

is practically unavailable to women. As an eminent English writer says: "The stripes of workmen are feared; those of working women laughed at." This fact is recognized by the employer, who well knows that he can buy his labour cheaper from unorganized than from organized labour.

Carroll D. Wright, U. S. Com. of Labour, makes the following strong statement on the condition of women in the cotton mills: "What are these women but the very weakest and most dependent of all the people? They have no disposition to agitate. All that is possible to them is to toil, scrimp, and bear. Now for men, the strong, those who bear rule, the sovereigns of the land, the *hours of labour* are but *ten* all over the country in about every employment where they preponderate. But where the women and children preponderate the hours of labour, as a rule, are *eleven or more*. And the question is, why is it, in this land, which aims at equality and justice, that the weakest, the most helpless and dependent, are loaded with the more hours, while the strong, the able-to-bear, and the controlling ones have the less hours to work?"

Many noble societies, even in this city, have been founded for the amelioration of the condition of factory operatives, but these do not reach the cause of the evil. It is justice, not charity, these women want from society. The even-handed goddess is the only reformer that can reach the root of these and many other social wrongs. The woman who effects the promotion of one capable factory woman to a position of trust and management, has done more to elevate and give encouragement to the whole class, than would she, who should organize a score of dilettante charities for their benefit.

The trades dependent upon the needle form a history of human misery unequalled by the industrial condition of any working class the world has ever seen. Is not Hood's Song of the Shirt so pitiful in that it is so true? Here, too, women suffer from the same want of organization, the same eager competition born of overcrowding, the same low wages that mark the other leading occupations. It is true that the best of skilled labour commands good wages, and the fashionable dressmakers often acquire a competency, but these are but a handful compared to the vast army of needle-women who work for a mere pittance. The influences which tend to depress women's industrial condition bear the most fearful significance in the lower grades of its workers,—the sewing woman who makes a heavy pair of working pantaloons for *seven cents*, and by working continuously at the machine can make ten pairs in a day of from 12 to 15 hours. Provided no time is lost, their average weekly wages are \$3.80, but to reach even this sum they are obliged to work *seven* full days, only occasionally taking Sunday afternoon for a holiday. The condition of the shirt makers is still worse; they receive but 6 to 8 cents apiece, and can earn only from 30 to 50 cents a day. Vests are made for 3 to 6 cents apiece. Miserable attics and cellars form the only homes of these women, and their tenure even of these is precarious, depending upon the uncertain fortunes of an employment in which, owing to the enormous overcrowding, the most frivolous reason serves as a pretext for a dismissal. Such a woman's food is insufficient and unwholesome, her clothing of the meanest description, and if she have a best dress for Sundays or holidays it is often in the pawn shop to meet the exorbitant rent she is obliged to pay for even her wretched tenement. A cloak maker, who, with a friend, occupies two rooms on the top floor of a large tenement house on the East Side, states that they never have a warm meal or meat except for their Sunday dinner. The remainder of the week they subsist on bread and tea or milk. She also added that they were better off than many other sewing women. And yet it is work demanding experience, skill, and taste in its higher departments, and requiring neatness, deftness of hand, and care in all. Its products are among those most in demand; the garments of the women and children of the wealthy classes are marvels of beauty and workmanship, while the changing dictates of fashion require the constant services of the sewing women. The question naturally arises, Why then are the wages of seamstresses so shamefully low and the struggle for existence so tragic for them? It must be obvious to the most superficial observer that, even with the

present excess of supply over demand in this branch of work, thorough organization could effect much in raising the wages of needle women. But here the greed of monopoly is limited by no restrictions or resistance. The poor sewing woman, isolated in the midst of a great city, falls an easy prey to this gigantic evil of modern society. The multiplication of stores of ready-made clothing means an increase of the system which allows the manufacturer to grind down the wages of "slop work" to the pittance which merely enables the sewing women to exist,—to live in any sense that implies a rational existence she does not. To these women even the lowest wages of the workman would mean riches and abundance. And yet it is the man who complains the most loudly and effectually. Michelet says that the workman needs so many more things than the workwoman that one could say of them what is said of the English and Irish labourers, "The Irishman when he is hungry asks only for potatoes; but the hungry Englishman demands meat, sugar, tea, and above all beer."

The position of domestic servant possesses many advantages over the condition of a factory or sewing woman, both by the increased comfort and cleanliness of its surroundings and its better compensation. But in no other employment do we hear more bitter complaints of inefficiency. This is almost wholly due to the fact that, in the city, domestic servants are mostly drawn from the tenement-house districts or the newly-landed immigrants from Castle Garden, who, without previous training, are expected to perform skillfully the complicated duties of a modern household. With the best intentioned, proficiency is only gained by many failures and long experience, while the more thriftless and careless go to swell the ranks of inefficient servants who, being always in search of a place, serve to keep wages at the lowest rates. But if girls were trained for domestic servants as boys are trained to become carpenters and masons, the work would speedily command the consideration and wages that other skilled labour does in the market.

Upon women possessing wealth, leisure, and influence, must the evils of the present state of domestic service chiefly rest, since they have it in their power, not only to provide themselves with skilled servants by organizing and encouraging schools of cookery and other branches of domestic economy, but of becoming benefactors to thousands of their own sex by raising domestic service to the rank of a skilled employment.

And yet to enter domestic service is one of the most common remedies proposed for bettering the condition of working women. Do the advocates of domestic service ever stop to consider that it is one of the employments open to women which is already crowded to its utmost capacity, and that to precipitate any more untrained women into a field of labour which does not afford any adequate means of training for those already there would be a most disastrous remedy for the evils which now prevail? Nearly a million women are filling the position of domestic servants, and yet the intelligence offices are crowded and every advertisement brings scores of applicants. It is better servants that are needed, not greater numbers. Another evil in the working woman's condition arises from the fact that however hard she may work she cannot, at the present rate of wages in the occupations fully open to her, hope to save money. It is with the greatest difficulty she can provide for the immediate wants of the present; thus all openings which require the smallest amount of capital are closed to her. A man, starting at the lowest round of the industrial ladder, can, by habits of steady industry, thrift, and economy, rise to the highest position in his trade or profession, can look forward to the pleasures of a comfortable home, of educating his children, and enjoying a competency in his old age. But for the working woman there exists no such plans or hopes. The hopelessness of her condition is one of its saddest features. —IDA M. VAN ERTEN, in the *North American Review* for March.

MESSES. BENTLEY, it is stated, will be the publishers of a work by Mr. Thomas Adolphus Trollope containing reminiscences of eminent men and women with whom the writer has been acquainted during a long and active life. If it is half as interesting as his brother Anthony's *Autobiography* it will deserve to be more widely read than all his novels put together.