

Are Low Wages Entirely to Blame?

Following are Associated Press dispatches bearing upon the recent revelations that have stirred the country:

Chicago, March 12.—Reformers and the unreformed—the vice investigation commission and the women for whose moral downfall the commission is trying to determine the causes—differed today on the relation between low wages and low morality. Letters received by the commission from women of the underworld mocked at the work which the members have done. One of the letters reads:

To the Commission—Girls don't go wrong because they are hungry or because they need clothes. They go wrong because they are tempted by lies and overpowered by the evil in men.

They listen to the fair and pretty things that men tell them, and they fall because they think they can trust themselves and trust the tempters. The employer—I was a good girl and I worked in a store.

I didn't get much money, but that did not matter. I lived on \$8 a week and would be living like that now, but I met men. They seemed to consider me their prey and all the time it was fight—fight. They wanted to be nice to me, they said, and take me to the theaters and treat me fair—and give me a chance to enjoy life.

I didn't know men were bad, all bad—where a girl is concerned. I thought only women were bad. I thought all a girl had to do to remain good was to be truthful with herself. God pity women who think that and who keep their trust in men until it is too late.

Every day it was someone else—always smiling at me, always trying to give me a "fair chance" to be happy. In the street they followed me. These I could avoid—but the "friends" who hung around!

That is the big, big secret of the thing that makes a good girl bad. If they had let me be—if they had only left me be—only let me live as I wanted to, I would not have to slink into the room when your commission was trying to solve things and wouldn't have had to sit in a corner with a veil down, afraid to look good women in the face.

Another cry from the underworld echoed the words of the first letter. It was more bitter, though, and it read in part:

You're looking for the things that made such women as I. Low wages! Dance halls! Hunger! Cold! They all helped a bit, but they did not turn the trick themselves.

You're all a bunch of hypocrites, afraid to look the thing in the face and afraid to learn the truth.

I don't know any girls who sold themselves for money to buy bread or clothes, but I do know lots of us who hit the road for hell because a lot of blackguards kept hounding us with their rotten "attentions." God help the men and not us. We're all right when we start—all we need is to be left alone. There are hundreds and hundreds of kids and sports who hang around State street and wait like wolves for the tired girls to leave the stores.

Why don't you make the men be good? All the wages in the world won't help us. Make the men good and the girls will be good. Now they haven't got a chance and they never will as long as the law smiles at one and spits at another.

This letter was signed with the initials, "L. M."

While these comments on the situation continued to pour in, the civic consciousness awakened by the commission bestirred itself in the launching of committees and private investigating forces.

In some stores numbers of girls approached their employers and demanded larger salaries.

All were assured that they would be taken care of as soon as something definite has been agreed upon. Several resignations were tendered by girl employes as a result of parental advice.

A mass meeting for the discussion of "a living wage and a Saturday half holiday" was scheduled by the juvenile protective association, the consumers' league and the women's trade union for next Friday night.

Milwaukee, Wis., March 12.—Special: A working woman needs \$8.90 a week to support herself in Milwaukee. This is the opinion expressed by the social service committee of the

Milwaukee federation of charities in a report made public today. The committee urges young women who expect to support themselves to keep away from the city unless they have an assured income of at least \$9 a week, domestic servants excepted.

Springfield, Ill., March 12.—A conference of governors to discuss the suppression of vice and the amelioration of the conditions of working girls promises to be one of the early results of the "white slave" investigation in Illinois.

The conference was suggested tonight by Governor Dunne, and Lieutenant Governor O'Hara, chairman of the "white slave" investigating committee, will communicate at once with the governors of the states, suggesting a general conference at Springfield at an early date.

Announcement was made today that the "white slave" committee would start on its eastern trip March 20. The itinerary includes Albany, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington. At Washington the committee expects to lay its findings before President Wilson, Speaker Champ Clark, Vice President Marshall and others.

WOMANHOOD IN PERIL

Some of the results of the investigation in Illinois of the "vice and wages" question are given in the following showings:

White slavery presents a hundred times greater national crisis than did black slavery. Thousands of good girls are going wrong simply because they can not live upon the wages paid them by employers.

American womanhood is in grave peril only because American manhood profits from the helplessness of womanhood to enrich itself.

The crisis is not confined to Illinois. It is national.

Senator Edmond Beall, breaking down completely in the investigation, announces that he will spend every penny of his fortune to save girls from the piteous menaces that surround them.

Lieutenant Governor Barrett O'Hara, who has been a leader in this investigation has wired from Chicago to the New York Herald as follows:

To the Editor of the Herald: Our investigation into the causes and effect of white slavery in this state has shown conclusively that thousands of good girls are going wrong every year merely because they can not live upon the wages paid them by employers.

The conditions revealed to our commission have been only half told in the press reports. Senator Edmond Beall, a veteran of the civil war and a man of wide experience with the world, broke down completely and wept during the examination of the victims of low wages at our executive session.

Senator Beall is a retired manufacturer, worth a great many thousands of dollars. He told me that he intended to spend every cent of his fortune and every hour of his time to save American womanhood from the piteous menaces that our investigation has shown constantly surrounds her.

"White slavery presents a hundred times greater national crisis than did black slavery," the venerable senator declared to me, "and I say that as one who fought four years in the battles of the civil war."

Senators Tossey and Woodward have declared themselves in like manner. We have investigated this matter sanely and conservatively. We have tried to let the sunlight in on a condition and to spare individuals. We have accorded to all witnesses exact justice and full courtesy. And at the end of our labors so far we are appalled, stunned, horrified.

American womanhood is in grave peril solely and only because American manhood profits from the helplessness of womanhood to enrich itself. There is no other conclusion to be derived. It is a national shame, but it must be faced now and boldly.

The Illinois commission began its labors with no idea to do other than investigate the question of white slavery as the term is applied to the buying and selling of women. We were forced soon, however, to realize that low wages were the real fundamental cause of white slavery, and that to study the effect and ignore the cause would be to give to our investigation the appearance and reality of a farce. We refused to be parties to a farce. The people of

Illinois, which took the lead in the final solution of black slavery, stand back of us loyally and the work will go on regardless of whom or where it strikes.

Our merchant princes and our kings of manufacture, the very people who have been the witnesses before our commission, admit that there must be a readjustment of wages. To a man they have entered into sincere and earnest cooperation with us.

The crisis is not confined to Illinois. It is national. Unquestionably the conditions in your state are no better than in our state, and Illinois asks the great state of New York to stand side by side with her as she did so valiantly in the civil war; this time to loosen the chains of bondage from every American woman who is now a white slave or is thus imperilled by low wages. For this, our commission purposes to visit your state within the next two weeks.

BARRETT O'HARA.

THE INHUMANITY OF MULTITUDES

When Henry W. Grady was hesitating whether to remain on a New York paper or to return to Georgia, he decided to go home because nobody in the apartment in which he lived could tell him about the baby whose little white coffin was carried side by side with him down the steps of the adjoining apartment. "The inhumanity of cities" overwhelmed him. How many of us have had a similar experience?

In one of the large apartment houses in which I have lived on the West Side, my front door when it swung open touched the front door of my next door neighbor, divided from me only by a thin wall of less than half a foot. One morning on going out I met a pleasant-faced man emerging from this door. We exchanged the casual salutation of housemates. This we repeated on several subsequent occasions, in a casual way. I never knew his name.

One morning, about six weeks later, I asked the elevator boy what had become of the man. "He died two weeks ago," was the response. "and his body was taken out after nightfall and carried to the cemetery."

Here was this man who by every law of life and every creed of Christianity was my neighbor—my nearest neighbor. I could almost hear him breathe at night through the intervening wall.

And yet, he had sickened, he had suffered, he had gone through the agony or travail of death. He had been carried out in his midnight casket to the grave and his family had come back to the anguish and desolation of an unspeakable bereavement.

And I who was "this man's neighbor" had neither ministered to his suffering in life, stood by him in the hour and article of death, nor comforted the crowning sorrow of those who came back to his broken and desolate home—just within a foot of the light and love and laughter of my own—because in the rush of our big world I did not know.

I have never gotten over that incident. I never will. Something ought to be done about it. If something could be done.

We pay a fierce price for the joy of cities. Too many people make any one person unimportant. Great crowds dwarf and minify individuals. In the multitudes we forget each other too often in life and in death.

When a man dies among two or three in a little community, it is a tragedy. It darkens the sky, it shadows the spirit, it bows the head in reverence and humility and sympathy.

But when one dies among five millions, the little gap made by the passing of the atom closes up so quickly from the mighty mass that it is difficult to remember that the atom ever lived or even died.

From which I came to say that the cities are not much of a place for old people or people who die. They should find a softer and simpler life and a quieter place in which to enact the last great tragedy of life, which is death.

I would like to live in a great city all my vigorous life.

But I would like to grow old and die in the little country town where the neighbors would come to ask after me in the last days, follow me kindly to the churchyard, when I was gone, and come back for a little tender touch of comfort to those who were left behind.

Is it not well now and then to halt this mad rush of living, and give space to a little breathing time of charity and tenderness for those who die?—John Temple Graves, in the New York American.