III Drawbacks - Industry due to fashion - Nursing-nursing-nursing

The trades in which the greatest numbers of women are employed, the clothing and textile trades, are not only seasonal in normal times, subject to the ups and downs as demand rises and falls, but they are subject to the whims of fashion. Take , for instance, the effect on women workers of the rise and decline of the hoop skirt. New York City in 1860 had .... hoop skirt works, hundreds of girls being employed. As the huge circular hoop gave way, graduating to one which through out only the back of the skirt, leaving the front flat and gradually was reduced in length until it was nothing but a little wire bustle at the waist, the fact was perceptible on the working world and in the towns where these factories existed. And as even the bustle gave way, the factories went out of business and the girls were forced to find other ways of earning their living. As the hoop skirt gradually dwindled the number of yards used in a skirt decreased, effecting directly the textile industry in which women are so largely employed as spinners and weavers. Today the textile workers of all countries are idle for long weeks in every season, not only have they long seasonal idleness, bur many factories are c osed entirely due to the fact that so little cloth is used in the gowns of women. The decline is partly made up by increase in the number of gowns used. One Sunday dress, one everyday street dress, two or three house dresses constituted the wardrobe of even well todo women sixty

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or seventy years ago and they wore these gowns a full season. Two to three times as many are bought by even your working girl under present conditions. Nevertheless the skimpy size of the gown has had a disasterous effect on the textile industry. "If women would were their skirts 2" longer", a manufacturing textile man said in public a short time ago, "it would put our industry again on its feet." These ups and downs of fashion effect all kinds of industrix manufacturers of accessories. What are girls doing now who once were employed in the factory that made whalebones for women's gowns, or those who made the elaborate pasmentarie (?) bugle and jet trimmings. Probably they have learned the new trick of embroidery and machine lace, the ..... being to persuade women to use more and more of these articles in their gowns. These fluctuations of the market of the fashion, throwing great number out of work to which they become accustomed, add to the general instability of the women's trades, and she comes to feel that nothing lasts in business, as she knows it. It is another element in her casual attitude that she assumes towards her job. It can hardly be expected that she should feel any high degree of responsibility or devotion to an undertaking which may close its door at any time and which she can see beginning to dwindle away. Her natural and rightful desire is for something that lasts and too much of the industry which calls her does not last. It is seasonal and unless she has some steady or permanent

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tie, like a home or some ambition like preparation for some undertaking for a trade or profession which she knows is to last, the whole struction is made destrubtive, unbalanced. Unfortunately employers in many of the seasonal activities are indifferent to modern conditions in their factory. They feel the more or less uncertainty about their enterprise and they are not sufficiently intelligent the far sightedness to see the changes in fashion and take advantage of them. Thus the girl is not alone subject to the seasonal and temporary work, but work under poor conditions and more or less slovenly management. It is not to be wondered that she becomes increasingly unreliable as a worker under these circumstances.

Women's situation has been complicated in the past, particularly on the Atlantic Coast, by the steady arrival of immigrants, glad enough to get any task for the moment. The inflow of incomers has made organization of women difficult and yet it is out of this foreign mass, a large part of it not speaking english, that the most stirring strikes against bad conditions that the public has seen, have come. In New York particularly there have been two strikes that have had not only great industrial and social importance, strikes that have done something for the women engaged and have done much to arouse and enlighten women in more leisurly circumstances. There were the strikes of the Shirt Waist makers in 1909-10, the uprising of the 20,000,

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as somebody has called them. There were between 30,000 or 40,000 women workers (?) in these shops in the City of New York and they were subject in many shops, though not in all, to most exasperating forms of exploitation. The little taxes and extra charges, illustrate how little consideration the employer had for the women. They had to pay for the needles, and power, for their chairs, for the locker that held their hat and there were all sorts of fines and they were grotesquely inproportionate too and destroyed in many cases. These irritations might perhaps have been tolerated but the general disorganization grew rather than lessened until finally their came the uprising. The women held out many months. They probably did more to educate the employers of women in other ranks of society in New York to the fact that they were a long suffering force which, once arouse, must be considered. Tow things were very prominent. Their inspirational power and their persistence, the two things which probably are the strongest elements in the women. There was something so gallant about those half starved little fighters that even the exclusive Colony Club held a big meeting to listen to their story. That strike and one other, did something for the whole women's industrial army, demonstrated a possibility that had not been realized. Up through the country there were strikes that made their knock[illegible] on the public. For instance the one on Kalamazoo. They wanted a minimum wage of $7.- a week and 54 hours instead of 59 hours and the company refused to listen. There were some violent doings but the company

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refused arbitration, got out an injunction. Some of the strikers were sent to jail, one of them for conducting what was called "Picket prayer", a novelty in strikes, but a novelty, when the facts went abroad, that stirred many an indifferent heart. See P. 222 - P. 166 Levine's Effect of Strike.

(For exploitations see Levine's P. 129, 147, 220 and 221

Inflectuations - see 147)

It is interesting to know - in Levine's book, that it was men who organized and led women through the preliminaty stages, though the women in the books of officials of the various unions given in this book, executive powers, etc. there is only one - Fanny Cohn, - Page 418. One has the feeling that in these women's strikes they did a good deal, not only for themselves but by pulling out men"s chestnuts from the fire. Certainly the men alone would never have aroused the emotion in the public that these girls did. It is interesting and significant too, that they from the facts, took little theory. The men uses facts but they mix it with theory, sociality particularly. They were always with them more or less With the women it was a plain fact whether they were to get the minimum wage, fewer hours, free needles, etc. They wanted definite things, results, and if they had those results they would settle down to business. Men never had Their heads were always

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busy with the idea and they would break off in a pr sperous season for

the idea ("Quote Lawrences - They were more or less like Lawrenc's Arabs."

Shubert Mansard
Leslie Cowan as Ophelia
Mary Norman. See Hamlet Co
Sheg. Lu. May 1 p 5-3 IV.

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