

HIT AT SWEAT-SHOPS.

SPEAKERS URGE THE EIGHT-HOUR LAW FOR WOMEN.

At a Meeting at Kimball Hall, Where a Joint Debate Was Expected, Representatives of the Manufacturers' Association Fail to Appear—Franklin MacVeagh in a Letter Expresses Himself in Favor of Shorter Hours—Addresses by Henry D. Lloyd and Dr. E. G. Hirsch.

Worthy champions of the eight-hour law were prepared to cross rhetorical swords with representatives of the Manufacturers' Association at Kimball Hall yesterday afternoon, but they found no foemen awaiting them. The association, by its Secretary, sent a letter saying that it thought no good would come from the joint debate, and therefore the challenge was declined. From Franklin MacVeagh, a member of the association, came a denial that he was opposed to the factory law and words of encouragement for those who are fighting for its enforcement. The hall was filled with people who had come prepared for a forensic strife. They were a trifle disappointed, but soon forgot that in listening to the speeches of Henry D. Lloyd, Mrs. Charles Henrotin, Rabbi Hirsch, and Dr. Bayard Holmes. It was clearly an eight-hour audience. Mrs. T. J. Morgan presided and Mrs. Fanny Cavanaugh was Secretary.

The first business was the reading of the letter from the Manufacturers' Association declining to debate. It was from Secretary J. F. Tit, as follows:

"Mrs. T. J. Morgan—Dear Madam: In reply to your invitation to participate in a debate on the question of the eight-hour law for women as applied to this State would say that we do not think any practical good would be accomplished by such debate. While it is probable that a majority of the members of the Illinois Manufacturers' Association would favor such a law if it was general in its application instead of local, as at present, we have to look at its practical effect on the industries of the State. Should it be enforced it will place those of us who employ that class of labor at a decided disadvantage with those engaged in similar branches in other States. As the production would be reduced one-fifth it would of necessity increase the expense four-fifths in a like ratio, and in these days of small profits and close competition it would have one of two effects, either to supplant female with male labor or to drive manufacturers to other States where no such restriction exists. We will not enter into the constitutionality of the law, as that will be argued by our attorneys before the Supreme Court, but we do not think that such an outrage on the liberties of the working women of this State, which at once deprives them of the liberty of making a contract and robs them of one-fifth of their earnings, will be upheld. And we have no doubt when this is thoroughly understood by the different labor unions that they will gladly invite an honest effort to have such a pernicious law repealed."

MacVeagh Favors Short Hours.

A letter from one of the members of the Manufacturers' Association, Franklin MacVeagh, was also read. It was as follows:

"Mrs. T. J. Morgan—Dear Madam: I have received your notification of a meeting at Kimball Hall Sunday afternoon, addressed to me, as I assume, as a manufacturer and as one opposed to the enforcement of the factory law passed by the last Legislature. You will permit me to say that neither as a citizen nor as a manufacturer am I opposed to the factory law; and it is in operation in such factories as we have. Indeed, I am in favor of eight hours as the common limit of work, though I might or might not approve of particular laws on the subject. Indeed, I hope to see the eight-hour reform brought about without too much legislation.

"I write to you because I do not want my position confused. I am so much in favor of shorter hours that I have long ago reduced the working hours in our establishment from ten to nine without the cooperation of my competitors. Last winter when the eight-hour factory law was being enforced, the times being so hard, in the interest of the workers, as our hours were already reduced to nine I should have been glad to let the winter go through on that basis, not being convinced that there was a general effort to enforce the law, but when I found there was such effort we immediately put it in operation. I have so long been in favor of reduced hours of labor that I was surprised to find myself classed in this instance as an antagonist of my own views."

Mrs. Morgan announced that she had received a message from Mr. MacVeagh to the effect that he was compelled to leave the city on important business and for that reason he was not present.

The first speaker was Henry D. Lloyd. He said the crucial point involved in the sweatshop law is the right of the State to control contracts made by women for the sale of their labor. "This Illinois law," said the speaker, "is evolutionary, not revolutionary. It follows logically and historically in the straight sequence of social development. But our great Chicago clothing manufacturers say to their employes: 'You shall not have the shortening of hours in any way. You cannot have it by individual request; you cannot have it by union; you cannot have it by law.' They do not take this attitude in ignorance of the conditions in which their people work. So keen is their appreciation, on the contrary, of these conditions that business-men go mad at the mere fear that they or their loved ones may descend into that inferno. Had there been no trades unions in Chicago and no trades union leaders to raise the people in mass-meetings, with members and committees in Springfield and Washington to guide State and national investigations through the baby farms of Chicago industry, Illinois would not have today the best anti-sweatshop law on the statute books of any civilized community. The unions of Chicago are here to stay notwithstanding the war that is now being made upon them, and the anti-sweatshop law is there to stay. If the Supreme Court of this State finds the law unconstitutional or void we will change the form of the law. If that is not enough we will change the Constitution."

Mrs. Charles Henrotin was the next speaker. She said the absence of the manufacturers from the meeting was of little consequence. Such meetings were of value because they served to educate public sentiment. The question at issue is not a ten-hour or an eight-hour day, but whether it is constitutional to restrict or limit a day's work by law to any number of hours. Mrs. Henrotin spoke of the effect of the law so far as it has been enforced. The girls who do piece work have not had their earnings reduced by the shorter hours. They have found themselves able to accomplish as much work. The "time" workers have suffered a slight reduction on the pay. The speaker said she would advise all workingwomen to join labor unions and to agitate for shorter hours for women because it means in the end shorter hours for all workers, men and women.

Sweater Boss Worse than Padrone.

Dr. E. G. Hirsch said there are two fetiches in the economical creed of people educated under British or American influences. One of them is the freedom of contract and the other the competitive system. A child, he said, has no right to make a contract by which it mortgages its future health and strength. No man can contract away that which is not his own. Where child labor is a necessity the social system is wrong and must be reformed. The father has no right to sell his child to the factory and it is the duty of the State to prevent him if he desired to do such a thing. The sweat-shop proprietor, who employs child labor, said Dr. Hirsch, is worse than the Italian padrone. The latter at least sends his little victims into the outer air. They frequently breathe the air of the boulevards, but the victim of the sweat shop is imprisoned in an atmosphere so foul that the manufacturer who waxes rich by the system would not permit his pet dog to breathe it. "One," said the speaker, "who had perhaps more tenderness for humanity than any other man who ever lived said 'suffer little children to come unto me.' If he came to Chicago and into the churches which bear his name he would say suffer the children to grow up to healthy manhood and womanhood and do not compel them to mortgage their future."

Dr. Bayard Holmes, Dean of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, discussed female labor from a physiological standpoint. He said it is impossible for a girl from 14 to 18 years of age to work long hours in the factory without permanent injury.

William C. Pomeroy and Ethelbert Stewart

of the Bureau of Labor Statistics spoke briefly, and the meeting ended with a speech by T. J. Morgan. The latter said regulations of the hours of labor is socialism, and he predicted that the time will come when competition will be abolished and children will not be compelled to work. The meeting adopted resolutions indorsing the sweat-shop law and urging its enforcement.