

LOOKING INTO AN EVIL

UNCLE SAM EXAMINING THE "SWEAT-SHOP" SYSTEM.

The Congressional Commissioners Begin the Inquiry in Chicago—Warner of New York and Hoar of Massachusetts Make a Tour of the Unhealthy Places—Manufacturers on the Stand in Justice Harlan's Court—Mrs. T. J. Morgan's Views on the Causes and Remedies.

Congress is interested in the "sweat shops" of the large cities, where men and women and little children work long hours for starvation wages amidst the squalor and filth of the worst sort of tenement houses. The special committee on Manufactures, of which John H. Warner of New York is chairman and Sherman Hoar of Massachusetts is Secretary, charged with the collecting of facts regarding this system, began its day's labors yesterday.

During the forenoon, while the April showers were doing the neglected work of the Street Department, washing the mud and filth from the streets, Mr. Warner and Mr. Hoar began a tour of inspection, accompanied by Health Officer McDonald and Inspector Mrs. Ida Glennon and Detective Will-

Prentiss could not answer the question, but he said if a case should arise in which he feared contagion he would submit it to the Health Department for a decision.

Henry W. King, the wholesale manufacturer and a member of the firm of Browning, King & Co., testified that his firm sold between \$3,000,000 and \$4,000,000 a year. They had their medium goods made at their own factory in Broome street, New York, and fine goods in Rockland, Me. The reason for manufacturing goods in New York was because skilled labor was cheaper in New York than in Chicago. The reason for this was that skilled labor from Europe landing in New York was inclined to stay there, and the result was lower wages.

Other Manufacturers Examined.

Edward Rose, a member of the Board of Education and of the firm of Strauss, Yondorf & Rose, was the next witness. He gave the annual sales of his house at \$1,500,000, seven-eighths of which were outside the State of Illinois. The system of giving out work to "sweat-shops," he explained, grew up several years ago because of losses resulting from the giving out of work to irresponsible persons.

Herman Elson of Hirsch, Elson & Co., No. 109 Market street, objected to Mr. Hoar's suggested plan of putting a tag number on each garment which should be a means of determining what shops the goods had been made in. Mr. Elson expressed the view that the wages paid to workmen were higher than some years ago.

"Our own examination made this morning," said Mr. Hoar, "brought out the fact that wages have been on the decrease for the last five years. Both the submanufacturer or 'sweater' and the workmen agree that the prices paid by manufacturers to the contractors and that paid by the contractors to the workmen are smaller than they were two or three years ago."

Emanuel Rothschild, who had been making side answers to the questions from the members of the committee, was called to testify. His first remarks were on the question of having United States inspectors to look after the product of the workshops.

"I object to any interference with our business by Irish tailors who are too lazy to work and who will want to dictate to us what we shall do. Before we will submit to that we would go out of business entirely."

"How do wages paid to employees now compare with wages paid one and two and five years ago?"

"So far as I know they are as good as then. I don't bother my head about what the subcontractors pay the operatives. That is their business, not mine."

After he had finished with his testimony Mr. Rothschild asked the stenographer and several reporters to change his statement so that his characterization of the lazy tailors who might interfere with him would apply to Germans, Scandinavians, Englishmen, and Scotchmen as well as Irish.

Mrs. Morgan went on the stand again just before adjournment to refute the statements of those witnesses who had said wages were as high now as several years ago. The threatened strike of last fall, which had resulted in the examination of the "sweating" system, had been caused by an attempt to reduce the wages paid cloakmakers by 40 per cent.

The committee is to meet at 10:30 o'clock this morning at the same place and will listen to some of the victims of the "sweaters." These people the Trade and Labor Assembly was securing yesterday afternoon. The committee will also hear any of the manufacturers and workmen from the unions who desire to present any evidence.



EMANUEL ROTHSCHILD.

ians from the Central Detail. A dozen shops were visited and the visitors saw enough of the evils of the system to convince them of a need for legislation.

Mr. Warner left the party before its morning's labors had been quite completed, and after a hurried luncheon he took himself, his bright red whiskers, and his official stenographer to Justice Harlan's court room in the Government Building to begin the investigation of the witnesses summoned to appear before the committee.

There were half a dozen clothing manufacturers present. Mrs. Thomas J. Morgan, who had been one of the committee which made the tour of investigation last fall, was present together with several other representatives of trade and labor assemblies. Mrs. Morgan was the first witness, and by way of preface she presented a type-written document showing some new places visited last week. Mrs. Morgan followed with statements regarding hours, wages, etc. In many of the shops she had found children of school age employed, starvation wages were paid for long hours of arduous work, and in some instances the employees were not given time to eat.

Causes and Remedies Suggested.

When asked the causes in her opinion and her suggestions as to remedy, Mrs. Morgan said:

"The low class of immigration that is constantly pouring into this country is in my opinion responsible for the present state of affairs. These people came to America with debased ideas; they have been accustomed to as bad or worse treatment in their old homes and they cannot understand or appreciate the dangers that surround them from a physical standpoint. Then people can get no other work and they are compelled to take up this class of work or starve."

"As to a remedy, if the city ordinances were enforced a stop would be put to all the 'sweaters' dens. One city ordinance provides that in factories each and every workman shall have 500 cubic feet of breathing space. In the 'sweaters' shops visited last fall we found the average breathing space only 35 cubic feet or only one-tenth of that required by law. I can see no improvement in the shops or in the wages paid. One place was whitewashed three weeks ago and that is the only improvement I have noted."

Mrs. Morgan said she had never found a washroom in a "sweat" shop.

John H. Prentiss of the Charles P. Kellogg Clothing company was the next witness put on the stand. He seemed to doubt the authority of Mr. Warner to put questions to him, but Mr. Warner soon disabused his mind of such a notion.

"What amount of business does your firm do in a year?" the Chairman asked.

When Mr. Prentiss was convinced that an answer would be necessary he replied that the



MRS. T. J. MORGAN.

annual sales of his house were between \$2,000,000 and \$3,000,000, and that of the entire clothing trade of Chicago in the neighborhood of \$20,000,000. The majority of the clothing sold by wholesale houses was made in Chicago, and in a majority of cases the work was done by contract. Five per cent would be a liberal estimate, he said, of the amount manufactured directly by the wholesalers. Contractors, he said, worked for several firms generally.

Not Familiar with "Sweaters."

In answer to questions regarding the sanitary condition of the shops in which the goods were manufactured Mr. Prentiss said he had never made an examination of the quarters. There was nothing in the manufacture of clothing to protect those who bought it against contagion.

New York was the principal competitor in the manufacture of the cheaper grades of clothing, though the clothing made there cut little figure in the Chicago market.

The witness told of the plan in vogue with his house of sending private inspectors to the houses where the manufacture of clothing was carried on, but he explained that this was done without system and a place might pass for months without examination.

Mr. Hoar described one of the places visited during the forenoon where a small room contained a cook-stove, a garbage box, two small children, an old woman with a diseased face, the workmen, the cut garments piled high on tables and chairs, with the vile effluvia from various vessels. He asked if the witness thought clothing made in such a place could be healthy. Mr.