

Shops on the middle floors are ill-lighted, ill-ventilated, and share the smells from the kitchens and drains of surrounding living rooms.

The group of workers in each shop is so small that they can take no effective measures for their own protection against long hours and bad sanitary conditions. Whatever is to be done to ameliorate these conditions must be done by legislation in the interest, not of the large body of garment workers only, but of the public health.

THE PURCHASER'S RISK.

With 15,000 garment workers employed in sweaters' shops, conditions such as these become a matter of public concern.

A shop in a crowded tenement house gathers together men, women and children from other tenement houses where disease is likely to be, and throws them into direct contact with the tenants of the building in which the shop is, and in which there is always liability of contagious disease owing both to the great number of tenants, and to the character of the houses selected for the purpose. The risk of sending out infectious garments to the purchasing public is thus enormously increased. This danger of infection in garments made up in tenement houses is an all-pervading, unavoidable danger, as it has been the duty of the inspectors to point out in each report.

The tables upon which these reports are based show, from year to year, the error of the belief that manufacturers of standing have no goods made up in these shops. They show that the risk run by the purchaser of a costly cloak or a custom-made suit is precisely the risk run by the working man buying a cheap, ready-made suit and by the poor woman who gets from a bargain counter knee-pants for her boy; that in the cloak trade, the clothing trade, the merchant tailor's custom trade, though the manufacturer or merchant tailor may have shops in good sanitary condition, nothing of his manufacture can be guaranteed non-infectious so long as the greater part, or any part of his work is done on tenement house premises. While any of his goods are made up in tenement house sweat shops, all the garments which he offers for sale must share the reproach and the suspicion which attach to tenement house manufacture.

So long as this form of manufacture is tolerated, it remains the duty of the inspectors to point out that the unsanitary condition of many of these tenement houses, and the ignorance and abject poverty of the tenants, insure the maximum probability of the presence of disease; while the spread of infectious disease to the workers in the shop is facilitated by the swarming of the children everywhere, and the universal failure to isolate patients. Consumption, now recognized throughout the medical profession as one of the most infectious of diseases, almost inevitably carried in garments made by persons suffering from phthisis, is the characteristic disease of the sweatshop worker. Diphtheria, small-pox,

typhoid, scarlet fever, scabies and worse forms of skin disease are found in alarming proximity to garments in process of making. No vigilance can insure the inspector prompt knowledge of the presence of disease in these houses and shops.

The city ordinance, indeed, requires the physician in attendance upon any case of infectious or contagious disease to report the same to the Board of Health, and section 2 of the Factory Law enjoins the Board of Health to destroy all clothing made under infectious or contagious conditions. But physicians cannot report to the Board of Health what they do not know, and in many cases among the very poor a physician is called in only when death is imminent, to save the annoyance of a coroner's inquest. Meanwhile infectious clothing may have been finished and sent out for weeks before the danger was known to any one.

These risks cannot be effectively diminished while tenement house manufacture remains. The contractor's profit is too slight to warrant his seeking better quarters, and in these shops electrical or steam power is out of the question, while the foot power machine is the especial curse of the sweater's victim and the prime source of his consumption, which he inevitably spreads abroad through the community.

The dangers of the shop are much increased by the circumstance that garment-making is a season trade. The making of cloaks, ready-made clothing and custom garments of all kinds ceases practically for several months of every year. When the season is "on" it is short and very intense; there is work in all the shops at once, and a demand for employes which brings about an access of undesirable conditions. New people open shops who were never contractors before, and know nothing of the requirements of the law. Poor men, who cannot afford a shop, rent half a dozen machines, set them up in kitchen and bedroom, and hire neighbors who run the machines and carry home garments to be finished by wives and children. During the season no staff of inspectors could cover all the shops often enough to prevent violations of the law or give assurance that no infectious disease is in the shops where garments are being made. These risks are inherent in the system of tenement house manufacture.

The sanitary value of the concentration of the garment workers in factories which could be permanently located and successfully inspected is wholly beyond computation, even in ordinary times when there is no epidemic. This consideration alone would, in the opinion of the inspectors, justify the prohibition of tenement house manufacture as a strictly sanitary measure. Until this is done, and tenement house manufacture abolished, purchasers must continue to take their chances of infection.

A system of manufacture which places all the cost of the plant upon the poorest and most irresponsible part of the trade (as the system of tenement house manufacture does by requiring the contractor to furnish the shop and supply heat, light and machinery), dooms the trade subjected to it to stagnation and degradation.