

THE TEN-HOUR LAW.

Some Interesting Facts Concerning the Working Hours of Maryland Women.

[Extracts of an address delivered by Miss Sarah F. Martin, Chief of the Ten-Hour Law Bureau, at the Suffrage "At Home," held at J. G. L. Headquarters on January 6.]

IT is always a great pleasure for me to present the work in which I am interested to any group of people, but I take particular pleasure in coming before the members of the Just Government League, for we are, in a way, working toward the same goal—namely, to better the conditions of the working women of this State. A few weeks ago a reporter took the liberty of saying in one of the daily papers that I was an ardent suffragist and thought the panacea for all industrial ills was the vote. Now, whether I can be called an ardent suffragist or not I leave to you; but as to saying that the panacea for all industrial ills would be found when women obtained the right to vote, is not correct. I did not say it, I do not think it. But I do think this: That among the good things to be accomplished (and I am sure that the suffragists will agree with me) the bettering of the conditions of the working women and the abolishment of child labor will stand among the first.

When I think of how Mrs. Kelley can remember and tell of the different hours of labor for women lawful in the different States, as well as the minimum wage in some of them, I realize that the work that I represent is indeed a very small part of that great work that she has been so instrumental in bringing about. But as that small part has to do with the State in which you and I are most interested, I trust it will prove to be not so very an unprofitable hour for you.

Causes for Regulating Hours of Labor.

Before I tell you of the specific work of the ten-hour law bureau in Maryland it might be interesting to you for me to go back and call to your mind some of the causes that made the regulating of hours of labor for women and for children necessary.

President Wilson, in his inaugural address, speaking of our past, said:

"We have been proud of our industrial achievements, but we have not hitherto stopped thoughtfully enough to count the human cost, the cost of lives snuffed out, of energies overtaxed and broken, the fearful spiritual cost to the men, women and children upon whom the dead weight and burden of it all has fallen pitilessly the years through."

And even lesser lights than the President of the United States have noted this condition in the industrial world; in fact, no one who has been alive in the last twenty-five years does not know something of the truth of this statement. The daily press has been full of it, and all that is written along social lines has kept us from ignorance, so thoughtful men and women have today awakened to these conditions and have realized that they need not exist; that to remedy this loss of all that is best in life to the employe does not mean a crippling of the industry or a loss to the employer, but that whatever makes for a healthier, happier employe means a real asset to the industry. And so we have the limiting of hours of labor as one of the good things to bring about better conditions in safeguarding the health of the working men and women, as well as their rights in the struggle for existence.

We are told by authorities who have made this subject their life's work that long hours are detrimental in many ways to women. I will just mention a few. Long hours mean fatigue, and we know what a close relation fatigue has to disease, especially to the nervous diseases, and fatigue has also a direct bearing upon morals. Long hours, overwork, especially night work, means lack of sleep, and working oftentimes in bad air, loss of family life, and had I the time I might go on and show you more and more how the long hours required in our large industries of the working women of our land have helped to make some of them look to be 60 at 40, and have deprived them of their rights as citizens in a free country.

These conditions that have existed in the past that have exemplified the need of change have at last come to light, and the thoughtful are aroused and see that through legislation, the obtaining of law for regulating hours of labor, is at least one spoke in the great wheel that is to make life worth while to the working woman.

When I speak of long hours and night work I feel that I can speak with special emphasis because of the fact that during my life as a hospital nurse our hours were long, and the careworn face of a nurse who had spent one or two months on night duty testified to the fact that night work is not conducive to the best of health.

England.

England began this work some 78 years ago, and if you will take the time to compare the laws regulating the hours of labor for women that are now in operation in that country you will find that they show that England has found out much that we today are just beginning to learn.

Massachusetts.

Massachusetts heads the list in this country as appreciating the necessity for this law, and began the work about 38 years ago, and what is true of England's laws is in a measure true of the Massachusetts laws. The Massachusetts law regulating hours of labor in the textile industries, which prohibits the employment of women more than 10 hours in any one day, or more than 54 hours in any one week, or before six o'clock in the morning or after 10 o'clock in the evening, is the result of almost 40 years' direct experience, and not a law yet to be tried and tested.

Maryland.

But to return to our Maryland law, "Hours of Labor for Females," Acts of 1912, Chapter 79, as it is technically called, was signed by Governor Goldsborough on April 1, 1912, and went into effect May 1 of that same year.

Three inspectors were appointed and took their commission on the 6th day of May for a term of service of four years, and the establishment of the Ten-Hour Law Bureau immediately followed. Hitherto no statistics concerning the working women in Maryland had been available, but with the establishment of this bureau we hope that the records will show not only the number of women, but in which establishments and also the character of work done. This will not be confined to the city of Baltimore, but will include each county in the State.

Establishments Enumerated in the Law.

Possibly I can best give you an idea of our duties by first going over the law in detail, and taking up the points most generally misunderstood.

When this law was being agitated a great many thought that if this law was passed no women in Maryland need work more than 10 hours in any one day, but when we come to enforce it, we find only certain establishments come under this law, such as factories, stores, laundries, etc. And during the first 20 months of our work we estimated that there were about 50,000 women who are reached by this law. The women who are employed in lunchrooms and hotels do not come under our jurisdiction, but we are having brought to our attention so many lunchrooms that do have long hours and much overwork that we are asking all those before whom we speak to help us by further legislation to have lunchrooms added to the establishments already mentioned in the present law. And so I am asking if you have any knowledge of overtime work being done in these places, if you will not report the same to us and thereby help us gather the data that will give us something definite to present when we plead for these women. This law will not be complete until it gives an eight-hour day's work and includes every working woman in the State. But we have only just begun here in Maryland, and we have much to be grateful for, and much cause to be hopeful of what the future has in store for us.

In the State of Illinois in 1909 a similar bill included only the mechanical establishments, factories and laundries, and it was amended in 1911, two years afterwards, to include mechanical establishments, factories, laundries, mercantile establishments, hotels, restaurants, public institutions, telegraph or telephone, places of amusements, express transportation, public utility business by common carrier.

One-Girl Places.

The question has been raised whether establishments employing one woman comes under the law, and there is no doubt but that they do; in one part of the law it mentions three or more women, but that has to do distinctly with the lunch hour. And really, we find that the "one-girl" places, as we call them, including cashiers in grocery and provision stores, and the smaller establishments, are the ones who need the law the most. We as inspectors have often been cautioned to look out for overtime in the big factories. As a matter of fact, we are less likely to find overtime work in these places than we are in the small boxes used by the cashiers in the grocery and provision stores and in the back rooms of some of our dress-making establishments.

It was said in the beginning by the credulous that girls would lose their places in many instances, and the positions would be filled by men, which, as far as my experience goes, has only happened in a very few instances, and in one of these that has come to our notice the girl was recalled after a few weeks' time, for few men are willing to be employed for 10 hours a day at the small wage that a girl receives.

Posting the Law.

One of our duties has been to see that the law is posted in every estab-

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