.

She loathed the city now; she demanded that we go to the country so that her children might have fresh air, and we went to a fakir village, practically owned and run by a fakir who had a fakir park. We rented an immense house from him and took his fakir performers to board. They were a medley, snake charmers, sword eaters, and the rest.

But they often forgot to pay their board and we began going into debt. We moved into a little cottage.

Then life seemed to settle down into drab. Father had been compelled to give up his struggle with the business college. He was still receiving \$14 a week, and had discovered a formula of a powder to increase the burning