

## CONDITIONS OF LABOR

### Factories.—Light and Air.

Fault can not be found with many of the larger plants on the score of lack of window space. Smaller establishments, such as tailoring shops, furriers, and millinery stores, are often located on one or two floors in downtown shops, which have a front facing of not more than twenty feet in width; in the rear the windows open onto a court, or there may be no windows at all. The front half of the shop is used for show and salesrooms, the rear half curtained or partitioned off for a workroom. The latter is usually so dark that artificial light is needed all the time. Very little fresh air can come in from the rear, and practically none from the front room, which is aired by the coming and going of the customers. Frequently the toilet is placed in the workroom without even a curtain protecting it. In such cases it invariably ventilates into the workroom. In one instance, in a high-priced millinery shop, the girls complained a great deal. The health officer had been there, but nothing was done to remedy the condition until one of the girls came down with scarlet fever. Then the toilet was enclosed, and other precautions were taken. In another rear workroom one of the employes had to sit with her back against a "shoe box" toilet door. This girl frequently had "fainting fits." In this same place, a cracked sink, which the owner had attempted to patch up with plaster of paris, allowed the water to drip on the floor. For many months one of the workers, on account of the location of her work table, had to stand on this wet spot, where the water drained. Eventually, she had to give up her work on account of ill health and went to the country to recover. In the same place, until this spring, the employes drank from a galvanized pail with a wooden cover.

Other firms of this class, such as tailors and milliners, sometimes have the entire floor for show and fitting rooms, and use a balcony for a workroom. As this is usually built in at the front of the store, the light is very good and the air also when the transoms are built to be opened; but they are very congested as workrooms, and crowd the workers up against one another. Sometimes the ceilings are so low that a girl can scarcely stand up straight in the workroom.

### Lack of Heat.

A question which is most important during the winter months is that of heat. In some factories no heat at all is provided, or tiny wood stoves supply inadequate heat. What the effect of sitting in a cold workroom for ten hours a day, perhaps after she has walked from home in the rain for lack



of carfare, — what effect this has immediately on a young woman's work and on her health for the long future is too evident to need further words.

### Conditions Affecting the Efficiency of the Worker.

Along with the question of sufficient space in which to work, good light and fresh air to keep her alert, and a reasonably warm workroom, comes the question concerning the nature of the work itself and its effect on the efficiency of the worker. Several conditions may affect the thoroughness and rapidity of a worker. First, she may work where the heat from stoves or machines is far beyond what the human frame is designed to meet. Second, she may have to handle materials that give off nauseating, acid, or other overpowering odors, or much dust and dirt. Third, the arrangement of the workroom may be such that she has to spend valuable time collecting materials for work, when a little forethought on the part of the manager would make her earning ability a few cents greater.

#### Laundries.—Too Great Heat.

Laundries probably demand the most from the workers on this score. It does not matter whether an employe is engaged in the handling of hot clothes, or managing the mangler or body ironer; she works in an overheated and frequently steam-laden atmosphere. The washing machines on the first floor, and all the rooms above suffer in consequence. Sometimes the boards of the floor are too hot for comfortable standing. Besides the discomfort of the heat, the work is very laborious, and 9½ hours at it demand more energy than can be regained in the same length of time of rest. In summer-time, conditions are particularly terrific. In one laundry, where the temperature sometimes reached 135 degrees, six girls fainted at work within three weeks. One was in bed several days as a result. The usual custom is to take the girls out of doors, leave them there until they revive, when they come back to work. Some laundries have fans which help to keep the air in circulation, and some have awnings, but one or two have neither, and the managers refuse to add them. Even those which have the fans have not, in many cases, a sufficient number. Most of the work has to be done standing. The women complain that its hardships would not be as great if a large enough force of workers was maintained; that lack of a larger force is due to deliberate refusal on the part of managers to hire sufficient help. As a general rule, laundrymen are unable to hire the number of workers they need, but men who refuse awnings or fans when the temperature of the workroom is 135 degrees are capable of keeping too few workers and of driving the ones on hand to the utmost.