



THE COURIER

LINCOLN, NEBR., SATURDAY, JULY 1, 1899.



ENTERED IN THE POSTOFFICE AT LINCOLN AS SECOND CLASS MATTER.

PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY

—BY—

THE COURIER PRINTING AND PUBLISHING CO

Office 1132 N street, Up Stairs

Telephone 384.

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Subscription Rates—In Advance.

Per annum.....	\$1 00
Six months.....	75
Three months.....	50
One month.....	20
Single copies.....	05

THE COURIER will not be responsible for voluntary communications unless accompanied by return postage.

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OBSERVATIONS.

The Ten Hour Law.

The object of the bill passed last winter regulating the number of hours' labor of female employes is ambiguous. Under the guise of making it easier for women in shops and offices, the law forbids employers to require more than ten hours work a day from female employes, but does not limit the number of hours which a male employe may devote to the service of his employer. Therefore when a merchant is looking for a clerk, he will naturally select the one who has fewest disabilities and will return the largest amount of service for the salary he is able to offer. Now the ten hour law applying solely to females is a disability. There are emergencies in every business and the prudent merchant will be cautious about employing help who can not work for him, whatever happens, more than ten hours a day without giving that employe a chance to have the law on him.

The law affects the drygoods merchant more than other employers because they employ more female labor than any other employers except manufacturers and there being very few factories in the Mississippi valley, the law as it affects factory girls is of small local significance. I think the law is a vicious one and was either introduced by a hidden opponent to female labor or by a foolish and short sighted friend. Very likely it was the latter, for it is the over-zealous, friendly busybodies who precipitate us into most of the uncom-

fortable and awkward situations which make us tired of life.

The quality and quantity of the work done, not the sex of the hands that did it and the head which directed it should determine the value of the labor, and it will, in time. In the meanwhile there is great opposition in many and most unexpected sources to female labor. The people who discuss the subject frequently refer to the depression of wages consequent upon the entry of woman into the labor market, the limited number of jobs, the unlimited number of females et cetera, et cetera. But when a woman and her children, or other weak and dependant members of her family are hungry, these considerations do not seem especially relevant to her.

As a drygoods clerk, to speak from the standpoint of a customer, a woman is more valuable than a man. Ask any woman—and the women buy the drygoods and household supplies—whether she prefers a man or woman to show her shirt waists, lingerie, hosiery, and the answer, except in rare cases, will be in favor of a woman clerk. A man, unless gifted with unusual taste and artistic discrimination is out of place in most of the departments of a drygoods store. Every good and well bred woman must first subdue natural objections before asking a male clerk to show her articles of made-up wearing apparel. In any drygoods store of this city anybody who cares to satisfy himself on this subject may constantly see women waiting for the services of a woman in the ready to wear department. Proprietors of men's furnishing stores have better judgement. No women are employed, not in Lincoln at least, and not many any where, as clerks in clothing stores. There are subtleties about the fit of a coat, about the color and style of a tie and about the shape of a hat that no woman has ever fathomed. There are occasionally men who know when a skirt hangs correctly and can prescribe the colors and style which different types of women should wear, but there are so few who attempt the mission that succeed, that the merchant prince who thinks he can pick him out is worthy of his title.

As to the ten hours a day law, five twelfths of a day is long enough for any one man or woman to work except in case of emergency. The man who has stood all day in a hot store among hurrying women on the hunt for bargains needs rest and the society of his own sex in the club, or out in the open air. He needs it as much as the woman who has stood at the opposite counter and also acquired an uncomplimentary opinion of her sex after the members of it have for ten hours pawed and rumpled her carefully folded stock. A law which makes it unlawful to work the woman more than ten hours is unjust to the woman in that it confers

upon her without her consent a disability and it is unjust to the man because it is an exemption which he deserves and has earned as much as the woman.

With the progress of time and the development of metropolitan characteristics Lincoln and even Omaha will probably get rid of some of the country town habits which distinguish them now. If the merchants of New York and Chicago can close six days of the week at 6 p. m. in the winter time and in the summer season at five o'clock on five days of the week and at one o'clock on Saturdays surely Lincoln and Omaha merchants whose rents are incomparably smaller can do so. The people in this Mississippi region have got into the habit in the summer time of strolling down town and in and out of the stores on Saturday night and insisting on being shown things they do not buy by pretty, tired shop girls and listless, bored young men. All the stories of goods bought by working men and women on Saturday nights could be discussed if for the next two months merchants would keep track of these Saturday night sales. I think they form an inconsiderable and trifling proportion of the day's sales, which when offset by the cost of light, is not worth the trouble. Especially when it is conceded that a woman who wants a dress must see it by daylight, and that if she has made up her mind to purchase it she will do so when the stores are open. If she can not buy it Saturday night she will buy it on Monday morning when the clerks, refreshed by a day's vacation will drape the folds alluringly before her critical eyes.

Trusts and the Tariff.

Mr. Henry O. Havemeyer, president of the sugar trust, embarrassed the Industrial Commission somewhat, when he called the tariff "the mother of Trusts," but he told the truth. "He, the chief of a particularly high handed trust, boldly declared that the existing tariff bill and the preceding one, have created and fostered all the trusts, with scarcely a notable exception, by providing them with an inordinate protection, to which they have not the slightest right under the sun. Mr. Havemeyer, it is well to add, is not given to indulging in day dreams concerning the rights of the community, or the duties of wealth to the state, or the ethics of competition or any other tommy-rot of that sort, as he would probably call it." Thus writes a man who is acquainted with Mr. Havemeyer and adds that "Mr. Havemeyer found that the Sugar Trust, with its capitalization that represents four or five volumes of water, is enabled, without the protection accorded most other enterprises, to earn fifteen or twenty per cent per year on its inflated stock, and with this fact in mind he was in-

evitably impelled to impress upon the Industrial commission the facts in the case."

If the tariff were removed, prices could not be inconsequently raised and the many could not be so easily fed to the few, though the largeness of the market and the different labor conditions in other centres of prohibition, might find an occasional victim among the few. There is no way to make trusts unprofitable but that of removing the tariff, levied on the many for the enrichment of the few. There is no reason why the price of the poor man's coat should contain besides the cost and profit of raising sheep, the cost and profit of making the wool into cloth, and the cost and profit of making the cloth into a coat, an additional bounty to the wool mill owner for his graciousness in consenting to live in America and buy and sell sheep's wool. In spite of all temptations to belong to other nations he has remained an American and we are opera bouffe enough to give up to him a considerable part of our sacred income to "encourage him to stay."

Any legislation that prevents men from going into partnership—and a trust is only a large partnership—is unconstitutional. But take away the special priveleges granted to manufacturers, and trusts, which work oppression will disappear. The trusts which have cheapened production, and whose products are sold at a price based on that cost and not on a protected market will not be permanently affected. The trusts have no special priveleges not granted to all men except those bestowed by the tariff.

Trusts have raised the price of paper, of lead and iron pipe, of bath tubs and plumber's supplies and many kinds of building material. The poor man who could build a house if the price of these things were in proportion to his wages—and they would be if the natural laws of commerce and of supply and demands were not interfered with—is unable to build because the rich men who supply these things are artificially protected from the natural result of an unwarranted raise in prices. Prices are like a vast body of water, which only threatens to submerge the land when men try to force it into an artificial channel, or restrain it in seasons of expansion. Mr. Havemeyer, with his knowledge of markets and causes of high prices and low prices has given competent testimony and legislators will find it futile to legislate against trusts while leaving the "mother of trusts" free to fill the country with new progeny.

Taxes vs. Charitable Beques'ts.

When rich men die they frequently leave large amounts to libraries, old ladies' homes, hospitals, relatives and other deserving objects. It is said that Russell Sage who has always