

# TO STOP CHILD LABOR.

## DR. PROBST AND FLORENCE KELLEY START A CRUSADE.

### Startling Facts Presented at Noonday Meeting in Central Music Hall—Apathy of the General Public and Legislature Severely Criticized—Condition of Cash Girls in Department Stores, Children in Factories, and Newsboys Shown in Glaring Light.

"Child Labor in Chicago" was the subject under discussion at Dr. Probst's noonday lecture at Central Music Hall yesterday. Miss Florence Kelley, State Factory Inspector, added her voice to that of Dr. Probst in behalf of the children. With the Civic Federation working in the same direction it looks as if Chicago in the near future may become the champion of childhood. In his lecture yesterday Dr. Probst said:

"There was a time in Chicago when little girls were not put at such a low estimate as they are today. There was a time when the city would have been horrified to learn that little girls by the thousands were deprived of schooling and compelled to work early and late. Chicago's heart is getting hard.

"Gaze at the little girl toilers of Chicago. Note the pallor of their wan cheeks. Look at their pinched faces. See the weariness and worryment of their countenances. Care, anxiety, and toil have worn deep shadows around their brows. The eyes have grown hard and the manner listless.

#### Little Cash Girls.

"Look at the little cash girls on State street. Many of them are driven out to toll by harsh and exacting mothers. In the great department stores little girls are hurried and driven hither and thither like roustabouts on a Mississippi steamboat. All day long they run hither and thither, without a moment's rest. Such a thing as a seat, even if provided, is not to be thought of from 8 o'clock in the morning until 6 at night.

"Their ceaseless toil sows the seeds of permanent wreck to physical health before womanhood is reached. Defrauded of education, their minds are stunted as well as their bodies. The moral influence of such surroundings is hurtful in the extreme. Thrown in contact with rougher adults their childish minds become impressed with all the faults and evils of older people. Watch those little girls when they pour out of the side entrance to these stores at 6 o'clock at night. They are too poor, often, to afford car fare. They meet all sorts and conditions of men in their homeward journey. Temptation lurks at every corner. When they arrive home what do they often find? A cross and careworn mother, crying little brothers and sisters. The slave's life of the South was often better than the endless grind of these little ones.

"What is the effect of child labor on industrial conditions? It increases the throngs of competitors, throws strong men out of work, and changes the order of nature. The weak are made the bread-winners and the strong the bread consumers.

"The State must step in and enact laws and enforce them prohibiting child labor. It must compel them to go to school. These little children have no voice and no champion. Every woman who has a heart, and every man who has a voice, should cry aloud in behalf of these helpless children."

#### Miss Kelley Speaks to the Point.

At the close of his remarks Dr. Probst introduced Miss Florence Kelley.

"It is comparatively a new thing in our history," said Miss Kelley, "that we find so many children doing so much work. There are over 8,000 children in the factories of the State of Illinois. But it is not the business of any human being to find out how many children are in the department stores, or what are the conditions under which they work or the number of hours. In Germany all children are compelled to go to school. It is not so here. Our compulsory education law is not worth the paper it is written on."

Miss Kelley stopped to explain that in November of this year she had put four different children on the stand to testify in their own behalf who she found could not understand English, even the simplest sentences. This was the case, although the children in question were born in Chicago and had reached the ages of 11, 12, and 13 years.

"Out at the Stock-Yards," continued Miss Kelley, "are two or three hundred little butchers, killing sheep and swine, handling entrails, and standing all day in from three to five inches of blood. In England grown men who are so occupied are not considered fit for jury duty."

Referring to the hundreds of children in the glass factories at Streator and Alton, Miss Kelley said: "Most of them from size and appearance look to be 10 or 11 years of age. They work from morning until night, ruining body and soul, and yet there is no help for this evil until our laws are changed.

#### Life of the Newsboy.

"It is not only the cash girls, but the newsboys who never go to school. The newsboys get up at 3 o'clock in the morning to catch the first edition of the papers, and they play craps on the corners with the pennies thus earned while awaiting the afternoon editions. They evade the law by coming to the night schools occasionally. Then they are so exhausted they drop their heads on desks and sleep. No power can keep them awake.

"It is not the proprietors of the stores alone who are to blame. We cannot put all the blame on the employers. The general apathy of the Legislature in these matters is but the pulse of the general public. We have grown hard.

"While the community is in such a state the Legislature will bury every bill relative to cash girls and newsboys just as it always has done."