

Mrs. Kelley's Estimate of Value of Child-Labor Law.

Mrs. Florence Kelley, state inspector of child labor, lectured yesterday noon before a good-sized audience at Central Union Hall on the subject of "Child Labor."

Rev. Francis J. Hecht, in introducing the speaker, said child labor had undergone retrogression in Chicago. The numbers of the coal girls in that city were more than the old slave drivers. The law should prevent the employment of children everywhere.

Mrs. Kelley began by expressing her gratification that at this busy season so many men were present. About 3,500 children were in the factories of Illinois, and New York and other states were in the same category. Here in Illinois there was no compulsory attendance at school. The law said no child younger than 14 years should work in a factory, but it was very difficult to enforce the law, and it was not worth the paper it was written on. She found some children who could not answer simple questions in English. With 1,000 sweat shops to look after, and a handful only of inspectors, it was impossible to enforce the law.

Children were killing sheep at the stock yards and mauling to death three inches deep. Technically the employer was free from blame, as the children claimed to be of legal age. In glass works in Mendota and Alton, as well as among the greasyards and cash girls, there was the same wrong. There was a whole colony of children, 8 and 7 years old, who were turned out to earn their living.

It was not right to put all the blame on employers; a part of it belonged to the legislators. All through all bright papers, and had their souls marked.