

# ITALIAN WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

A STUDY OF CONDITIONS IN  
NEW YORK CITY

By  
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

**A**FTER the outbreak of the European war in August, 1914, immigration to this country gradually decreased until, in comparison with its pre-war volume, it had practically reached a standstill. Those who a few years ago were desirous of shaking off the poverty or the oppression of their native land, stayed to give their lives in the defense of the very homes which they had been so ready to leave. The first year of the war showed a falling off in immigrant alien admissions from 1,218,480 to 326,700, while the net increase in the population of this country through immigration fell, because of the large number of foreign citizens returning to their native lands for war service, from 769,276 in 1914 to 50,070 in 1915.<sup>1</sup> Though the figures for 1916 and 1917 showed a temporary recovery, the net increase in population by immigration was lower than it had been for twenty years. Some nationalities which showed a decrease the year before, now showed a material increase. However, figures for the years 1917-18,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Annual report of United States Commissioner-General of Immigration for year ending June 30, 1915, p. 58. Washington, 1915.

<sup>2</sup> United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, Monthly Review. Vol. VII, No. 3, p. 342.

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while not giving the net gain in population through immigration, show a falling off in the number of immigrant alien admissions to the lowest point since the outbreak of the war. Though the literacy test, which went into effect in May, 1917, was without doubt a factor in this decrease, America's entry into the war at about the same time was an even more potent influence. These facts, however, should not give rise to the belief that the immigration problem is no longer with us.

Although the tide of immigration is on the ebb, we still have in our midst thousands of foreigners who must be molded into American citizens and imbued with a sympathetic understanding of our ideals and our institutions. With the restoration of normal conditions, the stream of immigration will doubtless be renewed if not with increased vigor certainly with new complexities. The hitherto inarticulate peoples of Europe who are now finding voice in public affairs are likely, in any country to which they emigrate, to bring with them for good or ill this new stirring of power. It is, therefore, not the moment for marking time, but rather for finding out where we stand in relation to the hundreds of thousands of the foreign born who are now among us; for learning what manner of men they are, what their work and their play, what their struggles and their successes, what their problems and their discouragements; for helping them to make the readjustments which are necessary in order to fit them into our American



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life; for furthering that assimilation which is essential if we hope to make our immigration population count in the upbuilding of our nation.

## PURPOSE OF INVESTIGATION

It seems timely, therefore, to present as a contribution to the basis of fact on which to found such effort, a study of Italian working women, representing as they do a nationality which has been among the most prominent in our latter-day immigration. This study aims to give insight into the means of livelihood of a group of these women, to show their incomes, their home life, the standards they are able to maintain, the effect of American industrial and living conditions upon their native standards, and, conversely, the effect of their Italian standards of life and work on the industries they engage in. As such, the study touches the problems both of immigration and of industry. It was made, moreover, before the war disrupted our social and industrial organization. The abnormal conditions as to wages, hours, employment, and cost of living during the war may prove to be temporary. A knowledge of the pre-war problems of the immigrant woman in industry, therefore, will help to solve the problems of readjustment and reconstruction.

The reason for choosing Italians as a subject for investigation is closely connected with the charges made popularly and indiscriminately against the so-called "new" immigration—Italians, Russian

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Jews, Poles, the Greeks, Hungarians, Slovenians, Croatians, Ruthenians—in fact, against the whole group of southern and eastern Europeans. These peoples are blamed for low wages, for long hours of work, for unemployment, for woman and child labor, for industrial crises, for congestion in cities, for lowered standards of living, for crowded, insanitary tenements, for blocking the growth of trade unionism, for pauperism and crime, for radicalism and unrest, and for other evils, real or imaginary, which infect our present-day industrial and social organization. It was as an example of this new immigration that Italians were selected for study. In other industrial investigations undertaken by the Russell Sage Foundation, especially in the study made of women in the artificial flower trade in New York City, the assertion was frequently heard that the Italian girl underbids her fellow-workers in every occupation she enters, that the most poorly paid home work is largely in her hands, and that Italian standards of living are a menace to American industry. It was because so many of these statements were directed specifically against Italians, and because this nationality formed so large a part of the new immigration that it was thought desirable to secure exact facts regarding them, as a basis for determining both the justice of these accusations and the wisest course which the community might take to remove the causes underlying such charges, whether the charges themselves proved to be founded on fact or on a contortion of facts.

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### METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

In view of the large Italian population in New York City, an intensive investigation had obviously to be limited to a comparatively small group in one of the main Italian districts. The section finally chosen was the lower end of Manhattan, below Fourteenth Street, which includes several Italian neighborhoods. This district seemed to offer more typical and representative conditions than other Italian settlements. The population included immigrants from both the north and south of Italy, and recent arrivals as well as families that had been in this country many years. In the largest of these colonies there was also the advantage of hearty co-operation with a social settlement in the neighborhood, Richmond Hill House, at 28 Macdougall Street, where a room was used as a branch office for the investigators. This settlement, which is closely in touch with the Italians in its locality, was at that time considering the establishment of a bureau for giving advice and information to Italian girls in the selection of their work, as well as a better understanding of American conditions; and the advisability of organizing such a bureau furnished a good basis for interviewing workers in the neighborhood.<sup>1</sup> An evening club, called the Italian Girls' Industrial League, was also organized under the auspices of the Women's

<sup>1</sup> Richmond Hill House has now for several years maintained a vocational bureau for the young girl and women workers of its neighborhood.

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Trade Union League for the purpose of educating the girls in trade union ideas.

The investigation was begun by the Division of Industrial Studies<sup>1</sup> of the Russell Sage Foundation in December, 1911. During the following year and a half, until June, 1913, 1,095 women wage-earners were interviewed, the living conditions of 544 families recorded, and a study made of the weekly budgets of 147 women not living at home. A careful record was kept of the total annual income and the expenditures of 48 of the families. The investigators also followed the women into their places of work, visiting 271 manufacturing establishments out of the 734 employing the group of women.

It was through interviews with workers, however, that the investigators gained the most insight into the problems which confront our alien population both at home and at work. Not including chats at chance meetings, 2,727 calls were made on the 1,095 women wage-earners in the group. At least two visits were made to the home of each worker, one during the day, when a good deal of information about the family could be gathered from the mother, and one in the evening, when the worker herself could be seen and tell her own story.

In the visits to workers in their homes, information was obtained on their home relations, their personal histories and industrial experience, and

<sup>1</sup>At that time the Division was known as the Committee on Women's Work.

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details of the conditions under which they were working at the time of the interview.<sup>1</sup>

For the double purpose of corroborating the workers' statements concerning their places of employment and of studying the factories and industries employing Italian women, the present or last place of employment of a group of the workers was visited. Through these visits not only were the industrial standards prevailing in the establishments learned at first hand, but also the general position of Italian women in them, together with the employers' attitude toward their work.

To secure as varied and at the same time as typical cases as possible, names were sought from widely different sources.<sup>2</sup> Settlements, evening schools, trade unions, and other organizations in touch with Italians were asked to co-operate with the Division in its investigation. Workers in Grace Chapel, a church in close touch with Italians on the east side, co-operated heartily and supplied a valuable list of names and addresses in its neighborhood. The International Institute of the Young Women's Christian Association furnished another important source. The Institute, in its work of helping immigrant girls, sends a visitor to the home

<sup>1</sup> Four cards, reproduced in Appendix B, pp. 321-324, were used to record the results of the visits.

<sup>2</sup> The sources from which names were obtained were as follows: Richmond Hill House, 239; relatives of workers interviewed, 233; other workers, 165; evening schools, 128; International Institute, 97; found by visitors or known to them, 104; Alliance Employment Bureau, 58; previous investigations, 33; Grace Chapel, 27; Manhattan Trade School, 7; Spring Street Neighborhood House, 2; trade unions, 1; Consumers' League, 1.

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of every girl arriving alone at Ellis Island and keeps careful records of the information obtained. These records enabled the Division to study at close range the problem of the newly arrived immigrant.<sup>1</sup>

The investigation was carried on under the direction of Miss Mary Van Kleeck, then Director of the Division of Industrial Studies. Six investigators took part in the field work. They were Miss Evelyn Dewey, Miss Amalia Errico, Miss Elizabeth L. Meigs, Dr. Anna M. Richardson, Miss Elisabeth Roemer, and the writer. Miss Henriette R. Walter prepared the study of family budgets which appears in Chapter VIII. Through the fact that several persons were engaged in the field work the information gathered has the advantage of representing more than one point of view. Even facts are sometimes tinged unconsciously by the personality and attitude of a visitor. Visitors, moreover, have a tendency to become more interested in certain phases of an investigation than in others and, therefore, to gain fuller information along those lines. Two of the investigators, one of them herself Italian, could speak Italian. This gave an opportunity to interview women who could speak no English, chiefly newly arrived immigrants, who illustrated all the difficulties of readjustment to new surroundings.

While the immediate concern of this investiga-

<sup>1</sup> For a full account of the 894 Italian girls visited by the Institute during the year 1912-13, see Appendix A, pp. 299-318.

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tion was the Italian woman in industry, the information about her industrial and home conditions and standards should be a contribution to the larger problems of immigration and of women's work. As an Italian she illustrates some of the many questions that are involved in the immigration problem; as a worker, employment problems that confront both men and women wage-earners in the industrial field; while as a woman she faces the special problems which relate to her employment, problems which arise from her physical limitations, her traditional position, and her recent entrance into industry.

## CHAPTER II

### THE WOMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES

**D**ESIRE for better economic opportunity has been the leading motive of Italian immigration to the United States. Causes that have attracted some peoples, such as desire for political or religious freedom, or the spirit of adventure, have not drawn the Italian emigrant from his native land. Economic pressure in Italy—wages so low that they permitted only very poor standards of living and no outlook for improvement—caused both men and women to seek new fields of labor in a strange country. From the hills and vineyards of Lombardy and Tuscany, from the mountains of Abruzzi, from the farms of Basilicata and the mines of Sicily, they have come with the one common purpose of getting better paid work.

While in 1880 Italian-born Italians in the United States numbered 44,230, by 1910 they had reached a total population of 1,343,125.<sup>1</sup> In that year the total number of Italians in the United States, born in Italy, or children of Italian parents, was 2,098,360. New York City alone included 544,449<sup>2</sup> in its

<sup>1</sup> Thirteenth United States Census, 1910. Vol. 1, Population, p. 784.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 935.



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population of four and a half million, and had within its boundaries as many persons of Italian stock as Naples, the largest city in Italy. Two-thirds of these, or 340,765, were immigrants of Italian birth, while the other third, 203,684, had been born here of Italian-born parents.<sup>1</sup>

### ITALIAN COLONIES IN NEW YORK CITY

Like the earlier immigrants from other countries, Italians have drifted into particular neighborhoods of the city where their countrymen had already made their homes. Several such settlements have grown up in various parts of Manhattan, the Bronx, and Brooklyn. The principal districts, however, lie in Manhattan, and the section below Fourteenth Street still claims about a third of the Italians in the city.<sup>2</sup> Even here they are concentrated still further into four or five neighborhoods. One is on the lower east side, above the Manhattan end of Brooklyn Bridge. Another lies a little farther north, between Fourteenth Street and East Houston Street; and a third, the most densely populated, extends from the Bowery to Broadway above old Chinatown. On the west side, extending roughly from West Broadway to the Hudson River and from Canal Street to West Fourth Street, is the district most varied in its Italian population. Here are found families whose parents were emigrants from Genoa thirty or forty years ago,

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 913.

<sup>2</sup> Thirteenth United States Census, 1910. Bulletin. Population. New York, p. 28.

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together with the emigrants from Sicily who have recently passed through Ellis Island. Into this neighborhood, too, families have moved from the east side as they have become more prosperous, so that both poor families and those comfortably well off live on the same block.

The name "Little Italy" is frequently applied to each of these districts, and not inappropriately. They form small communities in themselves, almost independent of the life of the great city. Here the people may follow the customs and ways of their forefathers. They speak their own language, trade in stores kept by countrymen, and put their savings into Italian banks. Italian newspapers supply them with the day's news; Italian theaters and moving-picture shows furnish their recreation. Italian priests minister to their spiritual needs in the Catholic churches, and societies composed only of Italians are organized for mutual aid and benefit. The stores all bear Italian names, the special bargains and souvenirs of the day are advertised in Italian, and they offer for sale the wines and olive oils, "pasta," and other favorite foods of the people.

Religious feasts and holidays are observed with as much pomp as they were in the villages from which these peasants came. The new-born babe is wrapped tightly in a swaddling sheet and its birth is celebrated by much drinking of wine and neighborly rejoicing. Marriages are frequently arranged by the parents, sometimes even with the help of a

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marriage broker. The father and oldest son have full authority over the members of their household and the wife and daughters abide by their rule. A single woman, young or old, cannot go out alone in the evening without risk to her good name.

While emigrants from all parts of Italy may be found in any district, differences of dialect, customs, and standards of living prevent much social intercourse unless they come from the same province. Northern Italians will refer to people from Naples and Sicily as "low" Italians, and those from the south assert that the north speaks a different tongue. A woman from the vicinity of Naples scornfully remarked that "in our language ladies don't go out to work after they are married, but they do in Sicily."

Immigrants when they first arrive will naturally seek out a street or house where others from the same village live. Sometimes a five-story tenement with its 20 or 30 apartments may be filled entirely with friends and relatives from the same village or farm district. After they have been here a few years, the line of demarcation becomes fainter. In the older Italian neighborhoods, as on the west side, Sicilian, Genoese, and Neapolitans may be found in the same house; and their scorn of one another has become tempered with the mild forbearance of dwellers in the same tenement. The social character of the Italian soon induces the woman from Naples to take her home work into the rooms of her Sicilian neighbor, or Theresa from

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Genoa to ask her foreman to take Maria into his factory, even though Maria comes from Basilicata.

The tenements in which the Italians lived differed widely in the comforts they provided. Some had bathrooms, one had the luxury of hot water three times a week, but the sole water supply of many, cold at that, was a sink in a public hallway. The majority of families did not have a private toilet, but had to use one in common with others in the tenement, sometimes as many as four families using the one toilet, often filthy, dark, and with plumbing out of order. Little activity was shown on the part of the landlords in making improvements in these tenements, and if tubs or cupboards were installed, a dollar or two a month was added to the rent. The halls, dark or lighted by a single gas jet, were seldom provided with oilcloth, and the rickety wooden stairs, grimy and littered, were hard to keep clean. Usually the janitor was not energetic enough to make war on the dirt accumulating from the footsteps of the hundred or more occupants of the building. Nor were the apartments much better kept. When new tenants moved in the walls might be recovered with a new coat of paint so thin that the old paint was still visible, but landlords were slow to repair broken plumbing or leaking sinks. If any repairing was to be done for an old tenant, he was sometimes called upon to pay part of the cost. Each tenant had to supply his own cook-stove, and some apartments were not even supplied with gas, dangerous

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oil lamps still being used. Some families, however, were fortunate enough to live in newer tenements with stone stairways and fairly well lighted halls, not, however, always well cared for. Even in these tenements, dark rooms were to be found.

But whether the families lived in old houses which had formerly served as the home for one small family but now did service for eight or ten, or in old tenements with small, dark rooms, or in the newer tenements fitted with "all improvements," an extraordinary amount of overcrowding prevailed. Seventy per cent of all the persons in these Italian households were living under congested conditions; that is, with more than one and one-half persons per room, 54 per cent averaged two or more persons to a room, while in one family in every 10 the household counted three or more persons per room.<sup>1</sup>

### THE WOMEN INVESTIGATED

Such were the homes of the 1,095 wage-earning women who were interviewed for this study. All but 27 lived in the Italian districts below Fourteenth Street, and over three-fourths, or 772, were in the lower west side colony in the neighborhood of Richmond Hill House.

The majority of this group of women were very young, two-thirds being under twenty-one years of age, while a tenth were under sixteen. Only 66, or 6 per cent, were over thirty-five years old.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix C, Table 1, p. 328.

<sup>2</sup> See Table 20, p. 136.

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It is not surprising, therefore, to find, even in an Italian group where early marriages are the custom, that a great majority, 957, or 87.4 per cent, were single. Of the remaining 138, 90 were married, 37 were widowed, and 11 were deserted or separated from their husbands. Only 150 were living outside a family group or boarding, and of these, three lived as domestic servants with their employers. By far the larger number, 945, lived with their families, distributed among 582 households. Information concerning the membership, sources of income, and mode of living was secured for 544 of these. The families had a total membership of 3,358 persons, ranging from a blind grandfather to a week-old baby. The average membership per family was 6.2 persons, and the number in any one household varied from two in 23 families, to 10 or more in 50. One family even boasted 14 members. Those from southern Italy and Sicily were especially large, with an average of 6.4 persons as compared with 5.7 persons in the families from northern Italy.<sup>1</sup>

To maintain families of such size<sup>2</sup> required in most cases the earnings of more than one member. Even including the aged and the infants, we find that 62 per cent of all the persons in these families, or nearly two out of every three, were contributing in some way to the gross family income, a much larger per cent than was found at work in the

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix C, Table 2, p. 329.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix C, Table 3, p. 329.

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population as a whole in New York City in 1910.<sup>1</sup> The income of these families was the sum total of the earnings of fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, and other relatives, and of receipts from lodgers, boarders, and home work. Table 1 shows the number and proportion of the members of the family contributing to the income.

TABLE 1.—CONTRIBUTORS TO THE INCOME OF 544 FAMILIES OF ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS, BY AGE AND SEX

Age and sex	All members of families	Contributors	
		Number	Per cent of all members
Fathers . . . . .	439	383	87.2
Other males 14 years old or more . . . . .	528	452	85.6
Mothers . . . . .	515	279	54.2
Other females 14 years old or more . . . . .	933	852	91.3
Children less than 14 years old . . . . .	943	117	12.4
Total . . . . .	3,358	2,083	62.0

The 117 children under fourteen years of age who were contributing were chiefly doing home work after school or were still too young to attend school. The earnings of women were the sole means of support in 50 of the 544 families. In more than half of the remaining families there was only

<sup>1</sup> The total population of New York City was 4,766,883, and 2,152,433 persons, or 45 per cent, were gainfully employed. Thirteenth United States Census, 1910. Vol. I, p. 79, and Vol. IV, p. 180.

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one male contributor, while in about three-fourths of the families the women contributors numbered at least two. The average number of men contributors for each family was 1.5, of women 2.1, and of children under fourteen, one in every five families.

## FAMILY INCOME

The majority of the families did not rely upon a single breadwinner, but upon several members, to provide the income with which to pay for rent, food, clothing, doctors' bills or other necessities.

While the father was generally regarded as the head of the household and the principal support, he added to the income in only 383 of the 544 families. In 88 of the remaining 161 families, 16 per cent of all the families studied, the father was dead, and in 17 he was not living with the family and was contributing nothing to its support. In 56 families, or about 10 per cent of all the cases, the father was living at home but was not contributing in any way. In addition to the fathers, 452 sons and other male relatives were sharing in the family expenses.

Of the fathers who were contributors, three-fourths, or 287, were wage-earners outside the home, 86 were in business for themselves, and 10 were janitors or home workers. The leading occupation in the first group was factory work, in which 85 were engaged. The variable demand through the year for many of the products upon which they worked, such as men's and women's clothing, candy,



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flowers, and furs, affected materially the regularity of their work. So also those employed as bricklayers, hod carriers, stone cutters, and iron workers and in the more unskilled work of shoveling, digging, street paving, as well as the drivers and longshoremen, were subject to more or less irregularity of employment. Thirty-eight per cent of all those working reported their employment to be irregular, while among the wage-earners alone the proportion was 44 per cent.<sup>1</sup> Nor were their earnings during their periods of employment generally high enough to allow of savings for the idle day. Fifteen, or 10 per cent of the wage-earners reporting, were getting less than \$8.00, 28, or 19 per cent, less than \$10, and the majority, 95, or 63 per cent, were receiving weekly wages of less than \$15 or a smaller amount, even with fifty-two full weeks of employment, than the \$876 minimum set by Streightoff<sup>2</sup> as the lowest yearly income upon which a family of five could maintain itself in New York City. This estimate, it should be noted, made no allowance for savings or emergencies.

The economic condition of the father accounts also to a large degree for the number of mothers found contributing either by doing janitor's work, home work, keeping lodgers, or going outside to do day's work or office cleaning, or to work in a factory. In 515 families the mother was living at

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix C, Table 4, p. 330.

<sup>2</sup> New York State Factory Investigating Commission. Fourth Report, 1915. Vol. IV, Report on the Cost of Living, p. 1,671.

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home; in 24 she was dead, and in five she was not living at home. In 279, or more than half of the families studied, she was contributing to the family support. In this group 94 mothers did home work, 89 factory work, 23 janitor's work, 61 kept lodgers and boarders, while the remainder were distributed in various other outside occupations. Factory work, largely on men's and women's clothing and on flowers and feathers, was the chief occupation of the women employed outside their homes.

The mothers at work, handicapped as they were by home duties, nevertheless showed a good earning capacity. Of the 100 employed outside their homes who reported their wages, over half were paid weekly rates of \$10 or more, but at the other extreme were 11 who received less than \$6.00 a week. The irregularity of their work, however, materially reduced the yearly income. For instance, it was found that of the married and widowed women included in the investigation 44 per cent of them had lost twelve weeks or more during the year, as compared with only 25 per cent among the single women. Similarly it was found that 35 per cent, or a third of the married and widowed women had been unemployed during the week previous to the interview, as compared with about 13 per cent among the single women. The reasons for their unemployment show their divided duty between homekeeping and wage-earning; over a third were idle for personal reasons such as illness and cares at home, as compared with about a

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fourth of the single women who were idle for the same causes.

### OTHER SOURCES OF INCOME

Among the 544 families noted, 124, or nearly a fourth, were securing part of their income from home work, and 77 were adding to their income by taking in lodgers and boarders, not including the numerous relatives who were living with the family as regular members.

The net result of the efforts of all these workers through the year—fathers, mothers, daughters, and sons—is the year's income for the family. The proportions of their earnings that all the women included in the investigation turned into the common budget shows how far the families as a whole could rely upon its women workers for its maintenance. The pay envelope was turned in unopened to the manager of the household by 758, or 86 per cent, of the 884 women reporting. In 83 other cases, the women turned in only a part of their earnings, keeping the remainder for clothes, lunches, and carfares. Thirty households were run on a co-operative basis, the members sharing equally in the chief expenses. Only 13 did not turn any of their earnings into the common family fund, and only one of these was allowed to spend them as she chose. These facts are all the more striking because it was not unusual to find families in which the sons were not giving a cent to the support of the home.

## ITALIAN WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

### NATIVITY OF WOMEN

What proportion of the women and of their fathers were emigrants from Italy and what proportion were born in this country is shown in Table 2.

**TABLE 2.—NATIVITY OF ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS  
AND THEIR FATHERS**

Place of birth	Women whose birth- place was as specified	Women whose fath- ers' birthplace was as specified
ITALY. . . . .		
Northern . . . . .	174	330
Central . . . . .	37	64
Southern . . . . .	224	513
Sicily . . . . .	158	166
District not stated . . . . .	1	9
Total . . . . .	594	1,082
UNITED STATES . . . . .	496	8
OTHER COUNTRIES . . . . .	5	3
Grand total . . . . .	1,095	1,093 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Of the 1,095 women investigated, two did not state birthplace of father.

Slightly less than half of the women had been born in the United States, and of these all but 18 in New York, while all but 11 of the fathers whose birthplace was given had been born in Italy. Five women were emigrants from South America, whither their fathers before them had emigrated from Italy. The 594 women who had emigrated from Italy represented many parts of the country, as did also their fathers. Sicily claimed 158, the

## WOMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES

southern provinces 224, and the northern 174 of the women.<sup>1</sup>

### THE IMMIGRANT WOMAN

The problem of readjustment for the adult immigrant is quite different from the problem of the child immigrant. The latter has an opportunity to learn the language, to attend an American school, and to gain some knowledge of American ideas, customs, and standards before she enters the industrial field. As one girl remarked, "You might almost say I was born here." The woman who comes when fourteen years or older is plunged at once into the midst of industrial conditions entirely different from any to which she has been accustomed in Italy. One-half the workers investigated faced this problem in varying degree.

Of the 1,095 women, 8.4 per cent had come over within a year of the time they were interviewed, and 24 per cent had been here less than five years. This means that almost a fourth of these wage-earning women had had less than five years in which to adapt themselves to American conditions of life and labor. Among their fathers, only 6 per cent, or 43 of those who had come to the United States, had been here less than five years. Of these, four had been here less than a year and 32 less than three years. Two-thirds, or 405 of them, had been

<sup>1</sup> The leading provinces represented were, in the north, Liguria with 52 women, Piedmont, 48, Emilia, 26, Lombardy, 24; in the central, Abruzzi with 19; and in the south, Campania (which includes Naples and Salerno) with 124, and Basilicata with 63.

## ITALIAN WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

in this country at least twenty years, and 539 came over more than ten years ago.

Of the women who were born outside the United States, 226, or more than a third, came while they were under fourteen years of age; too young to go to work unless, as some did, illegally. A very large proportion of these latter had had the opportunity of attending school here, so that they had learned English and knew something of American ideas when they were ready to go to work. A comparison of their age on arrival and their ability to speak English shows that only five of the above 226 were unable to speak English at the time of the investigation, and three of these had been in this country less than five years.<sup>1</sup> One, who came over seventeen years ago at the age of twelve, had never had a day's schooling in her life but had gone to work as soon as she landed. Another who was thirteen when she arrived, although she was under age went directly to work in a men's clothing shop.

Of the 373 who had arrived when they were fourteen years or over, more than three-fourths could not speak English at the time of the investigation. Even among those who had been here five years or longer, only a little more than half had learned. This ignorance of the language may be due in part to the fact that about a third of this group did not come until they were twenty-one years of age or older. Only one of these women had had the advantage of going to school in this country. A few

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix C, Table 5, p. 330.

## WOMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES

had stayed at home for a time after their arrival, or had helped out in the family business, or undertaken home work. Most of them, however, had had to go to work as soon as they landed.

The friendliness and help that new immigrants meet with at the hands of their countrymen is a matter for comment. Any person from the same village, man or woman, is looked upon by the immigrant as a trustworthy friend in America, though an entire stranger in Italy. In some cases this ready acceptance of the services of fellow-countrymen has been turned to evil account. For most immigrants, however, the help so sorely needed at this time becomes almost their salvation. Families, already crowded into two or three rooms, willingly make space for a friend or cousin, and if they can possibly manage it, no matter how poor, they will keep her as a guest until she finds a job. They will pass the word among their neighbors that she is out of work, and sometimes they try to make her clothes more presentable according to American standards, so that she will look less like a new arrival.

The reasons for immigrating to the United States given by these 373 women who came after they were fourteen, reflected the general motive of their countrymen. About two-fifths, while expressing their purpose in various ways, came "to get a job." A large number, 128, said definitely that they came for that purpose. Sixteen wanted to send money to their old parents or sick relatives

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in Italy. Others wanted to earn a dowry so that they might return later to Italy with brighter prospects of finding a husband. Many others had come over with their parents, or husbands and children, or with brothers and sisters.

Even when they gave as their reason for coming, "to live with their relatives here," "to see America," "to get married," or more specifically "to find a husband," they had gone to work as a matter of course. The wife who in revenge was seeking a delinquent husband, was found at the time of the investigation finishing cloaks, while the young woman of twenty-four who had always been "crazy" to see this country was pressing underwear at \$6.00 a week in a factory a few blocks away from her home on Thompson Street. Rosa, who had come here seven months previously "to make a dowry" although she was still only seventeen, was earning \$4.50 a week making cocoanut balls in a candy factory. Two sisters, one eighteen and the other twenty, who had been here five months, had, like Rosa, come "to make a dowry." They were found sorting dusty waste papers and rags in a gloomy basement on the east side for the sum of \$5.00 a week each. Mrs. Cinque, when she was left a widow eleven years before, had immigrated to New York "to forget her sorrows." Ever since she had been working continuously as a stripper in a tobacco factory. Another family came because it "got wrong" in Italy. It managed to scrape together enough money for passage to Amer-



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ica, and mother, brother, and daughters settled in New York so that the latter could go out to work. As one of the daughters explained, "In Italy, in my country, women don't go out to work, but only work at home."

## WOMEN'S WORK IN ITALY

The remark that women do not go out to work in Italy was heard more than once. That they do, however, contribute in some way to the support of their homes is amply shown by the work histories of the women who were fourteen years of age or over when they left Italy. About half of this group, 176 in number, had contributed to their own support. It is true that 79 had worked only at home—at planting or plowing on their father's farms, at crocheting, weaving, or even making shoes. Or they had helped in a store or bakery kept by the family. But as their wages had formed part of a family wage, or they had received no money payment for their work, they did not look upon themselves as earners.

The remainder, over a quarter of the group, had actually been at work outside their homes; not a small proportion, for 150 of them were still under eighteen years of age when they came to this country. The kind of work that they had done depended largely upon the districts from which they came. If a girl living in a country district wanted to earn money, she had either to work as a farm hand or, at best, become an apprentice with the

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village dressmaker. Those who had lived in larger towns, like Turin or Milan, had a wider choice. Some had been in large dressmaking shops, others had worked in textile mills or factories where gloves, hats, or candy were made. Not one, however, had ever worked in an office, although one ambitious young woman had learned bookkeeping and typewriting, "not fast like you have to do it here, but like a lady would know how to do it."

The largest number had done agricultural work either on their parents' farms or as "hands" on their neighbors'. One woman from Basilicata told of whole families going out from the villages into the country to work, taking with them even the smaller children. She was paid 5 cents a day and her meals, or 20 cents without her meals.

Whether they had worked as farm hands for their own families or elsewhere, they all agreed in their stories of heavy work, long hours, and child labor. One woman fifty-nine years old, but still to be found daily at her bench in a tobacco factory, had helped on her father's farm even as a little girl. Girls never went to school, she said, but were made to work. Nine years in the United States had not yet softened the bitter memories of another woman who had begun work on her father's land when only seven years old. Aida, still only a child of fifteen, had had to do all the housework, besides working on the farm. "I worked like a horse, not like a woman," she said. She still had her red cheeks and splendid health in spite of the fact that she stood

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all day as a turner in a dusty bag factory. But heavy work out of doors is a far cry from working in the dusty, close air of a factory loft.

Only five had been domestics, and five others had done laundry work. Tessie began to go out washing by the day when she was only thirteen years old. In Genoa, she earned 40 or 50 cents a day, working for private families, but only 30 cents when she ironed in a laundry. Louisa, an ironer in a laundry in Naples, said she could make big wages—40 cents a day—because she was an unusually fine worker. Women from Abruzzi, Basilicata, and Sicily explained that there were no factories in southern Italy, so that the women who wanted to earn a living had become domestics or farm hands.

Some women from northern Italy had been employed in various industries. One woman, who thought that factories were better in Italy than here, had been twenty years in a silk mill. She had become a factory hand at nine years of age, and had had to be at work at half-past five in the morning. With half an hour off for breakfast and an hour for dinner, she did not reach home until seven or eight o'clock in the evening. At first she was paid only 5 cents a day, but had worked up to the maximum of 25 cents before she left. Another who was then a flower maker in New York, had wrapped candies in a Turin factory where she made from 40 to 60 cents in a ten-hour day. She also thought that bosses were better to their girls there

### ITALIAN WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

than in New York, and that conditions of work were just as good. Anna, twenty-one years old, who had been in this country three months, had become a tobacco stripper at \$5.50 a week. She had worked at skeining cotton in a mill near Lake Como. There she earned only 30 cents a day and her reason for emigrating was "insufficient wages." Mrs. Caproni had gone to work at the age of twelve in a silk mill in Pavia, where she earned 18 cents in a twelve-hour day. To her the factories in Italy seemed awful. As there were few opportunities open to girls, bosses could treat them as badly as they chose. "Here if you don't like a place, you can always find another."

It was with such an equipment of work experience that these Italian women and girls came to sell their labor in the American market. Usually their work had been far different from anything they might expect to find here. Many had never done factory work, while the skill of others would be of little use to them in the city. But their strength and good health, coming as they did from farm and village, their ambition to get ahead, already evinced in their willingness to break up their homes or to leave their parents in Italy, their readiness to do heavy work and suffer hardships for a better chance in life—these were the assets which they had to rely upon as competitors among the 600,000 working women of the city.

## CHAPTER III

### OCCUPATIONS OF ITALIAN WOMEN AT WORK

**S**URROUNDING the Italian district on the lower west side is an industrial boundary of busy streets lined with high loft buildings and remodeled dwellings where the noisy work of manufacturing is going on. If you approach the district from the south, by way of Canal or Broome streets, you will notice the odor of chocolate from some candy factory, or the strong smell of glue from a paper-box plant. On the west side, along Hudson and Greenwich streets, alluring signs advertise the homes of famous salad dressings, spices, groceries, or pickles. Approach from Broadway and you pass crowded workrooms where men's clothing is made by the wholesale, hats turned out by the gross, and flowers and feathers pasted, branched, and packed for shipment to the farthest corners of the country. You pick your way through the narrow, crowded streets of Mercer, Greene, or West Broadway, where heavily loaded trucks are delivering huge rolls of cloth or carrying away the finished products in the form of underwear, neckwear, shirtwaists, or mattresses and burial supplies. To the north of the neighborhood lies the

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### ITALIAN WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

center of the industry of women's and children's clothing, not only for New York City but for the whole United States as well. Here cloaks and suits are stitched and finished for wearers from Maine to Oregon, dresses of silk, wool, or cotton for the women of Dakota or Texas, and clothing for the children of San Francisco or Atlanta. Gray buildings of 15 or 20 stories tower high to the heavens, each floor vibrating with the motion of heavy-power sewing machines. In the height of the season every nook of each loft is filled with men and women straining every nerve to satisfy the frantic demands of jobber and retailer.

The location of this Italian colony within these industrial boundaries is typical of the bond between its members and the life of the city. When the woman leaves her home, however Italian in its customs, it is in these streets seething with American industry that she seeks her day's work. Her work place is the means by which she may come to look upon herself not alone as an Italian, but as a part of the big American labor force.

Manufacturing is the leading pursuit of Italian women in New York City. Although no general statistics are available about the occupational distribution of the various nationalities since 1900, it is worth while noting the figures showing conditions at that time. In 1900, 77 per cent of the women workers of Italian parentage were engaged in manufacturing, as compared with 36 per cent of those of all nationalities. The Italian woman

## OCCUPATIONS

does not turn to domestic or personal service. While 40 per cent of all the women at work in 1900 in New York City were in domestic and personal service, only 13 per cent of the Italian women were found in this field. In Table 3, the occupations of the groups of women investigated are compared with those in which all Italian women in New York City were found at work in 1900.<sup>1</sup>

TABLE 3.—MAIN GROUPS OF OCCUPATIONS FOR ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS INVESTIGATED, FOR ALL ITALIAN WOMEN AND FOR ALL WOMEN WORKERS IN NEW YORK CITY, 1900<sup>a</sup>

Main occupational groups	Italian women included in investigation		All Italian women		All women	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Manufacturing	1,027	93.9	9,391	77.1	132,535	36.1
Trade and transportation	55	5.0	984	8.1	65,318	17.8
Professional service	7	.6	150	1.2	22,422	6.1
Domestic and personal service	6	.5	1,602	13.2	146,722	39.9
Agriculture	..	..	45	.4	440	.1
Total	1,095	100.0	12,172	100.0	367,437	100.0

<sup>a</sup> Twelfth United States Census, 1900. Occupations, p. 638 et ff.

## MANUFACTURING

For this reason the investigation soon resolved itself into a study of Italian women in manufactur-

<sup>1</sup> The census figures for 1910 have not been published for occupations by nationality.

## ITALIAN WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

ing. Most of them worked in factories within walking distance of their homes. Some had ventured to dressmaking shops on Fifth Avenue, to department stores or offices as far north as Thirty-fourth Street, or to factories uptown or even in Brooklyn or New Jersey, often in these latter cases to continue work in a shop or factory that had originally been located in this downtown district. But usually, the fact that a firm had moved was sufficient excuse for leaving a position. Statements like "I don't want to spend 10 cents a day to ride up there," or "It was too far to walk to Thirty-third Street," or "I didn't want a job where I had to ride," showed why the majority were still to be found in the factories in nearby streets.

Of the total group of 1,095 women who were investigated, 1,027, or 94 per cent, were employed in manufacturing. Only seven had entered work that could be called at all professional in nature. These were a model, a singer, a teacher, an assistant in a laboratory, and three social workers. Six were in domestic or personal service as waitresses, maids, or cooks. Seventeen were in stores, 38 in offices, 11 of whom were stenographers, and four bookkeepers. The other 23 clerical workers did such unskilled work as addressing envelopes, opening mail, or simple filing. Only occasionally did girls express the opinion that office work, however unskilled, was superior to that in a factory. The latter was generally accepted as offering perfectly respectable employment for any girl,



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with the possibility of better earnings than office work. A woman of twenty-four, who had been opening mail in a large publishing house for ten years, explained that few Italian girls were willing to do clerical work as the pay was too poor. "Their mothers wouldn't stand for it. Most Italian girls are operators because they can make more money."

The group of Italian women investigated probably included a larger proportion of factory workers than would be found among wage-earning Italian women in the city. The limitation of the investigation chiefly to an Italian district where few would be engaged in domestic service has affected the proportion in this occupation. A tabulation, however, of the occupations of a group of 608 Italian immigrant women who had arrived alone in this country, visited by the International Institute in 1912-13, showed that factory work predominated among them also.<sup>1</sup> The list of their occupations showed 77 per cent engaged in manufacturing, while only 16 per cent were in domestic and personal service, and a little more than 1 per cent in sales work. Thus, whether the women were recent arrivals, came over as children, or were born here, they found employment chiefly in the factory trades. Table 4 gives the occupations of the 1,095 women by age at coming to the United States.

Among the 1,027 women employed in factories, 75 industries were represented, the number in each

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A, pp. 299-318.

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TABLE 4.—OCCUPATIONS OF ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS, BY AGE AT TIME OF COMING TO THE UNITED STATES

Kind of work	Women who were		All women
	Foreign born 14 years old or more at time of coming	Native born and foreign born less than 14 years old at time of coming	
Manufacturing . . . . .	364	663	1,027
Flowers and feathers . . . . .	33	123	156
Men's and boys' clothing . . . . .	64	31	95
Women's tailored garments . . . . .	38	12	50
Custom dressmaking . . . . .	6	18	24
Wholesale dressmaking . . . . .	59	54	113
Shirtwaists . . . . .	18	33	51
Muslin underwear . . . . .	6	34	40
Corsets . . . . .	7	15	22
Hand embroidery . . . . .	21	21	42
All other women's and children's clothing . . . . .	15	55	70
Paper boxes . . . . .	5	24	29
Other paper goods . . . . .	8	31	39
Tobacco . . . . .	22	5	27
Candy . . . . .	22	46	68
Other foodstuffs . . . . .	11	16	27
Headwear . . . . .	3	34	37
Textiles and miscellaneous sewed materials . . . . .	11	65	76
Rubber, fur, and leather goods . . . . .	9	14	23
Miscellaneous manufactured goods . . . . .	1	23	24
Laundry, dyeing, and cleaning . . . . .	5	9	14
Store work . . . . .	..	17	17
Office work . . . . .	1	37	38
Professional service . . . . .	3	4	7
Domestic service . . . . .	5	1	6
Total . . . . .	373	722	1,095

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of these industries varying from 156 employed in artificial flowers and feathers and 113 in making women's and misses' dresses for the wholesale trade, to the one or two employed in the manufacture of paper bags, burial supplies or raincoats.<sup>1</sup> The variety of the list, even for this small group, shows that Italian women have invaded almost every woman-employing industry in the city.

The clothing trades led in the employment of both native and foreign born. About half, or 507 of those in manufacturing, were making men's, women's, and children's clothing. In the two industries of men's clothing and women's cloaks and suits, where the work for women consisted chiefly of hand sewing, the foreign-born women who had come over as adults predominated. Many had not yet learned English. Few had entered such trades as muslin underwear and corsets, where the work was chiefly power operating.

Again, of the women engaged in the manufacturing of clothing, nearly half were twenty-one years of age or over. For the entire group, however, the young workers predominated, two-thirds being under twenty-one. Only 16 per cent of the group were twenty-five years or over, though it included

<sup>1</sup> Of 48 manufacturing and mechanical pursuits which employed women and were listed for New York City in the United States Census of Occupations in 1900, 43 were employing women of Italian parentage. The five industries which did not employ any were such unusual pursuits as bleacheries, dye works, model and pattern making, powder, cartridge, and wire making, and woolen mills, occupations no one of which employed more than 200 women throughout the city. United States Census, 1900. Occupations, p. 640.

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many women who had emigrated to this country as adults. The unskilled trades, such as flowers, feathers, candy, and paper boxes, employed the majority of the young girls.

**The Needle Trades:** That the needle industries should lead in employing Italian women is not surprising when we consider that in 1909 the two leading industries in New York City measured by value of products were women's and men's clothing. In this city was manufactured 69.3 per cent of all women's clothing in the United States, and 38.4 per cent of all men's clothing.<sup>1</sup> Here alone were employed 55,601 women on women's clothing, or more than half of those so employed throughout the United States, and 23,228 women on men's clothing. These two industries combined employed 40 per cent of the total women counted in manufacturing establishments in New York City in 1909.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, the needle trades appeal especially to Italians. Their idea of the woman is primarily as a home maker. Just as in every home you find a sewing machine in order that the mother can make her children's clothes, so the daughter, when she is ready to go out to work, wants to choose dress-making. In this way she believes that she will some day be able to sew her own clothes. Unfortunately they have no realization of the fine sub-

<sup>1</sup> United States Census of Manufactures, 1910. Vol. VIII, p. 124 et ff.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Abstract. Supplement for New York, p. 774 et ff.

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divisions that exist in this trade today, when such tasks as sewing on buttons on shirtwaists, cutting threads off petticoats, operating a ruffling or buttonhole machine, or setting in sleeves may be the one process that a girl will work at year after year. Even when she has secured a chance to work in a custom dressmaking place she rarely learns how to make a whole garment, but spends the day as a finisher, sleeve draper, waist finisher, repair or alteration hand, or even as a presser or stock girl. Though the work is still done for individual customers, the increasing size of such shops tends to greater subdivision of labor for the workers, and there is as little chance for a woman to learn how to make a whole garment as in the shops where dresses are made by the wholesale.

Lucy, an interesting, ambitious girl of twenty-one, who was busily cutting out a dress on the floor while talking to the visitor, said that most Italian girls went into dressmaking and the sewing trades because they believed they would be useful to them after marriage. "We have to think of the future and not always of the present." Her sister, however, disputed the fact that the trade would teach her much about making her own clothes. "In a shirtwaist factory," she said, "you may have to do only one part of the waist, sleeves, closing-in, or hemming, and you will have to work fast at that one thing." Another girl of seventeen, who during her three years' work in a flower factory had been the principal support of her old mother and father,

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still regretted that she had never been able to "learn a trade—something like dressmaking, so I could make my own clothes."

Many of the women had learned fine hand sewing in the public or convent schools in Italy; others had worked as apprentices and finishers with the village dressmaker, or had themselves been the dressmaker for the village. Over four-fifths of the group of 65 who had worked at some form of sewing in Italy were in needle trades in New York City. One girl, who began to learn dressmaking as soon as she left school, said that nearly all girls in Italy do this so that they will know how to sew. Lola became an apprentice in a shop in Turin at the age of twelve. After she had worked three years without pay, she received *buona paga* (good pay), \$5.20 a month. She said that girls trained in Italy as dressmakers were much in demand here, as they knew all the processes and did better work than those who had learned the trade in this country. Another young girl, who had been here only six months, earned up to \$9.00 a week as an operator on dresses. At twelve she had gone to work for a dressmaker in her native village. After a year or two she went into a regular dressmaking establishment in a larger town; later to Milan to learn the fashionable work. She explained that big shops are called "schools," but that they are in reality like the factories here.

Some of these women had been able to advance quickly. For instance, in a year and a half, Lena,

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who was only twenty, had worked up to sample making at \$12 a week. She had begun at the age of twelve in a large shop in Turin, earning 60 cents a month. After learning the trade she earned \$15 a month. Not satisfied, she had gone to France and worked for six months in a shop in Dijon where she made \$10 a month besides room and board. She found factory work hard in America, as she was not accustomed to working fast. She liked to make the whole dress and to work carefully and thoroughly. "But if a girl worked that way in a wholesale house here, she could not make anything and would soon get laid off."

"Your work is all right provided it is done quickly enough" was a criticism frequently made. "They do only cheap work in this country. Everything must be done in a hurry. In Italy it would take six months to do a pillow and here it must be done in three or four hours. Cheap work!" said Linda Baia, an expert embroiderer. A finisher on dresses complained that she had to learn the trade all over again when she came here because in Italy there was more hand sewing and no subdivision of processes. If one worked fast there, people would say that the work must be badly done, and everyone was taught to do as beautiful sewing as possible. There it would take months to make a dress.

Perhaps these criticisms are not always fully merited, as the women have not realized that they are no longer making garments for individual customers but for wholesale. In the group of 65 who

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had worked at sewing or dressmaking in Italy, seven had gone to work in the specialized line of men's clothing, nine on women's cloaks and suits, three on shirtwaists, 29 at wholesale dressmaking, two on muslin underwear; only four were in custom dressmaking, where they might have some prospect of doing the careful and all-round work to which they had been accustomed. The others were struggling with the piece-work system, extreme specialization of processes, the operation of the power machine, with the emphasis on speed and output rather than on quality.

Hand embroidery had likewise presented an opportunity of employment to some of these immigrants, especially to some of the better type who had learned the work in the convents or schools of Italy as a personal accomplishment. Here, when embroidered fancy waists and dresses were in fashion, they found an unexpected commercial value in their skill. For instance, one woman who could speak only a few words of broken English was making \$14 a week at embroidery and beadwork. Another was earning \$13 a week embroidering beads on chiffon. She was doing the finest work in her shop and her sisters, all embroiderers, estimated that the "boss" was making about \$20 a day on her work. Three sisters earned their living by embroidering waists and chiffon dresses. They agreed that Rose, the youngest, was the poorest worker as she had learned the trade in this country and not in Italy.



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Other immigrant women were found in the needle trades besides those who had learned to sew in Italy. Many, especially the older ones, who had been farm hands or housewives in Italy and were often illiterate, had turned to the simple work of finishing on both men's and women's tailored garments. Little training is required for this work. Moreover, the organization of the work in the shop requires so little supervision by the employer that ignorance of English forms no bar to these women. As piece workers they may be trusted to work at top speed to earn the small wage of \$6.00 or \$7.00 a week. Through neighbors or relatives who did home work, some newly arrived immigrants had heard of jobs in these shops and, according to the law of least resistance, there they went to work. Often, too, the friendly home worker would show the woman the rudiments of the trade, so that she did not feel as "strange" as if she had been plunged into the midst of work in a noisy candy or paper-box factory. This appealed especially to the older women, who were timid in seeking work. That men's clothing is an industry employing many new arrivals is shown by the fact that 111 of the 362 women who had gone to work immediately after landing had first worked on tailored garments.

The extensive advertising in Italian papers by New York firms—American, German, and Russian—especially for workers in the clothing trades shows that to them, at least, Italian women are

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desirable employes. Often advertisements in Italian to attract those who cannot speak English offer special inducements of "*buona paga, lunga stagione, union shop*" (good pay, long season, union shop). Advertisements appear for "*operatrici per vesti di sciffon \$15 a \$25 per settimana*" (operators on chiffon dresses to earn \$15 to \$25 a week). "*20 ricamatrici cercansi, lavoro a pezzi o a settimana. Si da lavoro a casa*" (20 hand embroiderers wanted, piece or week work. Work given home). Or "*operatrici, guarnitrici e body makers si cercano per camicette di lawn. Buona paga. Lavora fisso tutti l'anno. Non si da lavoro a gente dell' unione*" (operators, trimmers, and body makers wanted on lawn waists. Good pay. Steady work all year. No work given to members of the union).

The Italianizing of such English words as "bushelers" into *bucellatrici*, "operators" into *operatrici*, "drapers" into *drapperiatrici*, and "pressers" into *pressatori* or *pressatrici*, "dressmakers" into *dressatrici*, suggests that no equivalent terms for these specialized occupations exist in Italy. The name of her industry and her particular job are usually the first English words that the immigrant learns. A woman will shrug her shoulders helplessly when you ask her where she lives or how long she has been in this country. Her attempt to answer you with "feenisher," "press," "west," "dress," or "clo-ding," suggests that her work forms the strongest link with her new world.

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**The Flower and Feather Trade:** The flower and feather industry, which has come to be looked upon as the Italian women's trade, especially attracted the young English-speaking girls of American birth or women who had been here since childhood. The few older women who were found in this trade were mainly employed at the heavy but unskilled work of pressing petals or leaves. Angelina Delibro, a woman of fifty, had been handling a pressing machine for five years, but made only \$5.00 a week. She was glad of a chance to make 10 cents extra by working half an hour overtime on Saturdays. Although the work was unskilled, she claimed that she earned so little because she was too old and her fingers were too stiff for her to learn to do good work.

For the young girl as she left school it was often the first choice. Perhaps she had been making flowers at home after school ever since she could remember. When the time came for her to find work outside her home, even this slight experience or the offer of a job from the boss who had supplied her mother or a neighbor with home work, easily accounted for her entering this trade. Of the 156 who were in flower and feathers, 65 had done such work at home before leaving school. Antoinette Baretti wanted to be a nurse when she left the public school, as her teacher had told her about the work. But when she learned that in a hospital a nurse may have to scrub floors, she decided she would rather be a shop girl. Dressmaking would

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have been her choice if her eyes had not been so weak. Finally she went to work in a flower and feather factory where her aunt was a forewoman. An attractive, up-to-date American-born girl of nineteen was found sewing ostrich plumes at piece work. She also had planned to go into dressmaking, but a friend offered to take her into a position in a feather factory, "and so my mother thought I might as well go there," she explained. "It was right after my father died." Her sister, Celestine, had remarked to a visitor two years before, while still in school, that she was going into dressmaking and not flower making, although she had made flowers at home for years, because "that is no trade." But she became a flower maker. "I couldn't do anything else, so I had to," she exclaimed hopelessly. A woman of twenty-nine had been working at branching and flower making since she was twelve. Three other women had been sewing ostrich plumes for over twenty-five years. None of these had ever ventured into any other work and were proud of their trades.

Few in this industry or in any other, however, showed as much enthusiasm for their work as did a charming light-haired American-born girl, thoroughly absorbed in sewing ostrich feathers. Warned by an older sister not to go into candy making because "that is no kind of a trade and a woman can't work at it after she is married," Milly took up feather making. She had grown to love her occupation, and it was a rare pleasure for the visitor

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to hear her describe the different processes, and to watch her deft fingers as she scraped, pared, tinted, and sewed a plume.

This very requirement of deftness of touch and pliability of the fingers suggests why few of the adult immigrants were feather or flower makers. Farm work or heavy housework had hardened their hands, and even in the heavier work in this trade they are handicapped.

**Paper-Box Making:** Paper-box making was another trade employing principally the American born. They were young girls of seventeen, eighteen, or nineteen, and eight out of 29 in this trade had been in it for less than a year. The girls agreed that the work was monotonous and sometimes heavy, that very little skill was required, and experience counted for little. It had attracted only the less ambitious, and often girls sought to impress the visitor with the fact that they were in the trade only because they could get no other work. Raphaëla, nineteen years old, had been standing for two years at her table pasting paper on the bottoms of boxes. "You get used to it, but in the summer your feet get sore." She was ashamed to tell anyone her trade. "I always imagine that people think it is a dirty trade, and they ask me if I can't get anything better to do." Ida had worked up from turner-in and stripper to setter-up. With four years' experience she was earning a fairly steady piece wage of \$9.00 or \$10, although the danger of having a finger crushed in the machine limited her

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speed. Angelina Bellini was the oldest of eight children in a family where the father had unsteady work as a day laborer. Leaving public school at eleven, she had been working for nine years in the paper-box trade. As a paster she usually earned \$10 a week, but with overtime and Sunday work for as much as seventy-six hours in one week, she had earned up to \$15.50 in a week. She thought it the hardest trade there was, but since she had learned it she was not willing to go back and begin over again at a low wage in something else.

Mrs. Bardi, a widow of thirty-two with three children to support, finished paper boxes. She usually earned \$5.00, but sometimes added \$2.00 a week by putting rings on strings at home. A young girl of seventeen was a stripper, but had never made over \$5.00, although she was born in this country and had gone to a New York public school. The shiftlessness and low standards of her home were reflected in her work and lack of ambition. She first began work on paper boxes, then for three months worked in a steam laundry, nine months in a hair goods place, and then at paper boxes again, although she thought it "an awfully bad trade."

**The Tobacco Trade:** The tobacco industry had the largest proportion of foreign born, only one out of the 27 so employed claiming the United States as her birthplace. It is also the industry having the largest proportion of women who could not speak English. Two-thirds had not yet learned

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it, although only five of the group had been here for as short a period as two years. Among these were several older women who had been accustomed to farm work in Italy and who had not objected to the smell or the stain or the rough wear on the hands to which the Americanized girl or woman would object.

**Candy Making:** Although there was a general verdict against candy making as a desirable trade, yet 68, or over 6 per cent of the group investigated, were employed in it at the time of the interview, while 136 had tried it at some time in their work careers. In this trade were found both the older immigrant women and younger American-born girls. Immigrant women who could speak no English were employed at the less desirable and dirty work of peeling cocoanuts or almonds, or sorting peanuts. Biagia, who had come four months before from Sicily, was peeling almonds in a large west side candy factory for \$4.50 a week. As she could speak no English, she could not get anything better than this work which she had secured through the aunt with whom she lived. The girls of American birth, or those who could speak English, worked as packers, wrappers, or at the better paid work of dipping by hand or machine.

Whether they had been in the trade for a few months or many years, they cared little for it. Mrs. Sartori, who worked at the trade before her marriage and had returned to chocolate dipping,

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said the candy trade was about the worst there was, especially on account of the long hours. She hoped that her daughters would never go into it, "unless they are forced to," and she was struggling to send the oldest to a trade school so that she might escape. Josephine, only fourteen, had had no other choice than a position as a plat carrier. As she had to be on her feet all day and carry quite heavy loads in the ice-room, her mother was afraid her health would suffer, but she did not know how to find anything else for her. Carmela Lenaro, however, was one of the few who seemed satisfied. She had been a packer for two years. "I was walking along the street and the forelady was standing outside. She said to me, 'Little girl, are you working? If you want, you can come in here and learn packing.' So I went in and now I am used to the trade and wouldn't like to work at anything else."

## PROCESSES OF WORK

We can understand better the demands made upon the skill and experience of these girls and women by considering the processes at which they work instead of the industry. The name of the industry gives little clue to the nature of the tasks that the workers are called upon to do. Table 5 classifies the women according to the specific process at which those in manufacturing were engaged.

The mere fact that it is possible to make such a classification as the table shows is in itself significant



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and is proof of the present minute subdivision of labor. More than a fifth of the women were operators of power-run sewing machines. They were at

**TABLE 5.—PROCESSES OF WORK PERFORMED BY  
ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS IN MANUFACTURING  
INDUSTRIES**

Process of work	Women
Operating sewing machines . . . . .	222
Feeding and tending machines . . . . .	64
Fine hand sewing . . . . .	61
Medium-grade hand sewing . . . . .	185
Coarse hand sewing . . . . .	36
Hand and machine processes combined . . . . .	27
Pasting . . . . .	90
Branching (flowers and feathers) . . . . .	45
Cutting . . . . .	19
Hand stamping . . . . .	7
Measuring and weighing . . . . .	9
Sorting . . . . .	15
Examining . . . . .	12
Folding . . . . .	7
Packing . . . . .	48
Wrapping and tying . . . . .	8
Ribboning . . . . .	6
Pressing and cleaning . . . . .	21
Processes peculiar to certain industries . . . . .	76
Work incidental to manufacturing, such as supervising and stockkeeping . . . . .	38
Work not stated further than as "general," or learning . . . . .	31
<b>Total</b> . . . . .	<b>1,027<sup>a</sup></b>

<sup>a</sup> Of the 1,095 women investigated, 68 were not employed in manufacturing industries.

work on dresses, shirtwaists, underwear, corsets, petticoats, veils, curtains, straw hats, dress shields, and mattresses. As operators they guided strip after strip or article after article into the machine, with no opportunity even to hold a needle in their

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hands. Whatever basting was required was done by others. Nor did their machine work mean that they made a complete garment. In making the simplest muslin underwear, operators described themselves still further as tuckers, rufflers, double hemmers, lace runners, fly makers, buttonhole makers, or button sewers. One girl, who thought there was no trade so good as that of underwear, had managed to learn how to make a whole muslin nightgown, but her day's work consisted merely in sewing in yokes. A few sample makers only, perhaps made a garment throughout.

This fine subdivision of work was also found in hand sewing and other hand processes. In making shirtwaists or dresses, for example, women were employed at processes so unskilled as distributing work to the operators, sewing on buttons by hand, marking for buttons. Other girls were examiners, pressers, or packers. Rarely did a girl combine even two of these simple processes, and even more rarely hand and machine work. Only 27 women were combining a hand and machine process in their work. Yet as has been said it was the opportunity to learn to make a garment throughout that had attracted many of these women into the needle trades. Hand sewing was the work of 282 women. One group did fine hand sewing, such as embroidery or the making of buttonholes, occupations requiring neat, careful stitches. Another group of 185 women did hand sewing of a medium grade, finishing clothing, sewing on braids and

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passementerie, preparing and trimming hats, making neckwear, or finishing and lining furs. A third group were coarse sewers, whose task was to make things hold together. They sewed on buttons, tacked covers on umbrellas, or sewed ostrich feathers, lampshades or teddy bears.

The functions of the workers, in processes of the same name, vary widely in different industries. Because a girl knows how to branch flowers it does not follow that she knows how to branch feathers. Packing flowers, which requires an artistic sense, is far different from packing candy. The pasting of samples on cards, requiring a neat, deft touch and a sense of color, is quite unlike the mechanical pasting of labels on wine bottles. Nor does the wrapping of a chocolate in silver foil bear much resemblance to the wrapping of pamphlets in a paper cover.

A description of occupations for even one nationality gives a cross-section of the complex make-up of the work force in an industry. We have seen one trade attracting large numbers of young girls, another a majority of the older women; one industry where the new immigrant ignorant of English predominated, another where the American-born girl was found in every kind of job. On the other hand still others employed Italian women of every age and degree of skill and education. Such variations should give pause to any desire to generalize and put into one pigeonhole the skilled, and into another the unskilled industries.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE WORK PLACES OF ITALIAN WOMEN

**N**OT so very many years ago society's chief interest in workers was in the amount of their earnings, and that largely as a source of taxes or a cause of pauperism. But the world has passed this stage of "it is nobody's business" policy in regard to its wage-earners, and the community is now generally ready to recognize that the conditions under which they work are matters of public concern. The manufactured products and the money returns are not the only interests of the public. It feels a responsibility for the human element—the producer.

#### INDUSTRIAL STANDARDS

There is now general agreement that industry should meet at least certain minimum requirements or standards in conditions of employment. Opinions differ as to the methods by which it may be made to live up to these standards, whether through the pressure of public opinion, the social education of employers and workers and voluntary action on their part, state regulation, or some other method. The principle of minimum requirements, however, is accepted as fundamental to social welfare and progress. The following statement embodies cer-

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tain of these requirements and standards which have been accepted as a basis for measuring the welfare of the human factor in industry:<sup>1</sup>

"First and elementary among these matters are working conditions. These should be made as wholesome and safe as possible. Fire hazards should be minimized, machinery guarded, sanitary conditions maintained, industrial diseases prevented, and good light and ventilation provided. . . .

"Second, until children are sixteen years of age it is essential that they develop normally and receive training for the work of life. Any occupation, therefore, is objectionable which interferes with such development or training. Under fourteen, children should not be employed in gainful occupations.

"Third, hours of labor should not be so long as to injure health or to deny workers opportunity for self-improvement, the development of home life, and an intelligent interest in public affairs. Eight hours for a day's work is a standard which is now widely accepted.

"Fourth, every worker should have one day of rest in seven.

"Fifth, women and children should not be employed at night.

<sup>1</sup> Odencrantz, L. C., and Potter, Zenas: *Industrial Conditions in Springfield, Illinois*, p. 6. These are based upon a statement of Social Standards for Industry recommended in the report of the Committee on Standards of Living and Labor of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections in 1912.

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"Sixth, workers who give their full working time to an industry should receive as a very minimum a wage which will provide the necessities of life. . . .

"Seventh, either the 'necessities of life' should include enough to allow workers to carry insurance and have something for old age or else industry should provide directly for the care of incapacitated workmen and for the dependents of workmen who are killed or used up at work through payment made by the employer,—the cost to be distributed over society by some form of insurance or other method.

"Eighth, irregularity of employment should be minimized, and when workers lose their positions adequate facilities should exist to help them find new places.

"Ninth, the bargaining power in settling the terms of the work agreement should be as evenly balanced as possible between the employer and the employee. This would recognize the right of employers and employees alike to organize or form unions."

Any industrial investigation in a center like New York City, with approximately 1,500,000 men and 600,000 women at work, is important because of the opportunity it provides to compare actual conditions with this program of minimum requirements. The value of such a study is increased when it deals with Italians and other immigrants whose entrance into industry, it is claimed, tends

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to lower standards of employment as well as those of living.

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The 1,095 Italian women and girls investigated were found to be at the time of the interview or when last employed, in 734 different establishments covering 61 distinct industries.<sup>1</sup> The investigation of work places, however, was limited to 271 shops engaged in manufacturing in Manhattan. None was made of the work places of the few engaged in offices, stores, restaurants, or in private families. The dress and waist industry likewise was omitted as an investigation of it was being conducted at the time by the Wage Scale Board<sup>2</sup> of that industry, financed jointly by the Employers' Association and the trade union. Many establishments engaged in flower and feather making, millinery, and bookbinding had been covered in previous investigations of which reports had already been made.<sup>3</sup> Other omissions

<sup>1</sup> The following list will indicate how the original list of 734 was reduced to 271: Number of firms not engaged in manufacturing, 69; establishments covered in previous investigations, 55; establishments in dress and waist industry, covered by another investigation, 121; addresses incomplete, not found, etc., 198; information refused, 11; outside Manhattan, 9.

<sup>2</sup> The results of this investigation have been published as Bulletin 146 of the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Wages and Regularity of Employment and Standardization of Piece Rates in the Dress and Waist Industry of New York City*. 1914.

<sup>3</sup> Van Kleeck, Mary: *Artificial Flower Makers* (1913), *Women in the Bookbinding Trade* (1913), and *A Seasonal Industry, a study of the millinery trade in New York* (1917). Russell Sage Foundation Publications.

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were due to the fact that some workers, especially those who could not speak English, were unable to give complete addresses. They knew how to get to their shop, but could not tell the name, street, or number. In other cases the shops had moved or failed.

In only 11 cases did the employer refuse the information desired. While some were naturally more interested and communicative than others, most of them tried sincerely to give what information they had. Many were interested in particular phases of their work, with little to say upon other problems; so that there was little uniformity in the kinds of information secured in the various establishments. One employer had given serious thought and much time to the problem of keeping his workers the whole year round. Another took no interest in this question, discharging workers when he didn't need them and advertising when he did. Some had had experiences, favorable or unfavorable, with trade union organizations which they were anxious to tell about; others showed not the slightest interest in the subject. Some answered only direct questions and could not be persuaded to show their shops or employes at work. Others escorted the visitor from basement to roof, explaining every detail of the work and conditions with a genuine interest in the purpose of the visit.

In 194 cases the owner or manager was interviewed and frequently the foreman or forewoman



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was called in to supplement their information. In other cases the manager or owner was inaccessible and the information was furnished by the forewoman or by someone in the office. The amount of information given varied with the interest and leisure time of the person interviewed; but the investigators were met with uniform courtesy, the interview not infrequently ending with an invitation to return for further information.

As the investigators went from shop to shop they were impressed with the diversity of the problems involved. Some Italians were in establishments which boasted of the highest industrial standards; others in sweat shops where workers were crowded together under the worst conditions; some in places where everyone from owner to errand girl was Italian, and that the language of the shop; others where they were lost in a variety of nationalities and the employer could scarcely tell whether or not he had Italians on his payroll. It was exceptional to find shops where all the workers were Italian or, on the other hand, industries in which they were not represented at all. Of the 271 shops included in this investigation, 216 reported the number of Italian women employed and the proportion they formed of the regular force. In a total of 13,000 women employed, nearly one-third, or 4,600, were Italian by birth or by parentage. Table 6 shows how the numbers varied in different industries. Many employers frankly did not know how many or what

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proportion of their workers were Italian, so that the information cannot be given for 55 shops.

**TABLE 6.—PROPORTION OF ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS IN WORKING FORCE OF SHOPS INVESTIGATED, BY INDUSTRIES<sup>a</sup>**

Industry	All women employed	Italian women employed	
		Number	Per cent of all women
Flowers and feathers . . . . .	325	115	35.4
Men's and boys' clothing . . . . .	1,432	1,079	75.3
Women's tailored garments . . . . .	99	67	67.7
Wholesale dressmaking . . . . .	555	177	31.9
Muslin underwear and corsets . . . . .	2,414	435	18.0
Hand embroidery . . . . .	125	117	93.6
All other women's and children's clothing . . . . .	2,182	490	22.5
Paper boxes . . . . .	447	199	44.5
Other paper goods . . . . .	965	118	12.2
Tobacco . . . . .	155	60	38.7
Candy . . . . .	806	477	59.2
Other foodstuffs . . . . .	456	204	44.7
Headwear . . . . .	769	253	32.9
Textiles and miscellaneous sewed materials . . . . .	1,337	520	38.9
Rubber, fur, and leather goods . . . . .	522	136	26.1
Miscellaneous manufactured goods . . . . .	335	73	21.8
Laundry . . . . .	184	97	52.7
Total . . . . .	13,108	4,617	35.2

<sup>a</sup> Of 271 shops, 55 did not supply information as to proportion of Italian women employed.

In the shops doing hand embroidery and laundry work, making men's clothing, women's tailored garments, and candy, more than half the women were Italian. Hand embroidery, with 94 per cent of the workers Italian, headed the list. Many of

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these were immigrants who had learned the trade in convents and private schools of Italy. At the time of the investigation, the fashion required that chiffon waists, dresses, and gowns should be elaborately embroidered with silks or beads. The fashion had come suddenly, as is the way of fashions, and no Americans or workers of other nationalities had been trained for this work, so that the Italians found a ready market for their skill, with few competitors.

The second largest proportion was in men's clothing factories, where 75 per cent of the women workers were Italian. In 22 out of 27 such shops, Italian was the predominant nationality. To the immigrant trained in fine hand sewing, the making of hand buttonholes offered an excellent field of work, and other women could quickly pick up the simple, coarse sewing like tacking and basting. For instance, in a men's clothing firm on Spring Street employing about 450 workers, practically all of the 150 women were Italian, many of whom could not speak English. Most of the work was simple, consisting of finishing, felling, turning straps, trimming off threads, cleaning, sewing on buttons, making pads, and basting, at which the women could earn from \$6.00 to \$10 a week. A few were working side by side with men operating machines and earning up to \$26 a week; 15 were skilled hand buttonhole makers, earning up to \$16 a week. No learners were taken, but unskilled

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help was used for such simple work as tacking and turning strips.

Almost as large a proportion of the women in shops making women's cloaks and suits was Italian. The work was for the most part finishing, as buttonholes were made by machines operated by men. Great speed, however, combined with accuracy, is essential for a good finisher in this trade, and it usually takes about two years to become skilled. Consequently older women were employed. The major part of the work was done by men, and in the shops visited seldom as many as 10 women were employed. The trade was strongly organized for women as well as men, and in the busy season the earnings of the women soared up to \$18, \$20, or even \$35 a week. A long slack season, however, cut down these high earnings, when some shops were closed entirely for three or four months, or only one or two women were kept for chance orders. Many of the Italian women who were married did not seek other work during the slack season but stayed at home. One employer thus explained the high wages of these women: "I believe it is because they have a way of working after they are married. As it takes some time to get started and efficient the longer trade life gives them the advantage."

Italians formed less than a fourth of the women in industries like the making of muslin underwear, corsets, children's clothing, umbrellas, linens, paper goods, and metal articles. In the making of straw

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hats, a highly skilled occupation where, according to some employers, only one in 20 succeeds in learning the trade, with wages ranging up to \$30 or \$40 a week during the busy season, over a third of the women were Italian in the shops investigated. One manufacturer said that the highest wage in the preceding week, \$38, had been paid to an Italian. "Italian girls are very nice about their work and I am glad to get them when I can. They like perfection in their work." But in paper-box making, where the work was simple, easily learned, and wages rarely reached \$10 a week, 44.5 per cent of the women were Italian.

Italians predominated in 112 out of 240 shops in which employers could state a prevailing nationality, but in every industry there were other shops where the majority were Americans, Hebrews, Germans, or Irish. In some industries the Italian's skill with the needle was a special asset, or her love for perfection and deftness of touch, while in other cases, because of her ignorance of the language and of how to get a job, she was forced to accept dirty, unskilled work.

## EMPLOYERS' ATTITUDE

To the majority of employers a worker is a worker, irrespective of nationality. One employer stated that he had never noticed any special race characteristics in work but thought them individual. "Some Italians are excellent, and some are very poor." In some shops larger numbers were

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employed because the foreman or owner was Italian, or the shop was situated in an Italian neighborhood. One candy manufacturer would not employ an Italian who did not wear a hat, but came bareheaded or with a shawl over her head. Another employer in the cloak and suit industry stated, "We have only the better grade of Italians, born and educated here. They all speak English." Another in the same line said, "We never take Italians if we can help it. They make trouble with the other workers." "I'll take anybody who can do my work for me. I don't care what language they speak," said a manufacturer of boys' clothing. The crux of the matter was probably that if workers came up to the employers' standards of cleanliness, appearance, and ability to do the work, there was not much discrimination on grounds of nationality. Employers had no prejudice against the Italian girl who dressed like her fellow-workers and spoke their language. Her employment depended largely upon the individual employer, as one wanted only Italians, while his neighbor manufacturing the same kind and grade of goods objected seriously to her employment. Agreement was general that she earned the same wages as other workers in their shops. Some employers went further, declaring that Italians were unusually industrious and earned more, while others, with different experience, would agree with the employer who said that Italians ruin every trade they take up because "they will work

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for anything." Both extremes were rare, however, and the general verdict was that they were no worse and no better paid than the other workers in the shop.

### WORKING CONDITIONS

**Factory Buildings:** Factories were housed in three types of buildings—the modern loft, the old loft, and the remodeled dwelling. The distinction between a modern and an old loft is based on structure rather than on equipment, so that a building housing a men's clothing firm, although it has introduced elevators and a sprinkler system, is still classed as an old loft because of the wooden floors and stairs and the limited window space. On the other hand, a five-year-old concrete building, built expressly for the firm occupying it, was classed as a modern loft in spite of the absence of elevators. The manager believed that a factory was a place to work in and did not wish his employees "joy-riding" in the elevator. Usually the formal entrance, the uniformed elevator man, and the concrete steps were evident in the modern loft buildings, while a freight elevator entered from the street, or worn wooden stairs ushered us into the old loft building.

The investigators found 54 shops occupying entire buildings, 74 more than one floor, 135 one floor, and the remaining eight less than an entire floor. The size of the shop, however, gives no indication of the number in the workroom. A firm occupying two adjacent lofts employed only eight

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women. Their work, spooling silk and cotton, required much space for the winding machines. Another firm, dealing in ladies' neckwear, occupied a very large main floor loft. They employed four girls as the neckwear was all made elsewhere. These four worked by artificial light in a small, dark room in the rear of the building.

The workrooms in remodeled dwellings were the most unsatisfactory. With wooden stairs, dark halls, inadequate lighting, and poor sanitary equipment these afforded little safety or comfort to the workers. In one case, 12 girls were crowded into the basement workroom of a candy shop on Varick Street with a damp cement floor, where they had to work by gaslight all day. On the other hand, modern brick buildings, such as the seven-story fireproof factory occupied by a tobacco company employing 1,500 women, were often equipped throughout with a sprinkler system, and fire drills were held each month. A factory for the manufacture of knee pants was located on the sixth floor of an old loft building which was not provided with an elevator, so that the 15 women and 50 men had to begin their day's work with a climb of five flights of wooden stairs poorly lighted. At the time of the visit a leak in the hall of one of the upper floors had caused water to drip down through the stairs. The rest of the building was occupied by a laundry and as the doors were left open the building was saturated with steam. However, as it was taller than its



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neighbors; the workers once upstairs had fresh air and good light. Only a few of the women were provided with chairs with backs, although they sat for eight and a half hours a day operating power machines or sewing on buckles by hand.

About three-fourths of the buildings were equipped with elevators. These were usually only freight elevators, rickety, slow traveling, and frequently decorated with the signs, "You travel on this elevator at your own risk." In the 55 buildings having no elevator service, 10 of the workrooms could be reached only by climbing three, four, or five flights of stairs; four others were situated in the basement. Not only is lack of elevators bad for the health of the workers but a menace in case of fire.

**Fire Protection:** While the present study could not cover the technical side of fire protection, which required more thorough examination and understanding of the problem than was necessary for the purpose of this inquiry, the investigators observed all degrees of fire protection or lack of it. One modern factory boasted the largest fire-escape in the world. In many cases, however, so crowded were the workrooms with piles of stock that escape in time of accident or fire would be doubtful. Some employers had regular monthly fire drills under trained supervision; others did not even know what a fire drill was. One owner of an underwear factory casually referred to a fire that had occurred in his factory on the preceding Sunday,

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when he had violated two legal provisions by allowing women to work seven days a week and permitting smoking in the workroom.

New York City has witnessed several horrible factory fires, one of the worst being the Triangle fire in 1912 in which 147 women lost their lives. Even with strict enforcement of the best regulations, serious accidents may occur. But workers should be protected as far as lies within human power. Narrow, wooden, unenclosed stairways such as were found in one loft after the other even where paper, cloth, and other highly inflammable materials are handled, provide inadequate and dangerous exits; piles of stock in front of windows and doors, the crowding together of machines and chairs, so that workers could not pass freely in or out; unprotected gas flames near inflammable material, and smoking increase the danger. It was obvious every day to the visitors that it is not enough to have laws upon the statute books providing protection against all these conditions; they must be enforced.

The workrooms represented every stage in the development of the factory system. In one instance three women sat making candy in what had formerly been a flat in an apartment house, while a few blocks away some 500 were employed in an eight-story building where they had the latest equipment in the way of an automatic sprinkler system, fire doors, excellent lighting, ample space, and a ventilating system. Employers

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ranged from the man who could scarcely understand a word of English, knew nothing of the problem of industrial betterment but only how the work should be done, was entirely unconcerned about conditions and recognized no personal responsibility for those in his workroom, to the man who had given time and thought to provide the best conditions possible for his workers, and who recognized a responsibility for their welfare as well as for payment of their wages.

**Lighting and Sanitation:** Good light conduces not only to better health but to better work. Some employers, however, had failed to grasp this relation, while others had installed the best lighting devices known. In nearly a sixth of the workrooms the investigator, even without any scientific analysis, could pronounce the light bad, while in others it was only fair and had to be supplemented by artificial means. Four of the shops required artificial lighting for all workers throughout the day; in others, only the workers in certain parts of the room were so handicapped. The matter is the more serious as two-thirds of the workrooms with bad lighting were in the needle industry, where practically every process is a strain on the eyes, from the incessant watching for nine hours a day, often on dark materials, of the rapidly moving needle of the sewing machine to hand sewing and finishing.

A large underwear factory was an example of good conditions. Here the majority of the work

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was done on the top floor where light came through large windows and skylights. Electric drop lights hung over the tables, so close together that when artificial lighting was needed no shadows were cast. Some employers who had made a serious study of the problem of lighting had not only installed the very latest devices, but had placed them to the best advantage of the work and the workers. In many cases, however, while the light was adequate, the employer had displayed little judgment in the placing of his workers, so that girls doing work requiring little eye-strain were seated by the windows with the best light, while others doing work requiring close application were farther back in the room. Not only in this respect but in others, with some thought and better management, conditions for the workers could have been much improved without extra expense.

Ventilation also received very little attention in most of the factories. Windows usually furnished the sole ventilating system, so that the temperature of the day and time of year determined whether workrooms were well ventilated or not. In only one of the factories seen in the needle trades was ventilation scientifically controlled. Fifteen of the Italian girls investigated were at work in this factory. The investigator, who was a physician, ascribed to this system their good physical condition. They seemed to enjoy their work in spite of its monotony. In marked contrast to the healthy look of these workers were

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the stooped shoulders and depressed air of women in other shops where windows could not be opened without creating a draft for someone, and were consequently kept closed. While employers were apt to lay the blame for bad air upon the workers who objected to open windows, yet they might have solved the problem by providing a better system. For instance, in one factory the panes of glass in some windows were so adjusted that they might be turned to admit air without a direct draft. With the installation of some such simple device, the welfare of large groups of workers could be materially bettered. It was frequently impressed upon the visitors that a very little thought and foresight in these problems of physical surroundings would have added much to the comfort, well-being, and efficiency of the worker.

The same lack of organization appeared in such a simple problem as the cleaning of the work-rooms. About a fifth of the factories were recorded as "dirty" for the usual reason that there was no definite system of cleaning. Sometimes this devolved upon an errand boy who rushed through the work after the employes had gone. In some of the larger factories a man or woman was employed during the day to clean while the work was going on. One girl had complained that "in her place" the boy swept without dampening the floor, so that the workers sat in the dust. This particular "cleaning system" was seen in operation during one of the visits. In other cases the nature

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of the product rather than any concern for the workers required that the workroom be kept clean, and that this be done when the materials were not exposed.

**Noise:** The physical discomfort and actual effect of noise on the human machine varies. Workers often become accustomed to a constant noise and are disturbed when it ceases. Nevertheless, a person can do a higher grade of work when the function of the auditory nerve does not have to be suppressed. Young girls who try power-machine operating leave the work, even though they like it, because they cannot endure the noise. Where it cannot be eliminated it should be reduced to a minimum. More than half of the shops visited were noisy, and a large part of these were in the sewing trades, where the power machines pound away at great speed. That the noise can be largely controlled is shown by a special make of machine so constructed as to be practically noiseless. This machine suggests the possibility of improvement in the other machines.

**Seats:** New York State laws require that every person employing women in a factory shall, where practicable, provide and maintain suitable seats with proper backs; and where women are engaged in work which can be properly performed in a sitting posture, these seats shall be supplied and permission given to use them. Conditions, however, vary widely from the legal standards. In some industries, as for instance in the sewing

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trades, the nature of the processes requires that most of the workers must be seated, although in one underwear factory visited, only the machine operators and finishers were seated, while the examiners, packers, and pressers had to stand all day. In a petticoat factory a few blocks away all the women were sitting at their work, even the pressers and folders. It was the first time the visitor had ever seen pressers sit at their work. All the other pressers interviewed complained of the fatigue and strain due to continual standing. It is a curious thing that employers can devise reasons for customs that seem to have no basis. Regarding the hand chocolate dipping, one employer said, "Girls are obliged to stand to get the swaying motion of the body necessary to perform their work properly." But in a large factory nearby, 70 girls were doing a perfectly satisfactory job in this line, comfortably seated in chairs with backs. People might well do without the fancy curls on chocolates if they can be obtained only at the cost of the strain upon women who must stand continually at their work.

Factories were visited where women were required to stand, engaged in steaming or selecting feathers, packing feathers, crackers, candy, cigars or clothing, cleaning and sponging men's clothing, basting men's clothing, examining, pressing, mangling, cutting, fitting, boning corsets, drafting, grading and counting paper patterns, hand folding, hand stamping on stationery, hand labeling, weigh-

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ing cereals, folding silk, filling and capping olive oil bottles, hand gathering of books, tending various kinds of machines, like weaving, winding, knitting, embroidery and labeling machines, and hanging curtains. The very name of the process indicates that the work in some cases cannot be done seated, such as fitting and serving as a model. Even when seats were provided they were frequently without backs, and hence did not adequately protect the women from strain and fatigue.

Some ingenuity and thought, if the employer is at all concerned over the health and comfort of his workers, could certainly provide seats for practically all the women whom we saw standing at their work day after day. For example, an employer in Springfield, Illinois, invented a chair which slid on a track so that the worker tending a series of machines could move along from one machine to the next. The length of the working day, moreover, made standing all the more injurious.<sup>1</sup>

**Lunch Rooms:** The installation of a lunch room or some facilities for providing the workers with a proper lunch, is a good paying investment. Employers who had had enough initiative to give their workers a full hour at noon, with a chance for recreation, or who had provided an open space on the roof where the workers could walk about and get fresh air, showed themselves good business men, for the workers came back to their ma-

<sup>1</sup>For discussion of working hours, see Chapter V, pp. 82-107.



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chines and work tables with renewed energy and interest. The same is true of the employer who, if he cannot provide a lunch room, at least arranges so that the workers may get something hot, like tea, coffee, cocoa or soup.

One underwear manufacturer provided a separate lunch room where employes could get soup and coffee at two and a half cents a cup and allowed no one to eat in the workroom, thus protecting his goods against stains. The shop of another underwear manufacturer was so crowded that he could not have a separate lunch room, but he had also found it profitable to provide tables for lunch in one part of the workroom, with a woman to make coffee at noon. No worker was allowed to eat at her machine. In a large corset factory on Broadway a lunch room with a counter where hot dishes were procurable, was situated on each floor. Shops with such facilities, however, were few. In most cases, a visitor happening in at lunch time would find the workers sitting at their machines or tables eating a cold lunch brought from home or bought from the factory peddler who deals largely in pies, pickles, apples, and candy. Occasionally a large, dirty coffee or tea pot provided by the workers supplied all with a cup of "something hot."

## TYPICAL SHOPS

A description of certain typical shops will summarize more effectively than any mere generaliza-

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tion the actual conditions under which these Italian women toiled. A shop of the better class where all the 35 women employed were Italians was located on the seventh floor of a new 12-story loft building. The workroom was clean and well lighted and the workers, who were putting hand embroidery on dresses and waists, were provided with comfortable chairs with backs. In the fifty-four-hour week experienced women averaged about \$12, although some earned as much as \$15. The season lasted from September to May, and only 10 workers were kept during the slack period. "We lay off every worker we don't need," was the policy, the employer explained. "The Italians are wonderfully efficient in this work. We use only Italians. They seem to have the ability born in them and trained in them from their earliest childhood." This shop was visited because a fourteen-year-old girl was working a fifty-four-hour week at a wage of \$5.00. She had no certificate and was employed in violation of the law that no person under sixteen may be employed without working papers, nor for more than forty-eight hours a week.

Only four of the 40 women employed in a certain chocolate factory on Greenwich Street were Italian. The employer explained that Italians could not get the uniformity necessary in hand dipping. "They seem to lack the knack of getting the same twist on the top of each chocolate." The workroom was light, clean, and well venti-

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lated, and the floor was covered with sawdust and swept out every day. About 20 girls were sitting at tables, deftly dipping bonbons and cherries into chocolate. The girls earned \$7.00 to \$10 a week. Six girls were standing at a table placing each piece of chocolate in a round paper dish and packing 180 in a box. A rapid worker could pack 60 to 70 boxes a day. Two other girls were also standing as they labeled boxes, for which they were paid \$6.50 a week. No girls under sixteen years of age were hired. The time schedule was a nine-hour day, or fifty-three and a half hours a week. Owing to the fact that the shop had been much disturbed by girls coming in late, a system of fines had been instituted whereby anyone five minutes late was fined for half an hour's time.

Italians, as has been already stated, were not found in unskilled work only. In a shop where 35 girls were doing fine engraving on stationery and checks, only two Italians were employed, but one of these was the most expert and best paid worker. Hand stamping, the most skilled process, requires at least a year's training, although each worker is taught all the processes, including machine stamping, examining, and packing. Experienced workers made \$14 to \$16 in the week of fifty-three and a half hours. The shop was in a well lighted, modern loft building.

Poor working conditions for women workers were found in a contractor's shop manufacturing boys' knee pants, situated in an old factory build-

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ing with wooden stairs and dingy windows. Fifty men were busy operating power sewing machines and pressing, while near the windows in a corner sat six women "busheling," five of whom were Italian. In the fifty-four-hour week, the maximum allowed by law, they could make as high as \$9.00, but usually their earnings fell below this. For instance, one girl seventeen years old had earned only \$5.00 in the week before she was interviewed, although she had illegally worked sixty-one hours that week. The men had been able to organize, but the women had not.

Italians predominated in one of the best shops in the underwear trade, occupying a corner loft on East Sixteenth Street. Here 75 women were engaged in operating whirring power machines, finishing, ribboning, cutting out embroidery, or pressing stacks of dainty white muslin underwear. "Italians are very quick workers and I am glad to get them," said the superintendent. The workroom had excellent light, and the workers were so placed that they got the most benefit from it. There was a fire-alarm system and fire drills were held regularly under trained supervision. Although the shop was on a fifty-hour weekly basis, the employer managed to get his orders out without overtime or home work, and to keep his force together the year through. No one under sixteen years of age was employed, and the minimum wage for beginners was \$5.00 a week. Sample makers could earn \$15 a week steadily, while machine

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operators usually made between \$12 and \$15 at piece work. Even the two girls who had been interviewed, although only seventeen years old, were earning \$10.50 and \$14 a week. The work in this line was skilled and required training and practice.

Three other young girls had been less fortunate in the shops in which they had chanced to find work. All still under sixteen years of age, they had drifted into the shipping department of a factory where the sole work for the 75 girls employed was pasting on labels and packing into boxes the bolts of ribbon which came to the department complete except for this one process. The girls were paid \$3.50 to \$4.50 a week. It was a typical blind alley occupation where 50 new "learners" were engaged every year. This one process took only a few hours to learn, and the only requirement was that girls must know how to read in order to put on the correct labels of individual firms. Only four of the girls in the shop were as old as nineteen years. When girls asked for an increase they were encouraged to find better paying work, as the highest wage paid here was \$7.00 a week. The force was kept busy all the year and the firm was constantly advertising for more. The only compensation for the blind alley nature of the work was the excellent workroom and a weekly schedule of only forty-four and a half hours. The crowd of young girls, standing or sitting around the long tables, many

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with their hair hanging in braids or curls, so that they looked like children, made the room appear little like a factory where workers might expect a well paid future. The majority of the girls were American born, with only 10 Italian born among them.

In a long, narrow room, down on Cherry Street, lighted only by a skylight, two Italian women were found standing and bending while they sorted bales of dusty waste paper. Neither could speak a word of English and neither knew that they were violating any law because they worked ten and a half hours every day, from seven in the morning until six at night. They only knew that at the end of a week's work the Italian owner, who was a friend, handed them each a five-dollar bill.

In an ostrich feather shop on Twelfth Street, owned by an Italian, almost all the 30 girls were Italian, some of whom could not speak English. They were seated at their work of selecting, scraping, sewing, steaming, and curling feathers and plumes. In a week of forty-nine and a half hours the majority could earn \$10 to \$12, but they often supplemented their wages with earnings from overtime or home work. At other times, however, they might work only two or three days a week, but the entire force was kept. Although the workshop was located in a remodeled dwelling, the girls could get good light at their work and the place was fairly clean except for the usual litter that accompanies feather making.

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One girl had been working for a year as examiner on sweaters in a loft on Wooster Street where she earned \$10 to \$11 a week. She was found busy at work among some 75 other women and girls of whom 10 or 12 were Italian. In the rear of the loft were weavers, and in the front sewing machine operators. In the middle were winders, who unfortunately had to work by gaslight all day in air filled with a fine dust from the yarn and worsted used. Although the dust had not caused any special disease the owner felt that it was probably injurious, but did not know how to get rid of it. Sewing machines were carefully provided with skirt guards and foot rests, and all workers who sat had chairs with backs. But women who were tending winding and knitting machines as well as examiners and folders, stood at their work through the day of eight and three-fourths hours. "We have about a fifty-one-hour week. Soon it will be the eight-hour day and that will give the employes time really to live." Women were not yet organized in this trade, but the employer believed the time not far distant when they would be. With a minimum age of sixteen, a minimum wage of \$5.00 when many of his competitors were still paying \$3.50 or \$4.00, a week of fifty-one hours and an attempt to keep his workers steadily, to safeguard the machinery and to provide the best work conditions he knew how, he offers an example of the employer who finds it compatible with his business principles to provide decent conditions as far as he understands them.

## CHAPTER V

### HOURS OF WORK

THE importance of the length of the working day has been brought home to us more forcibly today than ever before. The war, with its sudden demand for the production of supplies in large volume, has taught us that long hours do not necessarily mean increased output, but on the contrary, are bad for both the product and the workers. For a number of years labor unions in the United States have been demanding the "three eights"—eight hours of work, eight hours of leisure, and eight hours of sleep. Six states and the District of Columbia have already passed laws limiting to eight the daily number of hours which women may work. When this investigation was begun, the New York State law prohibited the employment of women in factories more than ten hours a day for six days a week. In October, 1912, the daily limit was reduced to nine, and the weekly from sixty to fifty-four hours. Children under sixteen are also protected by a provision that they may not work more than eight hours a day for six days, or forty-eight hours a week, nor before eight o'clock in the morning or after five o'clock in the evening. The hours in some industries in which a



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number of the Italian women were found to be employed were still further limited by trade union action. Nevertheless the daily hours for women sixteen years of age and over, as given in Table 7, below, show how far industry was from the standard of an eight-hour day.

**TABLE 7.—DAILY HOURS OF WORK FOR ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS 16 YEARS OF AGE OR MORE**

Industry	Women who work daily				All women
	Less than 8 hours	8 hours and less than 9	9 hours and less than 10	10 hours or more	
<b>Manufacturing</b>					
Flowers and feathers . . . . .	3	46	76	..	125
Men's and boys' clothing . . . . .	1	9	39	25	74
Women's and children's clothing . . . . .	4	48	241	3	296
Paper goods . . . . .	..	13	42	6	61
Candy . . . . .	..	1	31	22	54
Tobacco and foodstuffs . . . . .	..	20	26	5	51
Headwear . . . . .	..	19	12	1	32
Miscellaneous manufactured goods . . . . .	3	37	81	2	123
<b>Office and store work . . . . .</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>557</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>851<sup>a</sup></b>

<sup>a</sup> Of the 920 women sixteen years old or more engaged in manufacturing, 69 did not supply information as to daily hours of work.

From this table it will be seen that out of the group of 851 women sixteen years and over, about a fourth worked less than nine hours a day, while 8 per cent were working as long as ten hours or more. The women in the candy industry fared

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worst, for 22 out of 54 workers, or 41 per cent, had a ten-hour daily schedule. Men's and boys' clothing ranked second, with 25 out of 74, or a third, working ten hours or more. In the latter trade one woman was working regularly eleven hours a day, and another even twelve hours.

The weekly hours of work for the women of all ages are given in Table 8.

TABLE 8.—WEEKLY HOURS OF WORK FOR ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS, BY AGE

Weekly hours of work	Women who were				All women	
	Less than 16 years		16 years or more			
	Num-ber	Per-cent	Num-ber	Per-cent	Num-ber	Per-cent
48 hours or less . . . . .	25	28.1	89	10.7	114	12.4
More than 48 and not more than 50 . . . . .	10	11.2	128	15.4	138	15.0
More than 50 and not more than 52 . . . . .	13	14.6	111	13.4	124	13.5
More than 52 and not more than 54 . . . . .	20	22.5	267	32.1	287	31.2
More than 54 and not more than 56 . . . . .	14	15.7	148	17.8	162	17.6
More than 56 and not more than 58 . . . . .	3	3.4	34	4.1	37	4.0
More than 58 and not more than 60 . . . . .	4	4.5	37	4.5	41	4.5
60 hours or more . . . . .	..	..	17	2.0	17	1.8
Total . . . . .	89	100.0	831	100.0	920 <sup>a</sup>	100.0

<sup>a</sup> Of the 1,027 women engaged in manufacturing, 18 under sixteen and 86 sixteen years old or more did not report weekly hours of work, and three reported irregular hours.

Table 8 shows that 72 per cent of the girls under sixteen were working more than forty-eight

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hours, the limit set for them by the New York State legislature, and that nearly 24 per cent were even exceeding fifty-four hours, the legal limit for their older working sisters. Of the women sixteen years and older, over 28 per cent had a week of more than fifty-four hours and 17, or 2 per cent, worked as much as sixty hours or more.

The statistics in the two preceding tables are based on statements made by the workers themselves. Information given by employers and presented in Table 9 shows a somewhat more favorable picture.

None of the shops reported a week as long as sixty hours. The two extremes were represented by the 12 per cent of women who were in shops where they worked forty-eight hours or less per week, and the 10 per cent whose weekly hours exceeded fifty-four. In the latter group were included a few shops visited before the fifty-four-hour law went into effect. It is to be noted, however, that a large proportion of women was employed in shops which maintained almost the maximum number of hours allowed by law. Nearly 50 per cent of the women were in shops where the weekly hours were over fifty-two but did not exceed fifty-four hours. In the candy industry, 94 per cent of the women were working over fifty-two hours a week, and only a few were in factories where a week of forty-eight hours or less was the rule. In the women's tailored garment industry, on the other hand, 95 per cent worked fifty-two

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hours or less per week. As a result of the new law<sup>1</sup> and the strike in the men's clothing industry,

TABLE 9.—MAXIMUM FORCE OF WOMEN EMPLOYED IN FACTORIES INVESTIGATED, BY INDUSTRY AND WEEKLY HOURS OF WORK

Industry	Women employed in factories whose weekly hours were				Total
	48 or less	More than 48 but not more than 52	More than 52 but not more than 54	More than 54 but not more than 60	
Flowers and feathers . . . . .	292	398	184	..	874
Men's and boys' clothing . . . . .	25	622	999	..	1,646
Women's tailored garments . . . . .	45	106	8	..	159
Dresses and waists . . . . .	..	450	..	..	450
All other women's and children's clothing . . . . .	580	2,532	1,127	1,300	5,539
Paper goods . . . . .	672	221	778	..	1,671
Candy . . . . .	50	60	1,785	20	1,915
Tobacco and foodstuffs . . . . .	521	575	2,783	200	4,079
Headwear . . . . .	70	129	861	60	1,120
Textiles and miscellaneous sewed materials . . . . .	163	482	990	436	2,071
Rubber, fur, and leather goods . . . . .	17	167	133	9	326
Miscellaneous manufactured goods . . . . .	80	38	597	6	721
Total . . . . .	2,515	5,780	10,245	2,031	20,571
Number Per cent	12.2	28.1	49.8	9.9	100.0

which had occurred shortly before the shops in this industry were visited, the length of the working week had been considerably reduced. When

<sup>1</sup> Passed October, 1912.

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the Italian women in this trade had been interviewed previously, they had reported long hours of work, some working up to or exceeding the sixty-hour legal limit. When the shops were visited no women were working over fifty-four hours, and 39 per cent were in shops with a working week of not more than fifty-two hours.

## REST PERIODS

During the course of the nine- or ten-hour day the women frequently did not have a rest period of a full hour at noon. Only 283, or less than a third of the 951 women reporting, enjoyed a full hour; 457 had only half an hour, while the remainder had usually about forty-five minutes. The New York law requires that in each factory at least sixty minutes be allowed for the noon-day meal, unless the Commissioner of Labor shall permit a shorter period. So many employers are granted such permits, however, that the law is of little significance. A half hour at noon condemns the worker to a cold lunch eaten perhaps on her work table, and is far too short a time for her to relax or to get out into the open air. This fact is all the more important since many of the processes are so highly specialized that the operation requires only a limited number of motions of the hand or arm, and the other muscles of the body remain inactive. The work needs also constant attention and concentration, often continuous watching of a needle or a machine. In such

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monotonous work, with endless repetition, a reasonable rest period is needed to permit some mental activity, and an opportunity to reverse the physical action and to rest the muscles and nerves.

### OVERTIME HOURS

Daily and weekly hours of work were very often extended by overtime and home work. Among 262 who gave information on this subject, 50 employers admitted resorting to overtime and 32 asked their workers to take work home when they were busy. Seven firms reported both overtime and home work. The nature of the industry determined to some extent the prevalence of extra time, although the business ability of the employer seemed to be a vital and governing factor. In the same industry there were employers who had managed to organize their work so that overtime was not necessary, while others insisted that they must require it or go out of business.

Of 894 women who reported whether or not they had had to work overtime in their last position, 367 reported "Yes," and 527, "No." The industries in which the "yeas" outnumbered the "nays" were the manufacture of women's tailored garments, dresses, shirtwaists, petticoats, kimonos, candy and bookbinderies, laundries, and department stores. The industry with the largest proportion of women who had had overtime was laundry work, with wholesale dressmaking ranking second.

The period of overtime ranged from a week to

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twelve months in the year. Among 269 women who reported definitely how many months in the year they had worked overtime, 41 had worked overtime for less than four weeks, 70 for a month, 71 for two months, 59 for three months, and 21 for four, five, or six months. Seven women—three in laundries, one in a department store, one in a bookbindery, one in a towel supply company, and one in a men's clothing factory, had worked overtime during the whole twelve months.

Nor was such overtime merely casual. If we examine the number of nights they had been expected to work in any one week, we find that only 27 out of 320 reporting on this point, or only one in 12, had worked but one night a week, while seven others had worked extra time on Sundays only. Two nights a week had been the rule for 79 of these women but the large majority, 206, or nearly two-thirds, had been at work three nights or even oftener during these periods of overtime. In fact, 13 had worked as many as six nights a week in addition to their regular weekly hours; and three of these had worked on Sundays as well. These 13 women were employed in a department store, in an office, in a photograph studio, and in shops manufacturing men's clothing, straw hats, shirtwaists, hand embroidery, paper boxes, and candy.

Nor was the overtime for only an hour or so in order to finish up work; frequently it extended far into the night. In December, 1912, or three

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months after the fifty-four hour a week law for factory women went into effect, one seventeen-year-old candy maker was working regularly fifty-six hours a week, with frequent overtime until 9 p. m. The day's work totaled thirteen hours. In addition she also worked occasionally on Sundays. Her task consisted of packing chocolates, at which she had to stand all day. Another girl, also only seventeen, employed in an ostrich feather shop, worked three times a week until 9 p. m. in addition to a regular eight-and-one-half-hour day, so that her weekly schedule was increased from fifty and one-half to fifty-nine and one-half hours. She said that the boss had tried to induce her to stay every night, but the work was so hard she could not do it. A flower maker not only worked until 8:30 p. m. four times a week, so that she had sixty and one-half hours to her credit, but she also had to take work home over Sunday. She realized that the overtime was illegal, and had often wondered how it was that inspectors had been around to other places and forbidden more than one hour overtime, while in her place they worked three. She hated the overtime as it made her very tired, but it was compulsory. Table 10 shows the daily hours that the women and girls had worked when there was overtime.

Contrary to the widely advocated standard of eight hours it was found that 302, or 90 per cent of the 334 women and girls reporting overtime, had worked over ten hours a day, while 29 had



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actually worked over twelve hours. When the time is added that these women had to spend going to

TABLE 10.—DAILY HOURS OF WORK, INCLUDING OVERTIME, FOR ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS, BY INDUSTRY

Industry	Women who worked					All women
	10 hours or less	More than 10 hours but not more than 11	More than 11 hours but not more than 12	More than 12 hours but not more than 13	More than 13 hours	
<b>Manufacturing</b>						
Flowers and feathers . . .	3	8	24	2	..	37
Men's and boys' clothing . .	1	7	7	..	1	16
Women's tailored garments . .	2	13	8	..	..	23
Dresses and waists . . .	11	31	38	4	1	85
All other women's and children's clothing . . .	2	8	28	6	..	44
Paper goods . . .	2	16	4	..	1	23
Candy . . .	1	11	13	4	..	29
Tobacco . . .	4	4	3	..	..	11
Headwear . . .	..	3	3	..	..	6
Textiles and miscellaneous sewed materials . . .	4	3	15	6	..	28
Miscellaneous manufactured goods . . .	..	14	7	..	..	21
Store and office work . . .	2	3	2	1	3	11
<b>Total</b> . . .	<b>32</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>334<sup>a</sup></b>
<b>Number</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>36.2</b>	<b>45.5</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Per cent</b>						

<sup>a</sup> Of the 367 women who had worked overtime, six had worked extra time on Sundays only, and 27 did not supply information.

and from work, and the lunch and supper periods, small margin is left for recreation or other interests.

Even though in 1912 a maximum week of fifty-

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four hours had been set by law, in this investigation we found 115 women who had been working over sixty hours a week, among whom were 11 who had worked seventy hours or longer.<sup>1</sup> The latter were engaged in flower and feather making, men's clothing, bookbinding, candy, and in department stores. Two women had worked as long as seventy-eight and eighty hours in one week respectively, in department stores. On the other hand, 13 per cent, or 42 of those who had had overtime, had not worked over fifty-four hours a week. The excessive overtime was not limited to any one industry, but depended rather upon the individual employer.

TABLE 11.—CLOSING HOUR FOR ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS WHO HAD WORKED OVERTIME, BY AGE

Closing hour	Women who were			All women
	Less than 16 years	16 years and less than 21	21 years or more	
Before 7 p. m. . . . .	2	11	8	21
7 p. m., but before 8 . . . .	8	42	28	78
8 p. m., but before 9 . . . .	8	78	55	141
9 p. m. . . . .	8	48	38	94
After 9 p. m., but before 10 . .	..	2	..	2
10 p. m., or later . . . . .	1	6	4	11
Total . . . . .	27	187	133	347 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Among 367 who had worked overtime, six worked extra time on Sundays only and 14 did not supply information.

Table 11 indicates that unfortunately the long hours with overtime were not limited to older

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix C, Table 6, p. 331.

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women, but that even young girls of fifteen and sixteen, and many under twenty-one were working until half-past eight, nine o'clock, or even later. Eleven women, one of whom was under sixteen, worked until 10 p. m. or later.

Payment for extra time and labor after the regular day's work was over varied from industry to industry, and from shop to shop. The following list shows the rate of compensation among 263 women and girls who had worked overtime:

No pay . . . . .	9
Regular day or piece rate . . . . .	99
Regular day or piece rate and supper money . . . . .	9
Double pay . . . . .	7
Time and a half . . . . .	11
One-half day's pay . . . . .	36
Full day's pay . . . . .	4
Special rate per hour . . . . .	40
Special rate per evening . . . . .	48

The nine who reported no pay for extra work were not in factories. Six of them were employed in department stores, one in an office, one in a photograph studio, and one in a laundry. These facts do not substantiate the claims that Italian women in entering factory work are obliged to seek a class of work with lower standards of trade conditions.

The most common method of payment was on the basis of the usual day or piece rate, without extra compensation because the work was done after regular hours. Ninety-nine had received only the usual rate. Supper money was given in only nine cases, in amounts ranging from 11 cents to 35

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cents, 25 cents, however, being the usual amount. Only 7 per cent had received time and a half or double time, while about 14 per cent had been paid half a day's pay for the evening's work. When special sums were paid for an evening's work they ranged from less than 50 cents received by 18, to \$1.00 received by five workers. Payment by the hour ranged all the way from 5 cents to 35 cents.

## DANGERS OF OVERTIME

Several serious questions are involved in overtime. There is the obvious danger of having young girls of sixteen or eighteen years leaving the factories in the evening, in districts where the streets are dark and practically deserted. Moreover, at this time of overwork, when they need good strengthening food, they are usually condemned to two cold lunches during the day.

In a careful study of industrial fatigue made by A. F. Stanley Kent in factories in England, in 1916<sup>1</sup> the following conclusions were reached: "The general health of the worker, upon which his rate of working and his powers of endurance depend, so far as it can be gauged by the tests used in this investigation, appears to be prejudiced by the introduction of overtime, and, to a less extent, by work in the early morning hours. The suspension of overtime was followed in every case

<sup>1</sup> Second Interim Report on an investigation of Industrial Fatigue by Physiological Methods, by A. F. Stanley Kent, M.A., D. S. C. London, 1916, p. 65.

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by an improvement in the condition of the worker.

. . . Where an estimate was made of the time lost by the worker, and this was taken as an indication of his general health, the suspension of overtime was found to result in a saving of time of four and a half per cent." . . . Overtime labour, when performed by a tired worker results in an amount of fatigue out of proportion to the length and severity of the labour. Fatigue production is increased and recovery is lessened by overtime.

. . . An increase in the amount of overtime worked in a given period will produce an increase of fatigue out of proportion to the increased time. . . . Overtime, even when not leading to injurious fatigue, is deleterious to health as necessitating long hours spent in the atmosphere and surroundings of the mill, interference with meals, sleep, relaxation and exercise in the open air. . . . Overtime labour is physiologically and economically extravagant."<sup>1</sup>

This last point ought to be an important consideration on the part of the employer. Actual tests led to the conclusion that "During the middle periods of the day output is normally high, but is lowered by the working of overtime. This diminution is often so great that the total daily output is less when overtime is worked than when it is suspended. Thus overtime defeats its own

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 22. (See also Goldmark, Josephine, *Fatigue and Efficiency*. Russell Sage Foundation Publication. 1912.)

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object. . . . The unsatisfactory output of the overtime period is due to fatigue."<sup>1</sup>

Some of the employers interviewed held this view. One underwear manufacturer said, "If we can't get our work done this week, we will have to let it go to the next." Two Italian girls employed here confirmed this statement. A manager of a paper box concern had found by actual experience that overtime did not pay. "It may pay for two or three weeks but then there is a marked falling off in production." He had discovered that he himself was less interested in the welfare of the firm when he worked evenings. In a silk finishing factory, the employer had for ten years had a fifty-four-hour week. A framed sign bore witness to this fact. He related with satisfaction that when the fifty-four-hour law went into effect the inspector had said, "Mr.—, the State has at last adopted your hours." An employer in the men's clothing line, where a union agreement had reduced the hours to fifty-two after January, 1914, said, "We are glad of the short hours, but find it makes competition with firms in other states unjust. Eventually we shall have a forty-eight-hour week, but I hope it will be national. The people that got the hardest hit by the strike are the little fellows who had not heeded the fifty-four-hour law and who were working fifty-nine to sixty-two hours. It has put some of them out of business." A dress manufacturer remarked, "It should be a criminal

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

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offense all over the United States to work girls more than fifty hours a week, or else there should be no law to that effect. Injustice comes in the competition." A manufacturer of shirts had found by actual experiment in his own factory that his 350 workers, of whom half were Italian, did their best in the morning and that there was a falling off in work toward the end of the day. "It is not good to let women work over fifty-four hours a week, and even if we had shops in other states, I feel sure we should not allow the women to work over fifty-four hours." An employer manufacturing knee pants, who successfully operated his shop on forty-seven hours a week, had no overtime. "You are no good if you work more than nine or so hours a day. Even your head will not work."

Such comments from employers are significant, and bear testimony to the principles upon which the legislature has enacted laws limiting the hours of work of women and children. Unfortunately at the present time there are still some who do not believe in such restrictions. The most constant plea is that the workers themselves want a chance to work overtime and need it. A man who employed 80 girls to make dolls and teddy bears had a regular schedule of fifty-four hours a week. In previous years he had always had overtime, and told how when he had received a late afternoon telegram placing a large order, he would have lost it had he not been able to keep the girls overtime. But as overtime was no longer allowed

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he had hired an extra floor and as he said "would have to have many more workers and many more to put out of employment in the dull season." A flower manufacturer explained that the fifty-four-hour law injured the girls, as it deprived them of the opportunity to make extra money. "It is easy work and good for them. Girls want to make a good living and most of them know what work means and come very promptly to earn as much as possible." "Overtime is a great advantage to the employe," said an employer in the baking business. "These girls used to have extra money at Christmas and this year they sadly missed it." Few of his women workers received a regular wage of more than \$8.00 a week.

## ATTITUDE OF WORKERS

On all sides there were protests against overtime in spite of the inducement of increased earnings. One girl, who cut out trimmings on underwear at \$4.50 a week, was paid 35 cents for working until 8:30 p.m. She said she would not work overtime any more. "It is not worth while to kill yourself." Another girl of eighteen, an operator on kimonos, who made 50 cents an evening in addition to the usual \$11 a week by working three nights a week until nine o'clock with no time off for supper, at the end of three months exclaimed in despair, "I can't stand it any more." Carlotta Valenti had been working overtime at padding men's coats on the evening when the visitor called. She had sat



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idle all day, but a special order had come in and she had been obliged to stay until nine o'clock. A finisher on women's suits had to give up night school because she was required to work overtime every night, sometimes even on Sundays. Yet she made no extra money because she had to wait for work the greater part of the day.

A woman of twenty-two, a straw operator, summarized in her record some of the effects of such overwork. During four months of the year she worked overtime every day until 8 p.m., with no time for supper. In addition she was asked to come in for half a day on Sundays. She found the overtime extremely fatiguing; she used to get more tired in the two hours at night than during all the remainder of the day. She always noticed a marked change in her health at the end of the first week of overtime, and it took her a long time to get over the effects at the end of the season. She was usually too tired to eat, and had to go to bed as soon as she came home at night. Even then she was often too tired to sleep. While working on Sundays as well, she spent the rest of the day in bed.

So opposed are workers to overtime that frequently their employers cannot persuade them to stay unless there is a direct threat of discharge. In other cases, employers have resorted to the gentler persuasive measure of paying special premiums to those who remain.

An equally potent force, while more indirect,

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is economic pressure at home. Because her father was out of work, Lydia, a girl of twenty-one, who was the principal wage-earner in a household of six, pasting calendars at \$6.00 a week, worked three nights a week until 10 p.m. for two weeks before Christmas to earn a dollar an evening. The father of little Louisa Trentino, seventeen years old, was a hod carrier, usually idle. Her mother and the children earned a few dollars a week making flowers at home. Louisa could increase her weekly earnings of \$6.00 by 50 cents if she worked until 8:30 p.m. three nights a week. This meant that she could not attend evening classes, although she had been backward in school, nor join a club in a nearby settlement in which she was interested.

## VIOLATIONS OF LAW

The worst feature of this excessive amount of overtime and long hours is that while the women are nominally protected by law, the facilities for enforcing its provisions are inadequate. To the investigators in their visits to the shops, especially soon after the fifty-four-hour law went into effect, employers sometimes stated regular hours that were in violation of the law, so that they were seemingly ignorant of its provisions. Not all the violations reported, however, could be ascribed to ignorance, for some factories were exceeding the limits set by the law of 1909. Table 12 shows the nature and extent of the violations. On account

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of the changes that occurred in the law in October, 1912, reducing the hours of work for women while this investigation was in progress, the table includes also violations of the provisions of the law before it was amended.

**TABLE 12.—VIOLATIONS OF LAWS REGULATING  
HOURS OF WORK FOR WOMEN 16 YEARS AND OVER**

Nature of violations	Number
Of law prior to October, 1912	
Employment for more than	
10 hours daily . . . . .	18
60 hours weekly . . . . .	66
10 hours daily irregularly, more than 3 times a week	45
Of law as amended October, 1912	
Employment for more than	
9 hours daily . . . . .	132
54 hours weekly . . . . .	190
9 hours daily irregularly, more than 3 times a week	54
6 days a week . . . . .	37
Allowance for supper less than 20 minutes when working overtime more than 1 hour after 6 p.m. . . . .	136
Employment after 9 p.m. of women under 21 years of age . . . . .	6
Total . . . . .	684

Practically no industry included in the investigation was without a representative in the list of offenders. Factories manufacturing dresses and shirtwaists, cloaks and suits, men's clothing, flowers and feathers, muslin underwear, candy, paper boxes, hand embroidery, and laundries had large numbers of violations to their discredit. In shops manufacturing dresses, 92 distinct violations were found, while those in men's clothing shops amounted to 85, and in candy factories to 111.

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There were further violations of the statutes protecting children under sixteen in factories, as shown in Table 13.

**TABLE 13.—VIOLATIONS OF LAWS REGULATING EMPLOYMENT OF GIRLS UNDER 16 YEARS OF AGE**

Nature of violations	Number
<b>Employment</b>	
For more than 48 hours weekly . . . . .	77
For more than 8 hours daily . . . . .	82
Before 8 a.m. . . . .	13
After 5 p.m. . . . .	69
Without work certificate . . . . .	5
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>246</b>

In a group of 98 children under sixteen years of age who gave information about their conditions of employment, all but 12 had been employed in violation of some provision of the labor law. Some were not entitled to work at all as they had no work certificates. Others worked longer hours than the law allowed. Girls fourteen and fifteen were found working until eight and even nine at night. In view of the fact that eight hours had been set as the limit for their day's work by law in 1907, it is startling to find 82 out of a group of 98 children reporting, employed in violation of this law in 1912. The results certainly point to the urgent need of a better enforcement of the laws regulating the hours of work of both children and women.

The 851 workers who reported upon hours of work were employed with 579 firms. In 309 of

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these firms workers were employed in violation of some section of the labor law. Because of the provisions limiting the employment of children between certain hours, that is, to the hours between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., violations of these laws are comparatively easy to detect, especially as the employer must keep on file the work certificate of every child under sixteen years of age.

Unfortunately the provisions of the law regulating the hours of work of women are more difficult to enforce because their hours are not limited within certain periods. Each factory is required to keep posted a copy of the labor laws and a schedule of its regular hours of work. Even this provision was frequently violated, so that employees had little opportunity to know the law.

To enforce the law, the inspector must ascertain not only the regular schedule of the shop, but the daily and weekly hours worked by each woman. Even if he comes to the shop at 8 p.m. and finds a group of women at work, he must ascertain from each one her hours of work. Obviously, until the hours are further restricted within certain periods, the other provisions will be difficult to enforce. At least a first step would be the extension of the provision forbidding the employment of women under twenty-one after 9 p.m., to women twenty-one years of age or older. The present provision is inadequate to protect even those under twenty-one, since no proof of age is asked.

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### TRADE UNIONS

There is room, also, for greater activity by the unions in this direction. The investigators were surprised to find frequent violations of law even in shops which were organized. One important function of such organizations ought to be to secure adequate enforcement of the laws protecting labor, especially in the matter of hours, where the unions and legislation both aim at securing a shorter work day.

Because of the indifference, conservatism, and lack of understanding of the majority of employers, improvement in conditions of employment comes slowly unless stimulated by other forces. One of the most effective of these is the power of the worker through union organization. Of the 1,027 women and girls found in factory work, 110 were union members distributed as follows: United Garment Workers, 28; Vest Makers' Union, 5; Knee Pants Makers, 2; International Ladies' Garment Workers, 38; Ladies' Waist and Dressmakers' Union, 30; Joint Board, Children's Clothing Trade, 2; White Goods Workers' Union, 1; Wrapper and Kimono Makers' Union, 1; Straw Hatters' Union, 2; Bookbinders' Union, 1. Seventeen per cent, or 43 of the 259 shops in which they worked, were organized. Sixty-eight of the women who were union members could speak Italian only, and 82 were immigrants who had come to this country when they were over fourteen years old. They made up 22 per cent of the 373 women immigrants

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who were fourteen years or older at time of coming. In contrast, we find that only 28, or 4 per cent of the 722 women or girls who were born in this country or who came over as children, were union members.

One woman, forty years old, who had come to this country when thirty-three, had never been to school and could speak no word of English. This, however, did not prevent her from joining the men's clothing union and going out on strike. She knew she was striking for shorter hours and more pay. She had been working eleven and a half hours a day and was earning about \$6.00 a week. She said she would like to work from 8 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. and live a little more decently. She had been out on strike six weeks when she was interviewed. "I will not betray my patria," another woman out on strike declared, when the "boss" offered her lodging with Italian board and \$2.00 a day if she would return.

The largest number as well as the largest proportion of organized shops was in the cloak and suit industry, which included 15 of the 17 visited. In the men's clothing industry which was being organized while this study was in progress, eight of the 27 shops included women as well as men in the union. In this industry about 115,000 men went on strike in December, 1912, and 10,000 women finishers, almost all Italian, were thus thrown out of work. The settlement, in March, 1913, granted shorter hours and higher pay to

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the workers. The president of the union stated later that the women were paying their dues and holding meetings regularly, and that largely through their influence the organization of about 50 per cent of the home workers, all Italian, had been effected.

### HOME WORK

In some factories in busy season the women took the extra work home to finish at night instead of staying in the shop. This, of course, can be done only in occupations which are largely hand work—such as feather and flower making, hand sewing on garments, and similar processes. Thus we found that in 44 industries women had taken work home in only 22. Of the 886 who reported on this point, 130, or 15 per cent, had taken work home in their last or present position. The largest proportion of these were flower and feather makers. In this industry, 57 per cent of the women had taken work home with them after their day's work in the shop was finished.

While the women who worked at home were at least able to get a hot supper, they worked even later than those who stayed in the shop. For instance, a willow-plume maker used to work until one or two o'clock in the morning five nights a week for weeks at a stretch during the busy season. Theresa, another feather maker, eighteen years old, pale, thin, and anemic, had worked nearly every night until eleven for six weeks. The mother objected as the girl was not strong and the



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family didn't need the money. But Theresa said that she would lose her job if she refused to take the work. Another girl who made fancy garters took work home every night. A lonely, frugal woman of forty, who kept house in one room and tried to support herself on \$6.00 or \$7.00 a week, branched flowers after supper until midnight to earn \$1.20 an evening to add to the fund which was to tide her over the long slack season.

One of the most impressive facts to anyone who studies the records of those who have made good the losses of slack season through overtime and home work is the small number who are willing to do it unless they are literally compelled to. By experience they have come to know the price they must pay in the form of extra fatigue, bodily and mental weariness, sacrifice of all interests and all opportunities to enjoy the fruits of their labor, even decreased efficiency, in return for the few dollars and cents they receive. Yet the fact that such large numbers actually did perform extra work in spite of all its drawbacks is significant. On the one side is the influence of the employer who shows his realization of what the job means to the worker when he threatens to discharge her. On the other is the pressure of home conditions, which not only makes her powerless against his threat but spurs her on to make such sacrifice for the sake of the extra earnings she will be able to add to the family income. By bitter experience she has learned that "in time of peace she must prepare for war."

## CHAPTER VI

### WHAT SEASONS MEAN TO THE WORKER

THERE is scarcely an industry not affected once, twice, or even oftener during the year by variation in demand for its product. Each has a busy season or period when extra workers are taken on. Signs of "girls wanted" written in Hebrew, English, and Italian, hang thick at the entrance to the factory and reflect the columns of advertisements in the morning papers. In the factory loft, all labor at full speed throughout the long day. The wages of piece workers soar, and even the earnings of week workers are increased by extra tasks at night in the shop or at home. The employer rushes about frantically with orders to be filled, superintendent and foreman goad on the straining workers, and all are in breathless haste. Later, however, if you chance upon the same shop again, you may find all the extra hands gone and even some of the steady workers taking vacations of a few weeks. The piece workers' earnings have dropped sometimes to nearly nothing, and often they sit idle, waiting for work to come in. Even a week worker kept on, no longer expects a full week's pay in her envelope, since the shop closes at four o'clock instead of six. Machines which were thundering a

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few weeks ago now stand silent. The long tables at which girls were crowded are empty, the signs at entrance doors gone. Perhaps you will even be unable to see the workroom, for the door may be padlocked and the elevator man may tell you that the place is closed until the season begins again. The slack season is on.

### FLUCTUATIONS IN LABOR FORCE

Establishments manufacturing clothing, millinery, straw hats, candy, flowers and feathers, fur goods, and the bookbinderies reported slack periods lasting for several months. Table 14 shows the variation in the number of women employed in the busy and slack seasons in the different industries.

**TABLE 14.—MAXIMUM AND MINIMUM FORCE OF WOMEN EMPLOYED DURING YEAR IN FACTORIES INVESTIGATED, BY INDUSTRY<sup>a</sup>**

Industry	Maximum force of women	Minimum force of women	Per cent minimum is of maximum
Flowers and feathers . . . . .	740	438	59
Men's and boys' clothing . . . . .	1,461	1,270	87
Women's and children's clothing . . . . .	5,775	4,615	80
Paper goods . . . . .	1,314	1,112	85
Tobacco and foodstuffs . . . . .	5,911	4,684	79
Headwear . . . . .	1,037	528	51
Textiles and miscellaneous sewed materials . . . . .	1,582	1,275	81
Fur, rubber, and leather goods . . . . .	616	461	75
Miscellaneous manufactured goods . . . . .	721	634	88
Total . . . . .	19,157	15,017	78

<sup>a</sup> Of 271 factories investigated, 40 did not supply information as to maximum and minimum force.

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In the shops investigated, only about three-fourths of the women employed in the busy season were kept during the slack season. The largest variations were in millinery, where only 51 per cent were at work in the slack period, and in the flower and feather industry which retained but 59 per cent. In the making of men's clothing, 87 per cent of the force was retained.

### CONTROL OF SEASONS BY EMPLOYERS

Because an industry has an irregular demand, however, does not always mean irregular employment for the workers in it. The individual employer is almost as important a factor. In the same industry we found those who were continually hiring and laying off workers because of slack season, while others kept a steady force. One manufacturer of leather hand bags and purses could keep steadily only one of the six workers that he employed during the four busy months. Another, manufacturing dog collars in addition, could keep 50 women employed throughout the year, although there was a slightly busier time before Christmas and Easter as "ladies like to have dog collars and bags to match their new gowns." One firm in the men's clothing trade employed 24 women during the busy months from December to February and July to September. The force was reduced to 14 when it was slack, and even these were on part time four or five months of the year. But another in the same line

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kept 85 women all the year. In the slack season the women were employed on materials that were on hand and could be made up into stock.

Trades with no defined seasons seem to be at the greatest disadvantage. A fancy feather manufacturer complained that sometimes there would be no work at all procurable, and that sometimes the department would be busy almost the entire year. "You can't foretell seasons," said a maker of neckwear. "Sometimes we will strike a popular line and could use 200 workers for a couple of months. Then we will have nothing to do for a month or so." As a result, the number in his workroom varied from 35 to three.

Some firms made a practice of keeping their workers regularly even though there was little to do at certain periods. They felt compensated in not incurring the expense of hiring and training new help when the busy season came by having a force that understood their methods. This is a consideration that few employers take account of, perhaps because they have paid little attention to the expense of hiring and breaking in new workers. Yet those who have made a study of the cost of the process find that it is considerable when they reckon the time of someone to teach employes, the loss in materials and in wages paid. Even experienced workers have to be adjusted.

In a men's clothing factory making up suits ordered in the department stores, 100 out of 350 workers were kept in slack season to do contract

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work, though at a loss. The manager explained that the firm planned to keep the workers together and that it was better to lose \$500 than \$3,000. They made the garments at a slight loss, but if the firm had not made them at all they would have turned out \$3,000 less work during a year.

Other firms kept a large proportion of their workers during the slack season, but on part time or limiting their daily earnings and dividing the work among all. On the other hand, some employers felt that this plan was unfair to the workers and retained only as many as could get a full day's work. It seems unjust, however, for workers to be required to come in every day although there may be little or no work to do. In some cases employers required this as evidence that they were not working elsewhere. "I made \$1.86 last week," said a flower maker, "but we had to go every day to see if there was any work. I wish they would let us work one day and be off the rest of the week. It's awful to sit around this way." Such practices are to be condemned. Employers, without any expense to themselves, are trying to hold workers over the slack season to meet their needs when the busy time comes. Sometimes they take this opportunity to lay off slow and poor workers in the hope that they may secure better ones when the season begins.

Some of the firms where Italian women were working had made special efforts to regularize the output as well as the employment of their workers.

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Various motives prompted them, such as a wider use of their plants in order to keep together a force of good workers, or to keep their salesmen busy. One method was to manufacture a variety of articles. For instance, a firm employing 45 girls for making covered buttons for tailors could keep 30 continuously by making upholstery buttons as well. The employer stated that this last work paid poorly, but it nevertheless enabled him to keep his working force in shape for the rush season. A manufacturer of straw hats, with a busy season of six months when he needed about 84 women, had extended the work of the women materially by taking up a line of silk and velvet hats. Interested in keeping his workers together, as good workers were scarce, he had tried various schemes to tide over the slack season. During the previous year he had set them doing French scallops, but the girls found these too slow after the excitement of straw sewing and he had to discontinue making them.

A bathing suit manufacturer was busy all the year because cheaper grades of bathing suits of standard design could be made up throughout the year, while the better grade of suit was left until about April so that the styles might be of the latest.

Several difficulties face employers who try to dovetail two industries. For successful dovetailing, the seasons of the two industries must not overlap, the processes must require the same sort of machinery or hand work, and the workers must

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be able to transfer from one to the other without loss of efficiency. Where it can be worked out this is one of the simplest methods of solving the problem of seasonal employment.

Firms manufacturing standard goods, or goods that vary little with fashion, are able to make up stock during the slack season. This was done by manufacturers of such goods as underwear, dress shields, ostrich plumes, corsets, children's cloaks, paper boxes, playing cards, and cigars. An employer with a large olive packing factory said that while twice as many olives are consumed in the summer as in the winter, the work is steady for the women. A manager of a large paper-box factory employing about 100 women kept the larger part of his force during the year although there were only four very busy months. In the summer he ran on part-time schedule, closing at four o'clock, with no work on Saturday. At other times he made up standard stock, but only to a limited extent, as space for storage was too expensive.

## EXTENT OF UNEMPLOYMENT

The question naturally arises, what becomes of the workers whom employers do not try to keep on during the slack season? Are they idle or do they find other employment? A tabulation of the amount of time lost in the course of a year by this group of women indicates that for many the slack season means a prolonged period of unemployment. Table 15 gives this information by industries.



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TABLE 15.—WEEKS UNEMPLOYED OF ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS, BY OCCUPATION

Occupation	Women who were unemployed during the preceding year					All women
	No time	Less than 4 weeks	4 weeks and less than 8 weeks	8 weeks and less than 12 weeks	12 weeks and less than 26 weeks	26 weeks or more
MANUFACTURING						
Flowers and feathers . . . .	3	33	32	25	32	4
Men's and boys' clothing . . .	..	10	14	14	16	4
Women's tailored garments . .	1	3	..	3	16	8
Dresses and waists . . . . .	3	25	26	25	26	6
All other women's and children's clothing . . . . .	4	31	39	33	31	1
Paper goods . . . . .	1	20	12	6	3	3
Tobacco, candy, and foodstuffs .	2	25	14	17	18	1
Headwear . . . . .	..	7	5	3	8	4
Textiles and miscellaneous sewed materials . . . . .	3	18	11	8	6	5
Rubber, fur, and leather goods .	1	11	5	2	2	..
Miscellaneous goods and laundering . . . . .	3	6	5	1	4	..
Total . . . . .	21	189	163	137	162	36
ALL OTHER OCCUPATIONS . . .	14	11	8	3	7	4
Grand total . . . . .	35	200	171	140	169	40
						755 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Of the 1,095 women investigated, 236 had not been wage-earners the entire year, and 104 did not give information as to time lost.

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Only 35 of the 755 women, or less than 5 per cent, had drawn full pay during each of the fifty-two weeks in the year, while 40 had been unemployed at least six months. Slightly less than half, or 46 per cent, had lost wages for at least eight weeks during the year. With such conditions of unemployment it is not surprising to find marked differences between nominal wages and real earnings. We shall see in the subsequent discussion of wages<sup>1</sup> that the full time weekly earnings had to be reduced about a sixth before they were equal to the average weekly earnings through the year, since about half the workers lost wages for at least a sixth of the working days in a year's time.

The amount of unemployment varied from industry to industry. For instance, in only one of the 11 main manufacturing groups—the making of rubber, fur, and hair goods, had half the workers lost less than four weeks. On the other hand, in men's clothing, wholesale dressmaking and shirt-waists, and headwear, half had lost at least eight weeks, while half of those engaged in the making of women's tailored garments had been unemployed at least twelve weeks. As the number of women in each group is small, the results must not be regarded as conclusive but only as indicative of the condition of employment for these particular groups. The results, however, indicate that a high weekly wage does not necessarily mean a large yearly income. For instance, the

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter VII, p. 149.

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two industries—women's tailored garments and headwear—which were paying the highest weekly rates were likewise those in which the women lost the most time.

### REASONS FOR UNEMPLOYMENT

The reasons why women lost time from work during the year are given in Table 16. Slack season and part time have been grouped together, as it was impossible in many cases to distinguish just how much time had been lost from each cause. A girl may be away from her shop for an entire week, then return for two or three days' work only part of each day. In such cases, the worker's statement was accepted as to the total amount of time lost in the dull periods.

**TABLE 16.—CAUSES OF UNEMPLOYMENT DURING THE YEAR PRECEDING INVESTIGATION, OF ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS**

Cause of unemployment	Total reporting on each cause	Women unemployed during year	
		Number	Per cent of total
Slack season and part time . . . . .	777	509	65.5
Holidays without pay . . . . .	796	657	82.5
Vacations without pay . . . . .	758	132	17.4
Quitting of job . . . . .	806	97	12.0
Personal illness . . . . .	764	184	24.1
Other causes . . . . .	759	146	19.2
Total reporting on all causes	755 <sup>a</sup>	720	95.4

<sup>a</sup> Of the 1,095 women investigated, 236 had not been wage-earners during the entire year, and 104 failed to give information on all causes of unemployment.

## ITALIAN WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

The greatest loss of wages was due to the seasonal character of the work. Two-thirds of those reporting had lost time on this account alone. Nor did this mean a loss of a few days or a week, but of weeks, perhaps even months at a time. More than one out of every four, or 214 out of 777 reporting, had lost eight weeks or more during the year because of slack or part-time work alone, while 45 per cent, or 354, had lost a month or longer. In spite of their willingness to change from position to position or even from industry to industry to fill in the slack period in their regular trade, only a third were able to say that they had lost no time from either of these causes.

A straw sewer, who had earned as much as \$15 in the height of the season, complained of the hardship of losing six months' work during the year. "I'm no millionaire," she said. A flower maker stayed in one factory all the year round, but her earnings varied from \$3.00 to \$11 a week. Seldom was there enough work to keep everyone busy all the time, and in the summer, when there were no flowers to make, they could earn only \$3.00 or \$4.00 a week at branching holly. She was ashamed of getting such low wages at her age (twenty-two), and besides she wanted to help her poor parents in Italy. In her struggles to make both ends meet she had become convinced of the need of a flower-makers' union and had even thought of starting such an organization.

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Seventeen-year-old Mimi Contoni in three years' work had tried three occupations. Her record reads as follows:

Operator on underwear, 8 months; laid off, slack; idle 4 months.

Lampshade maker, 1 year; laid off, slack; idle 5 months.

Addressing envelopes, 2 months; laid off, slack; idle 3 months.

"I have had bad luck getting work," Mimi said. "Wherever I went, I was laid off."

When Rose Cellini was visited at the end of a long period of slack time, instead of showing any signs of benefit from the rest, she was much run down from the strain and worry of her irregular work. Three times within the year immediately past she had undergone the harrowing experience of losing a job and hunting a new one, only to return each night to their tenement home of three miserable rooms where a large family was clamoring for her earnings.

The irregular earnings of the two daughters in the Lombardi family were the principal source of income for its 12 members, ranging from the father of forty-two, who earned a precarious living by peddling, to the three-week-old baby. Mary, aged eighteen, and Millie seventeen, were both machine operators. Their earnings week by week during a year are shown at the top of the following page.

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Mary				Millie			
\$5.00	\$12.30	\$5.67	\$8.00	\$3.00	\$9.58	\$7.00	\$3.22
6.00	11.56	8.25	12.00	4.00	7.00	7.00	9.42
5.00	12.80	7.27	12.00	3.00	8.00	7.00	8.11
4.00	11.91	10.43	12.00	3.00	7.00	1.34	10.47
5.85	11.21	10.96	12.00	4.00	7.00	4.70	10.57
4.10	10.23	9.50	12.00	4.00	7.00	5.00	9.30
5.00	11.02	10.25	1.10	4.75	7.00	5.00	2.90
7.50	10.20	9.00	6.71	5.50	7.00	2.00	5.90
7.50	6.68	10.25	6.75	6.00	5.85	5.10	....
7.50	10.14	.....	6.80	5.50	7.00	.....	4.13
6.00	9.50	.....	1.61	6.00	7.00	.....	....
7.50	9.10	8.42	.....	6.50	7.00	6.65	....
9.00	.....	10.00	9.73	7.00	4.00	8.10	1.63
Total . . . \$407.30				Total . . . \$277.22			
Average per week . . 7.83				Average per week . . 5.33			

The fact that they had been able to reach wages of \$12.80 and \$10.57 at one time or another during the year shows that they must have possessed a certain amount of skill and speed. Yet for four weeks Mary was entirely out of work in spite of employment in seven places during the year. For twenty weeks she received less than her average of \$7.83 for the year. Millie likewise had tried eight positions during the year, but even with such hustling she was unemployed for five full weeks and for eighteen weeks had received less than her average of \$5.33 for the year. Such irregularity of income cannot but demoralize any standards that a family might hope to maintain, and no mere statistical record can portray the strain on seventeen- and eighteen-year-old girls who try to support a family under such desperate conditions of employment.

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The amount of loss from other causes is almost insignificant when compared with the great loss due to irregularity. Only 12 per cent had lost time after quitting their jobs voluntarily. Sometimes this was because of bad workroom conditions, sometimes long hours, sometimes because of a quarrel, or for more trivial reasons. Usually when a girl leaves a job of her own accord to get better wages elsewhere, or perhaps to take up some other kind of work, she has a definite position in view before she parts with her old one. She is thus not likely to lose time on this account.

Vacations taken by the girls themselves without pay had been enjoyed by only the small proportion of 17 per cent, and only 54 girls out of the whole group had had any vacation with pay. Many things account for the fact that they do not take voluntary vacations. In the first place, many have had long enforced periods of idleness, and those who have suffered from unemployment cannot afford to take any. Even if they could, they complain of no place to which to go. A fortunate few have relations or friends in the country, others perhaps are able to secure a week or two in the country through a settlement or fresh air agency. But usually a "vacation without pay" means staying at home in a hot, noisy tenement. Even the shop is preferable on a warm summer's day. One girl said she would rather work than stay at home. Another girl took two weeks' vacation but did not know where to go, and at the end

## ITALIAN WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

of that time she said she was more miserable than if she had been working. "A vacation don't do much good if you don't go away."

The largest proportion had lost some time on account of holidays without pay. Only 17.5 per cent of the women had not lost any pay because of holidays. This does not mean that all the others were paid for holidays. In some cases, as in laundries, the work continued on legal holidays as well as on other days. In other instances, as in the flower industry, work was often required on legal holidays occurring in the busy season, while there might be no work in the slack season when other holidays occurred, and when the loss of time would be attributed to the slack season. In manufacturing industries, forewomen were always paid for holidays, as were most of the stock and errand girls. In some of the smaller shops, where only two or three week workers were employed who had been there for some time and in whom the employer might have a sort of personal interest, they might be paid for legal holidays. But the rank and file in the workroom had to lose a day's pay when a holiday appeared on the calendar. A hand embroiderer in a fashionable Fifth Avenue dressmaking establishment was surprised when she was asked if she was paid for holidays. "Perhaps there is one place in New York where they pay for holidays. . But I don't know it."

An immigrant woman, employed as a "bushel-woman" on men's clothing, worked nearly all



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holidays. "No worka, no pay. If worka, pay." Again, some girls were paid only for Christmas and New Year's Day, when the pay was considered as a "kind of present" from the firm. Others lost not only legal holidays, but when employed with Jewish firms all the Jewish holidays as well. Sometimes these would amount to as much as a whole week altogether. In one instance, a girl employed in an underwear shop was out two days when the shop was closed on account of Jewish holidays, and to make up the loss in wages she was required to work three nights until 9 p.m. during the following week.

Another loss was incurred through the half holiday on Saturday in summer which was allowed in nearly all shops. But in the words of a foliage maker, "What's the use of giving us half a day off if they don't pay you for it? They say I get \$6.00 a week and then they dock me 50 cents for the half day on Saturday. That ain't right."

The general attitude of employers toward paying for holidays and vacations was summed up by one who objected, "Why should I pay for holidays?" A few were willing to pay week workers full wages, but piece workers were generally expected to lose their earnings. In some of the organized industries the union has been able to stipulate for payment for three holidays in the year, but in few of the shops included in this investigation were there such agreements. One firm manufacturing calendars was almost the only

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exception noted, paying for two weeks' vacation to workers who had been in its employ two years. The manager in another firm which closed its workroom during the first week in July said, "We could not pay the whole bunch for a week when there is no product." This was the general opinion. Few employers had realized that a vacation with pay to their workers might benefit the establishment in providing a good rest, new strength, and renewed interest in the work.

It is a matter for comment that three-fourths of the women had lost no time on account of illness. In spite of the protest of employers that women are irregular workers, the women interviewed showed a tendency to disregard their physical condition. Many had always been accustomed to a low standard of vitality, so that they continued at work when others of different health standards would feel fully justified in remaining at home and taking care of themselves. This indifference to their health and physical condition perhaps accounted in some cases for their lack of ambition and low earning capacity. On the other hand, the fact of long periods of enforced unemployment accounts for their determination to stick on as long as work is to be had.

## CONTROL BY WORKERS AND THE STATE

In the organized trades some attempt has been made by employes themselves to secure the distribution of work during the slack season among

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all the workers on a part-time basis, as has been done in some shops in the dress and waist industry. The reduction of overtime and long hours of work is also a factor in regularizing employment. Indirectly, legislation and trade unions, through their effect upon hours, have thus influenced regularity in industry.

No direct legislative action either to stabilize employment or to compensate workers for their loss of earnings has been taken in this country. Unemployment insurance has been tried in some European countries but never in the United States.

The only conscious effort in this direction made by the government is in the establishment of public employment offices. While such offices can do little to stabilize the employment within an establishment, they can at least facilitate the readjustment of a worker from one establishment to another with the least possible loss of time. Not all establishments in the same industry experience slack business at the same time. If an entire industry is slack, so that no opening can be found for idle workers, such a bureau ought to be equipped to effect the transfer of the worker to some other line of work where her experience and training may be of use.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PAY ENVELOPE

**T**HE pay envelope that a woman receives at the end of her week's work is the reward for the labor and time she has spent in shop and factory. For the sake of what her pay envelope contains she will sit hour after hour at a sewing machine guiding hundreds of corset covers; at a table piled high with stacks of red and yellow petals to be made into flowers; in an ice-room dipping hundreds of thousands of creams into hot chocolate; or bend ten hours a day over an embroidery frame, though her head and eyes ache with the strain. She will sort dirty rags until her throat and lungs are choked with dust; will stand packing beef tea tablets neatly in tissue paper, or examining paper patterns, until her feet swell and her back aches; she will keep up with the relentless speed of a machine which announces by a ring that 50 paper bags have been pasted and printed and must be removed before the machine can continue. The muscles in her arms are swollen, but there is no pause in the ten-hour day.

For what this envelope means in terms of food, rent, and clothing for herself and her family, she will spend nine or ten hours a day six days a week

## PAY ENVELOPE

in a crowded Broadway loft or a Third Street sweat shop, sometimes in a damp basement, exhausting herself to such a point that at night she can scarcely eat her supper before crawling into bed. Often too tired to share in the pleasures that make life worth living, she is without the strength or ambition to make use of opportunities to improve herself or her condition.

In return for these sacrifices of time, labor, sometimes even of health and ambition, what does the pay envelope contain to make the effort worth while?

Wages may be regarded from two points of view. On the one hand they are the expression in terms of money value of the necessities and luxuries that the worker may command for herself and those dependent on her. From this point of view it is not so much the weekly rate of wages as the year's income that is significant and all important to the welfare of the worker.

Wages represent also the price at which a worker is able to sell her time and labor to her employer. It may or may not represent her real value as an employe to him. The price she is paid is governed by a great many different factors. Wages vary not only from industry to industry, but within an industry they may vary with the occupation, with differences in demands upon the skill and speed, strength and endurance, and age and experience of the individual workers. Wages and advancement may depend upon education, special train-

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ing, and knowledge. Again, wages may be determined by the bargaining power of the individual worker and of her fellow-workers. The physical surroundings in the shop and home also affect earning capacity. Finally, her capacity may be limited by her home surroundings, and the opportunities for rest and rebuilding of the day's waste of energy and vitality, by lack of sleep, fresh air, clean surroundings, nourishing food, proper clothing, and recreation. In other words, as the earnings of a worker who must be self-supporting determine what her standard of living may be, so the standard of living in turn is one of the most important factors in determining her maximum capacity.

## EARNINGS BY INDUSTRIES

The wage statistics given in this chapter are important not so much for the actual rates shown, but in indicating the influence of such factors on wages as age, years of experience, degree of skill required, and the time in this country. Wages differ widely from industry to industry, as Table 17 shows. Of the 1,090 women reporting, 718 were week and 372 piece workers. The statistics in the following tables and discussion include both classes and present actual weekly rates for the week workers; but for piece workers, what they usually earn when they work full time.

The location of the median varies from the group receiving \$5.00 to \$6.00 who are employed on "all other foodstuffs" (chiefly groceries and

# PAY ENVELOPE

TABLE 17.—FULL TIME WEEKLY EARNINGS OF ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS, BY INDUSTRY<sup>a</sup>

Industry	Women whose full time weekly earnings were										All women
	Less than \$4	\$4 and less than \$5	\$5 and less than \$6	\$6 and less than \$7	\$7 and less than \$8	\$8 and less than \$9	\$9 and less than \$10	\$10 and less than \$12	\$12 and less than \$15	\$15 or more	
Manufacturing	10	11	21	20	18	16	21	22	15	2	156
Flowers and leathers	..	8	11	17	21	9	11	10	6	2	95
Men's and boys' clothing	..	1	2	5	3	7	6	12	7	7	50
Women's tailored garments	..	1	4	4	1	1	2	4	2	3	24
Custom dressmaking	..	5	17	24	13	16	10	25	27	10	164
Dresses and waists	..	2	7	9	8	4	6	14	5	1	62
Muslin underwear and corsets	..	2	2	3	8	6	3	9	6	1	42
Hand embroidery	..	2	8	7	10	5	11	7	7	2	69
All other women's and children's clothing	..	8	12	2	2	4	7	3	3	..	29
Paper boxes	..	8	13	5	4	3	4	2	..	..	39
Other paper goods	..	1	15	9	3	2	4	2	1	..	27
Tobacco	..	11	18	14	8	7	5	4	..	..	68
Candy	..	5	10	2	3	1	5	1	..	..	27
Other foodstuffs	..	3	2	2	5	3	1	5	..	9	37
Headwear	..	5	11	13	11	4	3	9	3	2	76
Textiles and miscellaneous sewed materials	..	1	5	2	5	2	2	2	4	..	23
Rubber, fur, and leather goods	..	3	4	6	..	4	..	3	2	..	24
Miscellaneous manufactured goods	..	..	3	3	6	1	..	..	..	..	13
Laundry, dyeing, and cleaning	..	5	5	4	6	4	4	4	3	3	38
Office work	..	2	3	2	2	4	3	..	..	..	17
Store work	..	1	3	2	2	4	1	..	..	..	6
Professional service	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	4
Domestic service	..	1	1	..	..	2	..	..	..	..	..
Total	32	102	163	156	135	104	111	138	99	50	1,090 <sup>b</sup>
Number	2.9	9.4	14.9	14.3	12.4	9.5	10.2	12.7	9.1	4.6	100.0
Per cent											

<sup>a</sup> Bold face type indicates median group. <sup>b</sup> Of the 1,095 women investigated, four received maintenance in addition to money wages, and one did not know the rate of wages in her new position.

## ITALIAN WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

biscuits) and on "all other paper goods" (like sample cards, bookbinding, calendars, and waste paper and rags), to the \$10 to \$12 group of those employed on women's cloaks and suits and on headwear.

A comparison of these figures furnished by the women with the maximum wages reported by their employers, as shown in Table 18, is interesting. While 59 per cent of the employers stated that the maximum wage paid women in their shops was \$15 or more, only 50, or about 5 per cent of the women employed in those shops, reported that their usual full-time earnings amounted to that much. Eighteen, or 7 per cent of 243 establishments which made statements as to the prevailing wage in their factories, reported \$15 or more.<sup>1</sup> The largest proportion of these factories was found in the manufacture of women's tailored garments and of headwear. In five of the 15 women's garment factories, the largest group of workers was receiving \$15 or more, and in four of the six firms making straw hats \$20 or more. Both of these industries, however, are very seasonal, giving their workers employment for only six or eight months out of the year. Moreover, the straw hat industry is highly skilled, while the women's garment industry is almost entirely organized. To summarize, then, although in 213, or 83 per cent of the establishments, the maximum wage paid was \$12 or more, it was the prevailing wage in but 54, or

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix C, Table 7, p. 332.



TABLE 18.—MAXIMUM WAGE PAID TO WOMEN IN FACTORIES INVESTIGATED, BY INDUSTRY<sup>a</sup>

Industry	Factories in which the maximum wage paid to women was									All women
	Less than \$8	\$8 and less than \$9	\$9 and less than \$10	\$10 and less than \$12	\$12 and less than \$15	\$15 and less than \$20	\$20 and less than \$25	\$25 or more		
Flowers and feathers	..	..	..	1	5	6	2	6	20	
Men's and boys' clothing	..	2	1	..	3	11	8	2	27	
Women's tailored garments	..	..	..	1	2	3	6	5	17	
Wholesale dressmaking	..	..	..	..	1	4	2	2	9	
Muslin underwear and corsets	..	1	..	..	4	10	5	..	21	
Hand embroidery	..	..	..	..	2	4	2	..	8	
All other women's and children's clothing	..	..	..	1	5	9	4	6	25	
Paper boxes	..	..	..	2	3	3	..	..	10	
Other paper goods	2	..	..	3	5	5	..	1	14	
Tobacco	..	..	..	..	3	2	1	..	6	
Candy	..	2	2	1	8	2	..	..	15	
Other foodstuffs	..	1	1	1	2	4	..	..	10	
Headwear	..	..	1	..	1	3	1	10	16	
Textiles and miscellaneous sewed materials	..	..	..	8	10	7	4	1	35	
Rubber, fur, and leather goods	1	3	2	3	4	4	..	2	15	
Miscellaneous manufactured goods	..	..	..	1	1	3	..	..	5	
Laundry	..	..	..	1	2	1	..	..	4	
Total	3	9	8	24	61	81	35	36	257 <sup>b</sup>	
	1.2	3.5	3.1	9.3	23.8	31.5	13.6	14.0	100.0	

<sup>a</sup> Bold face type indicates median group.

<sup>b</sup> Of the 271 factories investigated, 14 did not report the maximum wage paid to women workers.

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22 per cent, and only 14 per cent of the women reported their full-time earnings at so high a rate.

On the other hand, though 54 per cent of the women earned less than \$8.00 in a full week, only 53, or 22 per cent of the firms, reported their wage so low, and it was the maximum in three, or 1 per cent of the firms.

This low maximum was found especially in shops where the work was unskilled or where only one process was done. In one candy factory the maximum wage for 40 girls engaged in carrying plats was \$7.00, for 40 girls who were packing and wrapping, \$8.00, for 12 girls doing chocolate dipping by machine, \$10, and for 16 hand dippers, \$12. The maximum wage in a factory where 200 women were employed in packing spices was \$9.00.

In 18 shops the employers stated frankly that the wages of their largest group did not reach over \$7.00 a week.<sup>1</sup> These included three paper box concerns, three shops for sorting waste paper and rags, four candy factories, three grocery or cracker factories, one silk ribbon firm, one laundry, one metal goods and one flower factory, and one shop making women's cloaks and suits. Yet in these same trades were also found firms where the largest group was receiving much higher wages. In a candy and paper-box factory the largest group was receiving between \$10 and \$12. In most of the industries and in nearly every establishment, there

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix C, Table 7, p. 332.

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was the possibility of a limited few rising to as much as \$12 a week.

### WEEKLY RATES BY PROCESS OF WORK

While the wages vary considerably from industry to industry, a classification of those paid to women in certain processes, irrespective of the particular product, will perhaps give a clearer picture of the return for work performed. In the last chapter it was pointed out that similar processes are found in industries with widely dissimilar products. Table 19 shows the full time weekly earnings of workers in similar processes.

The best paid processes were operating on the power sewing machine in the needle trades and fine hand sewing. The majority of the women in these lines of work were paid \$9.00 or more a week. Operating power machines was also the work in which the largest proportion earning \$12 or more a week was found. This may be ranked as the most skilled work in the needle trades, not so much on account of the actual difficulty of the process as on account of the speed, accuracy, and application demanded. The coarser hand sewing, at which half the women were receiving \$8.00 or more, ranked third. These three processes together included about half of the Italian women who were in manufacturing. That such a large proportion of Italians chosen at random are in this skilled work indicates that they are not limited to the unskilled or the lowest paid work in industry.

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TABLE 19.—FULL TIME WEEKLY EARNINGS OF ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS IN MANUFACTURING, BY PROCESS OF WORK<sup>a</sup>

Process	Women whose full time weekly earnings were										All women
	Less than \$4	\$4 and less than \$5	\$5 and less than \$6	\$6 and less than \$7	\$7 and less than \$8	\$8 and less than \$9	\$9 and less than \$10	\$10 and less than \$12	\$12 and less than \$15	\$15 or more	
Operating sewing machines . . .	4	13	22	22	31	18	23	39	27	22	221
Feeding and tending machines . .	..	3	18	12	11	6	7	4	3	..	64
Fine hand sewing . . .	1	2	2	2	12	7	10	15	8	2	61
Other hand sewing . . .	5	14	23	38	25	25	19	37	23	12	221
Hand and machine processes combined . . .	..	..	8	3	2	1	3	4	4	2	27
Pasting and branching . . .	8	10	18	19	18	15	18	16	12	1	135
Pressing and cleaning . . .	..	2	3	3	4	2	1	2	4	..	21
Cutting, measuring, examining, sorting, packing, wrapping . . .	3	30	30	31	16	8	5	5	3	..	131
Processes peculiar to certain industries . . .	2	8	14	10	5	6	14	9	5	3	76
General work and learning . . .	4	4	10	4	1	2	2	2	1	..	30
Incidental work . . .	2	10	6	0	2	4	1	1	3	3	38
Total . . .	29	96	154	150	127	94	103	134	93	45	1,025 <sup>b</sup>
Number . . .	2.8	9.4	15.0	14.6	12.4	9.2	10.0	13.1	9.1	4.4	100.0
Per cent . . .											

<sup>a</sup> Bold face type indicates median group.

<sup>b</sup> Of the 1,027 women engaged in manufacturing, two did not report wages.

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In the other processes, few of the women had risen to \$12 a week, and the majority received less than \$8.00. Among the general workers and learners, half were earning less than \$6.00, these low wages being probably due to the fact that they were beginners at their work and were receiving some training. It is a more serious matter, however, that low wages prevailed in the groups engaged in packing, wrapping, and examining, processes often simple enough but which rarely serve as a means of promotion to more highly paid work.

## WEEKLY RATES BY AGES

The advancement that workers might hope for is suggested in the average weekly wages paid to those in different age groups. In Table 20 are presented the full time weekly earnings of girls and women according to age.

While the median earnings for the group as a whole were \$7.68, for the different age groups it varied from \$4.83 for those under sixteen years of age, to \$9.88 for those twenty-five years of age or more. The women twenty-one years and over were able to command nearly \$5.00 more a week for their work than the girls who were fourteen or fifteen years old. The difference in wages between the groups over twenty-one years of age and those between eighteen and twenty-one indicates that women have not reached their maximum earning capacity at twenty or twenty-one, an age at which large numbers drop out of industry to marry.

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When women remain longer at work they are evidently able to earn more, or they turn to work in which there is a better future.

TABLE 20.—FULL TIME WEEKLY EARNINGS OF ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS, BY AGE

Full time weekly earnings	Women who were					All women
	Less than 16 years old	16 years and less than 18	18 years and less than 21	21 years and less than 25	25 years or more	
Less than \$4 . . .	22	6	2	..	2	32
\$4 and less than \$5 .	43	33	15	5	6	102
\$5 and less than \$6 .	23	72	44	13	11	163
\$6 and less than \$7 .	13	53	49	20	21	156
\$7 and less than \$8 .	8	37	53	25	12	135
\$8 and less than \$9 .	1	21	44	19	19	104
\$9 and less than \$10 .	4	21	41	29	16	111
\$10 and less than \$12	1	15	53	40	29	138
\$12 and less than \$15	..	9	26	29	35	99
\$15 and over . . .	..	3	12	16	19	50
Total . . . . .	115	270	339	196	170	1,090 <sup>a</sup>
Median earnings . .	\$4.83	\$6.45	\$8.15	\$9.55	\$9.88	\$7.68

<sup>a</sup> Of the 1,095 women investigated, four received maintenance in addition to money wages, and one did not know the rate of wages in a new position.

But the table also shows decided variations in each age and wage group. For instance, while the largest proportion among the 134 who were receiving less than \$5.00 a week were girls under sixteen, yet there were 13 women twenty-one years or over who were not receiving more than this small wage. And among the 287 who were receiving \$10 a week or more we find a girl who had not yet reached her

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sixteenth birthday, 27 between sixteen and eighteen years of age, and 83 who were twenty-five years of age or older. Thus we find classed in the same wage group with Maria Mazzini, an ambitious American-born girl of seventeen years, who was an operator on muslin underwear at \$10 a week, piece work; a widow of fifty-nine who had been a tobacco stripper for twelve years and who also earned \$10 a week; and Mrs. Maroni, forty-five years old, an examiner of cloaks and suits, who left school in Italy when she was seven "to come to the United States," and had been working here since the age of nine.

Little fourteen-year-old Claudia, who had left the sixth grade in public school a month earlier to dress dolls at piece work and made \$4.50 a week, earned more than a girl of eighteen who worked as stock girl in a department store at \$4.00, and a woman twenty-three years old who packed nuts at \$4.00 a week.

Less than \$6.00 a week was received by 98 out of the 705 women eighteen years of age or older. In other words, one out of every seven women—not children or minors—had to support herself on less than \$6.00 a week or receive aid from other sources.

## WAGES BY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

Table 21 shows a general increase in earnings according to the number of years that the women have been at work, but here, too, are found marked differences in the length of experience of women who receive the same wages.

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TABLE 21.—FULL TIME WEEKLY EARNINGS OF ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS, BY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

Full time weekly earnings	Women who had been at work								All women
	Less than 1 year	1 year and less than 2	2 years and less than 3	3 years and less than 5	5 years and less than 7	7 years and less than 10	10 years and less than 15	15 years or more	
Less than \$4	19	9	2	..	..	..	1	1	32
\$4 and less than \$5	57	23	7	7	2	1	3	..	100
\$5 and less than \$6	42	41	27	27	7	5	6	5	160
\$6 and less than \$7	24	24	34	35	15	11	10	1	154
\$7 and less than \$8	15	19	18	38	22	16	5	2	135
\$8 and less than \$9	5	10	17	26	23	11	10	1	103
\$9 and less than \$10	6	6	15	26	29	18	8	2	110
\$10 and less than \$12	6	6	11	35	31	35	9	4	137
\$12 and less than \$15	2	5	6	17	21	23	15	8	97
\$15 or more	3	1	..	7	12	5	17	5	50
Total	179	144	137	218	162	125	84	29	1,078 <sup>a</sup>
Median earnings	\$5.32	\$5.98	\$6.96	\$8.08	\$9.41	\$10.03	\$9.88	\$11.25	\$7.69

<sup>a</sup> Of the 1,095 women investigated, weekly wages could not be ascertained for five, and 12 did not state years at work.



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In each of the 10 wage groups, with one exception, from those receiving less than \$4.00 a week to those paid \$15 or more, are found women whose experience varied from less than twelve months to those who had been wage-earners fifteen years or even longer. Thus one woman who had been working forty-three of the fifty-three years of her life, eight of those years at tobacco stripping, made \$5.50 a week. Maria Martini, a tired, old-looking rose maker of twenty-six earned only \$5.00 a week, though she had been working since she was ten years old—no more than little Mamie Ciaccio, a youngster of fourteen, who was just starting to make flowers at \$5.00 a week; no more than another little girl who had been marking and sewing tags on bathing suits for two months, receiving \$5.00 a week.

In the group earning from \$6.00 to \$7.00 are found such extremes as a woman thirty-nine years old who had been padding men's coats for fifteen years, a girl fifteen years old who had been wrapping candies for seven months, another woman twenty-six years old finishing women's coats, who had come from Sicily four months earlier, and a girl of fourteen who, in her three months' career as a wage-earner had tried as many different kinds of work, but who for the past month had been filling fruit jars at \$6.00 a week. In the group of workers making \$8.00 to \$9.00 are found women like Maria Petrino, who had come to the United States only three months previously but who could

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make \$8.00 a week at finishing dresses because she had learned how to sew in Italy. Mrs. Lucca, aged forty, had dipped chocolates for eighteen years but received only \$8.00 a week, no more than sixteen-year-old Antoinette Roselli, who had been a hand dipper for only two years but who earned the same wages.

Even among those paid higher wages there seemed to be a similar variation in years of experience. Among those who earned \$15 or more were found such women as Emma Monica, who had been an operator on dresses for three years and who made \$16 a week, piece work, though only eighteen; and Augusta Lupinacci, also eighteen, who learned straw sewing in a trade school and was earning \$15 a week after three years' experience. After sixteen years at flower making, Rose Campobello had become a forewoman at \$15 a week. Mrs. Della Chiesa, for nineteen years an operator on dresses, earned \$18 in a full week's work, but work was so irregular that during the year she had earned only \$500, and thus, on account of loss from part time and lack of work her average for the weeks in which she reported at the shop was reduced to about \$13.

Interviews with employers showed that few firms had any definite system of advancing workers as they became more skilled. In shops where piece work prevailed, the workers were usually put on piece rates as soon as they understood the process and their earnings increased as they ac-

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quired more speed. In the determination of piece rates no scientific method was observed. Few had worked out even trial methods. An underwear manufacturer explained that the piece-work rates for the 300 women workers in his factory had been devised by the forewoman and "had stood the test of time." In an umbrella factory, the rate for tippers was determined by timing three girls making up a new model, and then deciding the price at a conference. Even such methods, however, are unusual, and the rate is usually the guess of the foreman or forewoman. For week workers an increase was usually a matter of chance, and the initiative generally had to be taken by an employe. A petticoat maker in a shop with 40 other girls said they never got a raise without "picking," and that at the end of every year "the boss expected it."

A few employers had realized the value of some better system in order to keep their workers and let them know that there was something ahead. In a stationery house where the principal work was engraving, learners began at \$4.00. When they understood the work they were paid \$6.00. After that they were raised \$1.00 a week each year until they reached \$8.00, when wages were increased on the basis of how far the workers exceeded the average amount allotted. In a thread company, girls began at \$4.00 and were advanced 50 cents every six months until they received \$10.

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Other factors, it is evident, in addition to age, years of experience, or even the kind of work done affect rates of wages. For the immigrant it may be her ignorance of the English language. In the particular group of women investigated, however, those who could not speak English seemed to have fared about as well as those who could, if we may judge by their wages. Of the 637 receiving \$7.00 or more, 168, or 26 per cent, could not speak English, while the proportion among those receiving less than \$7.00 was only slightly larger, or 30 per cent. Evidence from the women themselves was no more conclusive. On the one hand were found women like Rose Canavaccio who could speak only Italian but could earn \$14 a week as a sample maker of dresses in a wholesale house. On the other hand, a strong healthy looking girl of eighteen who knew no English, had for two years been sorting new rags at \$5.00 a week. She complained that she could not get more pay as she could not speak English. Grazia, seventeen years old, although in this country only three months, was glad when a strike was declared in the vest shop where she was sewing on buttons. She said that she was being taken advantage of because she could not speak English and was getting only \$4.00 a week for work at which other girls were getting \$9.00.

Table 22 shows that the length of time the workers had been in this country made a material difference in the wages they were being paid. It

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indicates both the low wages of those recently arrived, and the rapid rise to better paid work after a few years' residence.

TABLE 22.—FULL TIME WEEKLY EARNINGS OF ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS, BY YEARS IN THE UNITED STATES

Full time weekly earnings	Women who had been in the United States						All women
	Less than 1 year	1 year and less than 2	2 years and less than 5	5 years and less than 10	10 years or more	Since birth	
Less than \$4	4	2	..	5	2	19	32
\$4 and less than \$5	18	2	3	10	9	60	102
\$5 and less than \$6	30	15	8	11	13	86	163
\$6 and less than \$7	17	10	17	19	21	72	156
\$7 and less than \$8	5	12	16	16	21	65	135
\$8 and less than \$9	5	8	13	9	16	53	104
\$9 and less than \$10	6	7	10	18	23	47	111
\$10 and less than \$12	3	10	12	34	33	46	138
\$12 and less than \$15	2	5	10	17	34	31	99
\$15 or more	2	3	3	9	17	16	50
Total.	92	74	92	148	189	495	1,090 <sup>a</sup>
Median earnings	\$5.80	\$7.67	\$8.15	\$9.22	\$9.54	\$7.16	\$7.68
Average age in years	20.5	21.6	24.6	22.8	24.1	18.2	20.9

<sup>a</sup> Of the 1,095 women investigated, four received maintenance in addition to money wages, and one did not know the rate of wages in a new position.

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The median earnings of those who had been in this country less than a year were only \$5.80, almost \$2.00 less than the median for those who had been here between one and two years. For those who had been here at least ten years the median earnings were \$9.54, a marked increase over those who had been here less than a year, especially as there was a difference of only three and a half years in the average age of the two groups. The most serious period for the immigrant appears to be the first year, when she must adjust herself to totally new surroundings. A prevailing low rate for the newly arrived immigrant is also indicated by the experience of Italian women investigated by the International Institute<sup>1</sup> previously referred to. Of those employed, 64 per cent were earning less than \$6.00 and 91 per cent less than \$8.00 a week.

In fact the lower average for those born in this country suggests that perhaps the immigrant, after the first year or two of adjustment, may become a formidable rival of her American sister in industry. In this group of women, the median weekly earnings of the American born disclosed a lower median than that of any group except immigrants who had just come from Italy. This difference is due very largely to the fact that these American-born girls were younger than the immigrants. The average age of the native-born woman at work was only eighteen years, while that of immigrants varied from twenty and a half

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A, pp. 315-317.

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for those here less than one year to nearly twenty-five for those who had been here from two to five years.

## RATES AND ACTUAL EARNINGS

Other things being equal, two workers who are being paid the same rate of wages might be said to be equally well off. But when the subject of discussion is industry, the assumption that other things are equal is usually so far from the real truth that weekly rates of wages are of little significance in measuring the social welfare of their recipients unless they are accompanied by such other facts as regularity of employment, overtime, and part time, or other conditions that may add or subtract from the nominal amount of the weekly rate of wages. The importance of this distinction is emphasized in Table 23 in the differences that appear between the full time weekly wages and the actual earnings in the week preceding the date of interview, of the 1,095 Italian women investigated.

Considering all the workers in the group, we find that over half were paid at a rate of less than \$8.00 in their present position or if they were out of work at time of investigation, in the last position they had held. Only 12.2 per cent were paid at a rate of less than \$5.00 a week, and yet less than this amount had been earned by 32 per cent of those who had been at work. If we compare the full time and the actual earnings of the better paid women, we find that 26 per cent were paid

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\$10 or more for a full week's work, but that only 16 per cent had earned as much as \$10 during the

TABLE 23.—FULL TIME WEEKLY WAGES AND ACTUAL EARNINGS IN WEEK PRECEDING INVESTIGATION, OF ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS

Wages or earnings	Women receiving the specified			
	Weekly wages		Actual earnings	
	Num- ber	Per cent	Num- ber	Per cent
None . . . . .	..	..	161	14.9
Less than \$3 . . . . .	5	4	32	3.0
\$3 and less than \$4 . . . . .	27	2.5	46	4.3
\$4 and less than \$5 . . . . .	102	9.3	107	9.9
\$5 and less than \$6 . . . . .	163	15.0	147	13.6
\$6 and less than \$7 . . . . .	156	14.3	138	12.8
\$7 and less than \$8 . . . . .	135	12.4	117	10.8
\$8 and less than \$9 . . . . .	104	9.5	82	7.6
\$9 and less than \$10 . . . . .	111	10.2	74	6.8
\$10 and less than \$12 . . . . .	138	12.7	91	8.4
\$12 and less than \$15 . . . . .	99	9.1	59	5.5
\$15 and less than \$20 . . . . .	41	3.8	24	2.2
\$20 or more . . . . .	9	.8	2	.2
Total . . . . .	1,090 <sup>a</sup>	100.0	1,080 <sup>b</sup>	100.0
Median . . . . .	\$7.68		\$6.34	

<sup>a</sup> Of the 1,095 women investigated, four received maintenance in addition to money wages, and one did not know the rate of wages in a new position.

<sup>b</sup> Of the 1,095 women investigated, 15 did not state actual earnings or were doing home work only, or maintenance was part of wages.

one week selected. It must be remembered that the actual earnings in one week not only exclude deductions for loss of time for any cause but include additional earnings from home work or overtime. The difference between the median full-time wages



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of \$7.68 for the whole group and the median actual earnings of \$6.92 for the week prior to investigation shows that the loss of earnings for part time and other causes was not made up by additional earnings from overtime and home work.

#### YEARLY INCOME

It is a comparatively easy matter to collect data concerning weekly or even hourly rates of wages, but as soon as any attempt is made to secure accurate information or even approximate estimates of the actual yearly income of a given wage-earner, difficulties are immediately encountered. If such information is sought from an employer's payroll, the investigation must necessarily be limited to workers who have been with the same firm throughout a year. If this information is sought from the workers, we face the fact that very few have kept account of their yearly earnings. Especially is this the case if they have had to change positions frequently, or if they are piece workers or have been employed on part time. Yet it is the earnings of those who face these three problems—an overwhelming proportion of workers as industry is organized at present—about which it is most essential to secure reliable facts.

In this investigation an attempt was made to secure an estimate of the year's income for each woman who had at least nominally been a wage-earner during the past full year. It could be derived only after an accurate account of the woman's

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work for the year had been secured. This included the time spent in each position, earnings not only from the daily work but from overtime and home work, losses due to part time, slack season, absence or deductions for fines or supplies. At best, the figure representing the year's income can be but an estimate. This was impossible to secure for more than 675 of the 859 women who were wage-earners during the entire year.<sup>1</sup>

A comparison of the year's income reduced to a weekly basis with the full time weekly wages at which they were employed in their shops is made in Table 24. It points to the marked effect of loss of time, whatever its cause, upon a worker's earnings.

The most significant fact is the gap between the actual weekly wages and the average when the year's income was distributed for spending through the fifty-two weeks of the year. Only 162, or a fourth, could claim actual earnings of \$8.00 or more throughout the year, although over half of them had been paid a nominal rate of \$8.00 or more a week in their last position. In fact 330, or nearly one out of every two, had less than an average of \$6.00 a week to live on, although only one in five had been paid at so low a rate in her last position. Moreover, this difference in aver-

<sup>1</sup> As the amount of the year's income was talked over with the women themselves, and as many of them were interviewed more than once, thus affording an opportunity for checking previous information, the results are fairly accurate. The number also includes 82 women and girls whose careers were followed up by an investigator from month to month for a year.

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TABLE 24.—FULL TIME WEEKLY WAGES AND AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS DURING THE YEAR, OF ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS

Full time weekly wage rate	Women whose average weekly earnings were											All women
	Less than \$3	\$3 and less than \$4	\$4 and less than \$5	\$5 and less than \$6	\$6 and less than \$7	\$7 and less than \$8	\$8 and less than \$9	\$9 and less than \$10	\$10 and less than \$12	\$12 and less than \$15	\$15 or more	
Less than \$4 . . .	3	4	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	8
\$4 and less than \$5 . .	11	11	8	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	32
\$5 and less than \$6 . .	15	26	33	19	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	93
\$6 and less than \$7 . .	1	11	24	44	16	..	..	..	..	..	..	96
\$7 and less than \$8 . .	4	10	12	29	36	6	..	..	..	..	..	97
\$8 and less than \$9 . .	3	3	5	11	24	20	8	1	1	..	..	76
\$9 and less than \$10 . .	2	4	5	10	19	21	15	4	..	..	..	80
\$10 and less than \$12 . .	..	4	2	9	9	21	25	18	11	..	..	99
\$12 and less than \$15 . .	1	..	..	1	1	4	7	21	18	9	..	62
\$15 or more . . .	..	1	..	1	..	4	1	5	7	5	6	30
Total . . .	40	74	90	126	105	76	56	49	37	14	6	673 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Of the 1,095 women investigated, five did not report full time weekly wages, 181 did not report average weekly earnings for the year, and 236 had not been wage-earners the full year.

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age earnings is apparent in each of the wage groups whether we refer to those who were paid rates of \$5.00 or \$6.00, or those paid \$12 or \$15. While 191 had stated full time weekly wages of \$10 or more, only 57 had actually had \$10 or more a week throughout the year. The others had been forced to live on \$8.00 or \$9.00 or even less. A comparison on the basis of average weekly rates with average earnings for the whole group shows a similar difference. For instance, the average weekly rate of wages of those in the group who were being paid \$6.00 but less than \$7.00 was \$6.09, as compared with an average weekly income through the year of \$5.18 for the same group. Such a difference suggests that perhaps those industries or occupations which offer nominally higher weekly rates may at the same time be those in which workers may expect to meet with greater irregularity and fewer days of work in the course of a year. Table 25 shows the same inadequacy of actual earnings in terms of total yearly income.

In this table it will be seen that the total yearly income was less than \$400 for more than half of these 675 women, while 74, or about 11 per cent, had actually earned less than \$200, an average of less than \$4.00 a week. Of this latter class nearly a third were women who had passed their eighteenth birthday. On the other hand, 62, or over two-thirds of those who had earned \$500 or more, were at least twenty-one years old.

If we eliminate the youngest girls and consider

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only the 473 women who were eighteen years of age or older, we find that 28 per cent had earned

TABLE 25.—INCOME FOR YEAR PRECEDING INVESTIGATION OF ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS, BY AGE

Income for year	Women who were						All women
	Less than 16 years	16 years and less than 18	18 years and less than 21	21 years and less than 25	25 years and less than 35	35 years or more	
Less than \$200 . . .	15	35	12	5	4	3	74
\$200 and less than \$300 . . .	11	81	64	24	10	12	202
\$300 and less than \$400 . . .	2	40	87	38	17	12	196
\$400 and less than \$500 . . .	..	15	50	33	8	6	112
\$500 and less than \$600 . . .	..	3	18	22	9	4	56
\$600 and less than \$700 . . .	..	..	6	6	5	4	21
\$700 or more . . .	..	..	2	7	4	1	14
Total . . .	28	174	239	135	57	42	675 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Of the 1,095 women investigated, 236 had not been wage-earners during the entire preceding year, and 184 did not report the year's income.

less than \$300, and 53 per cent between \$300 and \$500, while only 7 per cent had earned \$600 or more. When we consider that \$9.00<sup>1</sup> a week, or \$468 a year, was estimated before the cost of living was as high as at present, as the minimum amount on which a girl eighteen or older could support herself, it is evident that more than four out of every

<sup>1</sup> New York State Factory Investigating Commission. Fourth Report, 1915. Vol. IV, p. 1,609.

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five of these Italian women must either have made up the deficit in their earnings from those of others or have fallen below even the minimum standard allowed by such an income.

The year's income included earnings from all occupations at which the workers had been employed during the year, varying all the way from the income of the woman who had worked in the same place at the same work for fifty-two weeks in the year or the one who had lost twenty-two weeks while nominally in one position, to the woman who had held five positions in the past year as operator on waists and negligées or the girl of seventeen who had held six positions in four different trades and had earned \$131 in her thirty-seven weeks' work during the year.

Not only do workers shift from one industry to another, but even if they remain in the same industry many must change their positions during the twelve months to eke out their income. Table 26 shows the number of different occupations and positions in which the women had been employed during the year in order to obtain their income.

During the year, 77 per cent, as shown in Table 26, had been employed in only one industry, while 65 per cent had held but one position. Consequently these figures indicate that nearly a quarter of the women had worked in two or more industries, and over a third in at least two different positions. The results are more significant if the distribution in the different income groups is

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considered. Among those who earned less than \$200, more than half had been in two or more in-

TABLE 26.—INCOME FOR YEAR PRECEDING INVESTIGATION OF ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS, BY NUMBER OF INDUSTRIES AND POSITIONS EMPLOYED IN DURING THE YEAR

Income for year	Women employed during the year in							
	One industry	Two industries	Three or more industries	Total	One position	Two positions	Three positions	Four or more positions
Less than \$200	34	25	15	74	23	25	15	11
\$200 and less than \$300	131	52	18	201	106	50	28	15
\$300 and less than \$400	169	26	1	196	147	37	10	2
\$400 and less than \$500	102	9	1	112	92	9	8	3
\$500 and less than \$600	51	5	..	56	41	11	3	1
\$600 and less than \$700	18	3	..	21	16	4	1	..
\$700 or more	13	1	..	14	11	1	..	2
Total	518	121	35	674*	436	137	65	34

\* Of the 1,095 women investigated, 236 had not been wage-earners during the entire preceding year, 184 did not report the year's income, one did not state number of industries, and three did not state number of positions in which they had been employed during the year.

dustries, while among the 91 who had earned \$500 or more, only nine had been in more than one industry. The same is true in regard to the number of positions they have held. It indicates that shifting from one industry or position to another, whatever its cause, results in a lower yearly income. This suggests two possibilities—that the low income is due either to loss of time between positions or to the lower earning capacity of those who have had to shift.

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Some light may be thrown on these questions by comparing the incomes of the women in different occupations. While their total incomes in many cases were not derived from a single industry, as Table 26 indicates, nevertheless there was usually one which had been the principal source of income. In Table 27 is presented the last industry in which the women whose yearly income could be estimated were employed.

TABLE 27.—INCOME FOR YEAR PRECEDING INVESTIGATION OF ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS, BY OCCUPATION

Occupation	Women whose income for the year was						All women
	Less than \$200	\$200 and less than \$300	\$300 and less than \$400	\$400 and less than \$500	\$500 and less than \$600	\$600 or more	
<b>MANUFACTURING</b>							
Flowers and feathers	11	30	34	23	12	6	116
Men's and boys' clothing	6	16	17	9	..	1	49
Women's and children's clothing	24	65	51	32	22	14	208
Paper goods	4	15	19	7	1	..	46
Tobacco, candy, and foodstuffs	7	27	27	7	1	..	69
Headwear	2	6	2	5	5	4	24
Textiles and miscellaneous sewed materials	11	21	21	11	10	3	77
Rubber, fur, and leather goods	1	9	6	4	..	1	21
Miscellaneous goods and laundering	3	5	9	2	..	..	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>629</b>
<b>ALL OTHER OCCUPATIONS</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>675*</b>

\* Of the 1,095 women investigated, 236 had not been wage-earners during the entire preceding year, and 184 did not report the year's income.



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In eight of the nine main groups of manufacturing industries, the location of the median was in the \$300 and less than \$400 group, the exceptional industry being headwear. Even in the making of women's clothing, in which a comparatively high weekly rate prevailed, half of the women had earned less than \$400. While there were marked differences in the rates of wages paid to women in the various industries, the yearly income shows no such striking diversity from industry to industry.

## FINES

Other factors besides the seasonal character of the work which most of these women did, caused reductions in the year's income. Small sums were often deducted from the week's wages as fines for lateness and other causes. One girl, who was paid \$5.00 a week, was fined for an hour if she was late five minutes. A bookbinder complained that she was fined for double time if late, while she was paid only time and a half when working overtime.

The policy of fines varied from shop to shop. Some women had never been subject to the system, while others had seldom been able to make a full week's wages because of them. Sometimes women were fined for coming late five minutes, when their weekly hours were in violation of the factory law. In other cases, women who were required to work overtime or to take work home were fined if they appeared late the following morning. A packer of flowers was not paid for the Saturday half holidays

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in summer, but she rarely could leave before one o'clock, once working until three o'clock without additional pay. On the other days she could seldom leave her shop until 6:15 p.m., but was not paid for overtime unless she stayed until 8:30, when she would receive half a day's pay. She was then allowed to stay out until 8:30 instead of eight o'clock the following morning, but if she appeared after 8:30 she was fined a quarter of a day's pay. In many cases the girls complained that they were late through no fault of their own; the elevators were out of order, or were extremely slow; or there would be so great a crowd around the time clock at the final minute that the last comers would be marked late when their turn came to ring up.

While fines are supposed to have a disciplinary value, it is doubtful whether practically they have the desired effect. The girl whose earnings are not of vital importance cares little if she loses 5 or 10 cents when she is late, while the girl whose job means a great deal to both her parents and herself will be in her place on time. Employers justified their system of fining on the ground that workers coming in late disorganized the workroom, wasted machine power, and handicapped other workers. Others, however, had found that fines did not bring such good results as other methods, such as scolding or admitting no one to the workroom after a certain period of grace. One concern had an elaborate system of fines for its 1,300

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women, the money collected being distributed to workers with the best annual record. The fact that in one year \$1,400 was thus distributed suggests that the system had not been effective in preventing tardiness. In this same firm, although workers were fined 5 cents if late five minutes, even though piece workers, they were frequently kept waiting for work. One employer, when asked if he fined for lateness exclaimed, "What do I want with their money?"

Instead of being fined, workers should be taught responsibility for the loss of machines standing idle and for the disorganization caused by late comers. Employers who had tried this means had found it more effective than fines, especially if they coupled with this method the idea that workers who were habitually late were undesirable and would be the first to be laid off if a reduction in the force occurred. Probably other measures could be used which would not only be more effective in accomplishing the desired result, but less irritating to both employer and employee. Abolition of fines is a forward step, and is the policy of those employers who are inaugurating more progressive ideas into their business management.

## CHARGES FOR SUPPLIES

Not only are actual wages diminished by fines but deductions are made in the form of charges for supplies. There seems no basis of justification for deducting 35 cents a week from the pay envelope

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of an underwear operator for electric power, nor for charging her 3 cents for every two needles that she uses on her machine. And yet practices like these are not unusual. A corset operator who made about \$5.50 a week at piece work had to pay 30 cents a spool for thread, and she used one or two spools a week. A milliner had to furnish her own scissors and needles. Girls employed at any sort of hand sewing always had to supply their own thimbles, tape measures, and scissors, and to bear the expense of having these sharpened. The same was true of machine operators.

In some occupations the women had to supply all their own tools. For instance, a finisher in a paper-box factory had to supply her own awl, a hand folder her own bone folder, and a cigarette maker her own board for wrapping and a knife which cost \$1.25. A ribboner on underwear bought her own bodkin, and fancy feather makers, their nippers. An ostrich feather maker reported that she had to supply scissors, thimble, needles, and paring knife. The knife cost 50 cents and she had to pay 5 cents each week to have it sharpened. Needles at 25 cents a package lasted a month. In other cases, girls had to pay if they broke some part of a machine. One girl who earned about \$7.00 a week at making padding for coats by machine had to pay \$1.50 for breaking a part of it.

While the charges in themselves often appeared trivial, there seemed no reason why they should be made at all. They should be considered as part

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of the cost of production; but 5 cents a week for needles might be better spent by the girl who earned \$6.00 a week. The practice, based on the argument that workers are less wasteful of supplies which they must buy themselves, works harm to the great majority who are not naturally wasteful. While the amount is small, it is irksome and irritating to have to pay it, and it is doubtful whether the few cents that are saved to the employer by such methods are worth the antagonism created.

A charge for spoiled goods is often made. An operator on an embroidery machine was charged the full price of the scarf if oil from the machine got onto the material. "They ought to charge the net price, not the list. And anyway, the first time the scarf is washed the oil comes out." An operator stitching bands on corsets was charged 10 cents a cut. A young girl who trimmed the threads off of neckwear at \$4.00 a week had to pay for the collar if she made a cut which could not be mended. An operator on kid gloves had to pay the cost of the gloves if the machine sewed the seams crooked. One week she spoiled two pairs and had to pay \$2.50 a pair. "It took nearly the whole week's pay." In a shirtwaist house, if a waist was lost the price was divided among the stock girls in the department where the loss occurred. A salesgirl in a department store was fined 5 cents for every mistake. She thought the scheme "mean," as it did not correct the error. Customers were always

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calling to her to hurry and she had four counters on which to wait. "If they can't make money off the customers, they try to make it up on the employees." Incidentally she was also fined a cent a minute if late, but for two weeks before Christmas she had worked every night until 10:30 without pay. Nor had she been given any time off in return. When asked if girls did not object, she replied that the "boss" would say, "If you don't like it, you know what you can do."

This statement indicates why workers submitted to such fines and charges. Especially is this true in unorganized trades. It is an interesting fact that one of the first results of organization is the elimination of charges for supplies and unjust fines. On the other hand, to remedy the evils which are supposed to justify such practices on the part of employers, the trade union attempts to impress on its workers higher standards of relationships with their employers and greater honesty with one another.

## CHAPTER VIII

### UPS AND DOWNS OF THE FAMILY BUDGET

**I**N trying to make both ends of the family budget meet, the fact of prime importance to the housewife is the regularity of her weekly allowance for household expenses. Weeks of comparative plenty do not compensate for weeks of dearth, especially when the bottom falls out of the pay envelope without warning. In order to maintain a decent standard there must be a certain regular minimum which can be depended upon week after week. A realization of the importance of this factor—regularity of income—in the lives of workers' families led to the rounding out of the investigation of Italian women wage-earners by an intensive study of yearly income in a small group of the families included in the larger investigation.

#### SCOPE AND METHOD

The 48 families selected for this purpose lived in the lower west side Italian colony already described. For the purpose of securing the detailed and accurate information regarding annual income and regularity of employment which it is impossible to obtain in a single interview or, under ordi-

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nary circumstances, for very large groups, monthly visits over the period of a year<sup>1</sup> were made to the homes of each of the 48 families by an investigator who was able, through her intimate knowledge of the neighborhood and her personal acquaintance with many of the families living in that district, to enlist a degree of interest and co-operation that would have been impossible for an outsider.<sup>2</sup> At each monthly visit a record was made of the four preceding weeks of the family income, including the earnings of each breadwinner and any money received through other sources.<sup>3</sup> At the end of the year 12 cards containing this information were on file for each family, making a complete record of the year's income. In this way the danger of relying too greatly on memory was obviated. Similarly, in securing the data on expenditures necessary to gauge the adequacy of the income, a record<sup>3</sup> was taken at each visit of the money spent in the week previous. Thus an itemized budget was secured for twelve typical weeks scattered at regular intervals through the year. With this basis of fact, an estimate could be made of the total year's expenses, making due allowance for items which were not likely to recur in each of the fifty-two weeks of the year.

<sup>1</sup> The field work extended through the calendar year 1912, and a few visits were also made in the beginning of 1913.

<sup>2</sup> Miss Elisabeth Roemer, who undertook this study, had been for ten years a resident and worker in Richmond Hill House, a settlement on Macdougall Street, in the heart of the lower west side Italian colony.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix B, pp. 324-326, for reproduction of record cards.



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The greatest difficulties of the investigation were encountered in attempting to have these expense accounts kept. Ten of the families kept an actual account of expenditures, but in the others the mother of the family, who was also the dispenser of the budget, was illiterate or could not read or write English, while the other members of the family were too tired at night or too indifferent to undertake the task. The attitude of many of them may be summed up in the words of one frank father: "Me won't bother. Me buy when me have money. When no more money, me take out trust at grocery man." By going carefully over the various items of the week's expenditures at each visit, however, while the memory was still fresh a sufficiently accurate account was secured for the purposes of the investigation. In addition to the data on income and outlay, information similar to that secured in the larger investigation regarding living conditions and work histories was obtained. Another and a very rich source of information, especially regarding characteristics and standards of home life, was the long acquaintance of the investigator with many of the families. They were not selected, however, because of any preconceived notion of what facts they would illustrate, but were chosen at random without reference to the size or regularity of their income from among those Italian families in the neighborhood which numbered at least one woman wage-earner among their members.

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In dealing with so small a group of cases it is not to be expected that generalizations can be drawn or theories established. The value of an intensive study of a small group of cases does not lie in the statistical data secured, but rather in the insight obtained into the problems of individual families, and especially in this instance into the difficulties of their adaptation to unfamiliar conditions and into the uncertainties of their existence from week to week, month to month, and year to year.

### COMPOSITION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FAMILY GROUPS

Though only 48 families were included in the study, this group comprised as many as 328 persons, an average of nearly seven (6.8) members to a family. The smallest had four members and the largest 13. Only a third of the families had less than six members, while another third had eight or more. As many as six had more than 10 members. It is evident that these are not the "normal" families of the sociological budget maker, but a random group, many of them showing the typical Italian characteristic of large numbers.

In 39 families the father was living, but two of these had returned to Italy on account of illness and one had deserted, so that in 12 families the mother was the head of the household. In only two was the mother dead. There were 102 children under fourteen, and of the remaining 144 members, 90 were daughters and 51 sons of four-

## FAMILY BUDGETS

teen years or more; two were the mothers and one the grandfather of the head of the family.

It has been claimed by some Italian sociologists that one of the important causes for emigration from the mother country is the great fecundity of the Italian people, which will continually cause the population to increase too rapidly for the material resources of the country. In this group of 48 families only seven of the 43 mothers reporting had had less than five children, while 14, or about a third, had had 10 or more; four of these mothers had had 10 children each; four 11 each, two 14 each, and two 15 each. One mother of 11 children confided to the investigator that the midwife who had helped her on these numerous occasions gave her a special rate because of the frequent call for her services. Most of the households had been reduced from their original size, however, by early deaths or early marriages until at the time of the visit the greatest number of children in any one of them was 11.

These families were not of the shifting, floating population which spends a few years here gathering in what little wealth it can, sacrificing present comfort to future enjoyment of the fruits of its labors in its native land. They represented rather the wage-earning Italians who are permanent residents. The men had transplanted their families with them, and many of their children had been born on this side of the Atlantic. Most of them had come from Italy in the earlier days of emigra-

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tion from that country and had long been residents of the section of the city where they were then living. One of the mothers who had been born in the neighborhood forty-eight years before talked of the days when "this district used to be swell" and she had worked out at service in one of the old New York families. None of the Italian families investigated had been in this country less than five years, only two less than ten, while 46 had arrived ten to twenty years before, more than half of them in the first big wave of Italian immigration.

The heads of 28 of the families hailed from northern Italy, while 17 came from the southern provinces and three from Sicily. The usual prejudice of the northern Italian against the southern and the southern Italian against the Sicilian was in evidence among them. One Genoese mother was heartbroken because her son was "keeping company" with a Neapolitan girl, while the fact that Sicilians had moved into the tenement where he lived actually embittered the life of a man born in Naples.

The causes of their coming to the United States had been for the most part economic. Either they had never risen far above the poverty line in Italy or success which had once attended their efforts had turned to failure, and both classes in despair had turned to America as their savior. Whether their dreams had come true or not is revealed in a study of their income and what it brought them.

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Despite the fact that they had been so long resident in the United States, the process of Americanization, especially for the older generation, had proceeded slowly. Much of the small town spirit still clung to them and made this colony like a village set in the midst of a great city. They all knew one another, gossiped about each other, clung to the customs, the language, and the sectional prejudices they had brought with them from Italy, and they perpetuated their strong racial feeling by intermarriage. In these 48 families, 17 of the 46 mothers who were living at the time of the study and 11 of the 36 fathers who were with their families could not speak any English, while as many as 23 of the latter had not been naturalized and took little or no interest in public affairs. Even those who had gone through the formality of becoming American citizens lent themselves readily through ignorance to the scheming of petty politicians. One woman who had been in this country thirty-five years remarked indignantly: "Oh, he's a voter all right (meaning her husband)—eighteen years, and never did he get anything from it. I used to get mad at him when he had no work, and I says to him 'Why don't you go to them politicians? You vote for 'em. They ought to get you a job.' That's what other people do, but he's never gotten a cent from his vote." That Mr. Gogli had never "gotten a cent from his vote" was certainly a credit to him under the circumstances. Others, especially those from the provinces of northern Italy, showed a better under-

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standing of our democratic institutions, but for the most part the confusion of new surroundings, of unknown laws and regulations, to say nothing of the unscrupulous exploitation to which many immigrants are prey, make the workings of a democracy something of a puzzle.

As to the literacy of the members of these families, the younger generation had benefited by the educational advantages of the American public school system, but their elders, who had spent their early youth in Italy, where compulsory education is still in its infancy, were in many cases unable to read or write either Italian or English. Twelve of the 38 fathers had never attended school, and for a number who had acquired the rudiments of reading and writing, these accomplishments were practised only with considerable effort. The ignorance of the parents, moreover, was frequently visited upon the children. Failing to appreciate the value of education themselves, they often kept their children home from school on the slightest pretext. No effort was made, moreover, to keep the children in school for any longer time than the law required. The younger generation, on the other hand, looked down on the ignorance and the old-country habits of their parents.

## SOURCES OF INCOME

**The Wage-earners:** Chief among the sources of the family income, as has been shown in the discussion of the families of all the women investigated,

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are the earnings of the family's wage-earners. The often low wages of the individual worker are to a certain extent offset by the large number of breadwinners in each household. Each child, as he or she reaches the age of fourteen, is asked to earn a few dollars toward the family budget. The mother also adds her quota by taking in lodgers, doing home work, going out to do a day's washing, or acting as janitress for the tenement where they live. Even the children who are too young to leave school are called away from their play to sit long hours helping the mother make wreaths of daisies or fancy feathers, or to finish men's coats.

Table 28 shows the large proportion among the members of all ages who were contributing in some way to the family income.

TABLE 28.—CONTRIBUTORS TO FAMILY INCOME AMONG MEMBERS OF 48 ITALIAN FAMILIES, BY AGE AND SEX

Age and sex	All members of families	Contributors	
		Number	Per cent of all members
Male heads of families . . . . .	36	32	89
Other males 14 years of age or more . . . . .	52	49	94
Female heads or mothers of families . . . . .	46	35	76
Other females 14 years of age or more . . . . .	92	87	95
Children less than 14 years of age . . . . .	102	29	28
Total. . . . .	328	232	71

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In these 48 families, 232 of the 328 members, or 71 per cent, were contributing in some way to the family income.<sup>1</sup> This is an average of five contributors in an average family of seven members. Of the 96 who were not working for money, 73 were children under fourteen years of age, five were between fourteen and sixteen, and of the 18 who were sixteen years or more, 11 were mothers. Thus 90 per cent of all the members of families who were of working age, including the mothers of the families, were at work. The contributors under fourteen helped with the home work. The one man, not the head of a family, who was not a wage-earner was an aged grandfather who had long since left the productive years of his life behind him. The proportion at work among the women is high, especially among those not mothers of families.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The 544 families included in the entire investigation had 62 per cent of their members contributing. A study of the 100 wage-earners' families in Springfield, Illinois, in 1914 showed 47 per cent of all members contributing and 70 per cent of those fourteen years of age or more. A study of 100 families of women munition makers in Bridgeport, Connecticut, in 1916 showed 57 per cent of all members gainfully employed and 75 per cent of those fourteen years of age or more. These two groups, both of which showed a decidedly lower proportion of contributors than our Italian families, are mixed as to nativity but represent a substantial proportion of American-born families, 75 per cent in the Springfield group, and nearly 50 per cent in the Bridgeport group. (Odencrantz and Potter. *Industrial Conditions in Springfield, Illinois*, p. 120. Russell Sage Foundation, June, 1916. Hewes, Amy. *Women as Munition Makers*, p. 68. Russell Sage Foundation, July, 1917.)

<sup>2</sup> In the Bridgeport study referred to in the footnote above, the proportion of women fourteen years or more who were wage-earners was 67 per cent.



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**Men Wage-earners:** Of the 36 fathers who were living at home, 32 were contributing in some way to the family income. The majority were employed in the unskilled or at best semi-skilled occupations of the factory or in the casual and highly seasonal building trades. Of these, 11 were employed in factories, engaged in the making of such varied products as candy, liquors, bags, paper, steel wire, pumice stone, clothing, and bookbinding. Eight worked in the mechanical and building trades as masons, hod carriers, engineers, and day laborers; eight had their own business which was of the peddling, fruit stand or bootblack variety; one was employed in a wholesale house; and four contributed only what they made in assisting their wives with home work. Four of the fathers were not making any contribution toward maintaining the home. As these men were all fifty years of age or more, the age at which the Italian considers himself already an old man, they thought that the time had come for them to sit comfortably at home and be supported by their children. The traditional indolence of southern peoples rather than exhaustion from a life of strenuous work strengthened them in this conviction. One was a gambler whose gaming losses had forced him and his family to leave Sicily and seek a fortune in the New World. Another had never worked very steadily and now permitted himself to be supported by the work of his seventeen-year-old daughter and his half-witted fifteen-year-old son,

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supplemented by a casual day's washing by his wife.

If there had been no data by which to check up the earnings of the fathers at work during the course of the year, one might think from the statements of wage rates in their trades or of the earnings of their independent businesses that they were receiving at least not below the usual range of wages at that time.<sup>1</sup> Out of the 32 at work 22 reported that they made \$10 or more a week, while as many as nine said that they earned \$15 or more. The median wage for the group was between \$10 and \$11. When an analysis is made of the year's record of earnings, however, it is found that in many cases these full-time wages are received in only a comparatively small number of weeks. For example, two masons each said that they made \$24 a week—the maximum wage reported. After looking over the record of the year's earnings it was found that one of these, a man of sixty, beyond the age for such physically arduous labor, had made \$24, the full-time rate, in only four of the fifty-two weeks in the year, that in four he had had part-time work which paid him an average of \$3.10 a week, and that in the remaining forty-four weeks he had not made a cent. The

<sup>1</sup> The United States Census Bureau in the last wage statistics which it has published, gives \$11.16 as the average and \$10 to \$12 as the median weekly earnings for men sixteen years and over employed in the manufacturing industries of the country. (United States Bureau of the Census. Census of Manufactures, 1905. Bulletin 93. Earnings of Wage-earners, p. 12.)

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other mason who was still in the prime of his physical powers made \$24 for eight weeks, worked part time for thirty-six, averaging \$12.50 a week, and for two months was entirely out of work. A hod carrier, who gave his wages as \$16.50, made that amount for only thirteen weeks, and while he was actually unemployed for only two weeks, for fourteen his earnings fluctuated between \$3.00 and \$4.50. Another hod carrier whose full-time rate was \$15, was out of work twenty-five weeks, on part time for thirteen, and earning full wages for only fourteen. Some of the factory workers received a fairly regular income from their work, but slack weeks brought them part-time wages and even actual though brief unemployment. Where the full-time wage was low these irregularities could be even less easily borne. Of the 32 male heads of households who were contributors to the family budget, 20 reported their work to be distinctly irregular and the record of the year's earnings reaffirmed this fact; while among the 12 whose work was considered fairly regular, the wages did not maintain a uniform level and even one or two weeks of actual shut-down were recorded in several cases.

In these households, in addition to the fathers, 49 sons fourteen years old or more were at work and contributed to a greater or less degree to the family budget. A comparison of their occupations with those of their fathers reveals the progress of Americanization in the second generation. Of

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the younger men 12, or nearly one-fourth, were skilled mechanics, such as carpenters, machinists, plumbers, electricians, roofers, and blacksmiths, while only three, or less than one-tenth of the fathers, were in similar pursuits. Many of the sons also commented on the desirability of having a trade. Another fourth of the younger men were salesmen, shipping clerks, bookkeepers, or other clerical helpers. None of their fathers was thus employed. A sixth of the younger men were in factory work—and in these eight cases it was the more highly skilled trades, such as printing and work on men's clothing—while nearly a third of the fathers were also in such employment. Eight out of 32 working fathers were peddlers, fruit-stand merchants, and bootblacks on their own financial backing, while one son had had his own boot-blackening stand but had given it up in the course of the year. This rough comparison reveals the readiness with which the native-born sons of immigrant fathers adopt the American attitude toward different classes of occupations. Clerical work and the skilled mechanical trades which attracted the two largest groups have, according to the view of the average working-class American, a higher social standing than factory work and, of course, than peddling or day labor. The younger men were also employed as drivers and wagon boys, office or errand boys, postmen and porters. Three who were habitual loafers and ne'er-do-wells did odd jobs when the spirit moved them.

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The wages of these boys and young men were naturally lower than those of their fathers, since many of them were still minors and just beginning their work careers. Two who were schoolboys were delivering newspapers or running errands after school hours. Nevertheless, as many as 21 out of the 49 were making \$10 or more and 15 were making at least \$12. The median wage was between \$8.00 and \$9.00. The same irregularity which marked their fathers' work affected their own earning power. Only seven had been employed the full fifty-two weeks, while eight had been at work less than three months, 18 less than six months, and 27 had had at least three months of unemployment. But industry cannot be asked to shoulder the entire blame for this irregularity. A number of the boys were shiftless and drifted from one job to another or threw up a regular position for no apparent reason. A few had lost time because of sickness, and one died of tuberculosis during the course of the year. But whatever the cause, the fact of irregularity in this source of income is undeniable.

**Contributions to the Family Budget:** From the point of view of the family income the earnings of fathers and sons, moreover, were even smaller than has been indicated. In the contributions of the men of the family is revealed the traditional Italian attitude on sex equality. The boys usually paid board—a certain more or less definite portion of their earnings, often about half—and kept the

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remainder for their own purposes. The fathers also made certain reservations in contributing to the family budget. As one mother said, "Of course they don't give all they make. They're men and you never know their ways." On the other hand, it was assumed as a matter of course that the girl's pay envelope should be turned over to her mother intact. "It wouldn't look nice to pay board to the mother that raised you," was the common view of the girls, while the question as to whether the brothers also contributed everything they made to the home received the answer, "Oh, no, he's a boy." Even when the son gave in all his earnings—and instances of this occurred only among the younger boys—he received a larger allowance for spending money than his sister. Tony Ferrari was given 50 to 75 cents weekly, while his sister Rosa had to be satisfied with 25 cents.

Thus, unlike many of her sisters of other races, the Italian woman by going to work does not achieve that economic independence which is often thought to be the chief motive impelling the modern woman to take up a gainful occupation. The general attitude was that the going to work of the women of the family was an inevitable evil induced by conditions of American life which did not in any way alter their dependent position. "In Italy girls don't work, but to eat here, everybody's got to work." In this way, the women are kept in the paradoxical position of simultaneous wage-earning and dependence.

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In regularity of their contributions the girls also led all the rest. In 38 of the 48 families a single source of income could be picked out as the most regular throughout the year, regardless of its size. In 13, or over a third of the cases, this source was the earnings of one of the daughters. In nine it was the son's contribution, in eight the father's, in five the income from lodgers or a boarder, and in three the earnings of the mother. Of course, in the question of the size of the contribution, the ranking is somewhat different. It was possible to single out for each of the 48 families the largest source of income. The fathers led with 19 families in which their quota was the largest. However, the daughters came next with 13 families in which they were the mainstay, and after them came the sons with 11 families, the mothers with four, and last of all, one in which insurance of over \$1,000 was paid on the death of a tuberculous son, a large part of which was spent on the expenses attendant on his sickness and funeral.

**The Women Wage-earners:** In all there were 122 women engaged in paid work in these families. Of 35 mothers at work only 13 were employed outside the home, five in factories, two at day's work for families in the neighborhood, one as a visitor for a philanthropic society, and five as janitresses of the tenements in which they themselves lived. Two of the factory workers, one day worker, and a janitress supplemented their earnings in these occupations by keeping lodgers

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as well, while three janitresses were also home workers on artificial flowers. In the 11 households in which the mother was living but did not contribute to the family income, the father was living and at home. He was also living and at home in families in which the mother was a janitress or went out for day's work, to say nothing of the many families in which in addition to being the housekeeper and taking care of her large family, she slaved at home work or kept lodgers. The five factory workers and the one social worker were all widows and hence heads of their own households. There were 15 mothers who contributed through home work only, and there were seven more who combined this means of wage-earning with other incidental occupations. It is clear, therefore, that a large proportion of the mothers, in addition to their arduous duties as home makers for large families, also made a money contribution toward the maintenance of the home. And this was true in families in which the father was living as well as those in which he was not.

The daughters who were old enough to be wage-earners were almost all in factory work. The three exceptions out of the total of 83 young women employed outside the home were a bookkeeper, a mail clerk, and a playground attendant. The remaining 80 were factory workers, 34 in the clothing trades, men's and women's, 24 in work on flowers and feathers, seven in candy factories, and the remainder in the manufacture of a variety of articles.



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As a natural consequence of their employment in such large proportions in distinctly seasonal trades their work, and hence its proceeds, were quite irregular. Only three girls had lost no time during the year from any cause whatsoever; 18 had lost less than one month, 17 one month, 18 two months, 20 from three to six months, and seven six months or even more. As among all the women in the larger study the greatest proportion had lost time through slack season which led either to entire unemployment or to part-time work, while the smallest proportion had lost time by taking a vacation without pay or voluntarily quitting the job. The Italian girl takes her breadwinning more seriously than does her brother, who, for the most part, is only too ready to throw over his work on slight provocation and loaf around for awhile on the plea that he cannot find employment. She works because the family relies on her to do her part, and it is not her fault as a rule if she is out of work. She feels her responsibility keenly and slack time is a season of horror for her. "Last summer when I was laid off for nine weeks, I couldn't sleep nights. It was awful," said one girl. She tried to bridge the gap with work in other industries, and the best that she could find was a job in a large plant preparing spices, where she worked from 7:30 in the morning until 6:30 at night for \$4.00 a week.

It is not the size of the contribution, however, which causes this reliance of the family on the earnings of its daughters. The median earnings for the

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82 at work in the first week of the year were \$6.17, and for the 76 employed during the last week \$6.83. The median annual income of \$275, moreover, shows that the weekly average earnings for these women are even lower than the earnings in any one week.

**Home Work:** It is mothers chiefly who take up home work with the assistance of children who are too young to go to school. Forty-eight of the 232 contributors in these families made their contribution wholly through home work. Fifteen of these were mothers, and 26 children under fourteen. Besides this group of home workers, 56 more, chiefly young girls employed in other wage-earning occupations by day, assisted in swelling the family income by this means. In 26 of the 48 households home work was being carried on at some time during the year, and 21 of these families were making artificial flowers. The other five were working on feathers, coats, corset covers, and belts.

All the industries which supplied these families with work to be finished at home were highly seasonal, especially the artificial flower trade. It is obvious, therefore, that this source of income is also markedly irregular. There are periods of the year when it is difficult or even impossible to get any work to take away from the factories, and even in the busier periods the demand for home work is often greater than the supply to be allotted. The growing comprehension among employers of the

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inefficiency and dangers of home work is making itself felt in the decreased amounts available for families that have been home workers for years. One of the girls told of having to go early and then of waiting several hours to get any stock, because there was not enough for all. "It's first come, first served." Mrs. Silvio remarked that her shop seemed to consider it almost a favor to give the stock to her rather than to someone else. One family that had worked on feathers the entire summer the year before had not been able to get any during the corresponding period of the year of the investigation. Thus, it is through the tricks of fashion and of weather and through increasing enlightenment in regard to its evils that home work is playing a smaller and smaller part in the family support. That, however irregular, it is still present as a factor, both in the size of the income and in the standards of home life, is evident from the fact that over half the families in the group received anywhere from 1 to 33 per cent of their year's income from this source. This proportion does not, of course, indicate a large financial return, but implies rather, for the cases where the proportion is high, a miserably inadequate income on which to support a family of any size.

The facts regarding the pitiful rewards which home work brings for almost heartbreaking efforts are too well known to need much iteration here. The median average weekly earnings in the 26 home work families for the weeks in which they had

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home work during the entire year was \$3.38. Only four families averaged as much as \$5.00 a week, while as many as 10 averaged less than \$3.00 a week. The average year's income from this source for each of the 26 families that had done home work for any period during the year was \$98.31. These figures would be shamefully low as the earnings of one person in any kind of occupation, but when it is remembered that they represent the reward for the labor of three, four, five, or more persons they seem incredible. In only four of the 26 families were there fewer than three home workers, all the remainder having three, four, or five, except two which had six and one eight. In the Monica family only one of the nine members took no part in the home work. The mother bore the brunt of it, but she was assisted by the father and two older girls, all three of whom had other occupations by day—when the seasons permitted—and by four younger children. They were paid only 8 cents a gross for stemming leaves and 5 cents a gross for stemming purple ostrich feathers. They estimated at the first interview that they usually made \$5.00 a week at this work, but the record at the end of the year showed this to be their maximum, earned in only two of the thirty-three weeks in which they had had home work.

In another family in which home work on flowers was the only paid work of the mother and oldest daughter, \$13 was earned in each of the two weeks preceding Christmas, but only by dint of unremitted

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ting labor from early morning until late in the night. The following week there was no home work to be had. This was the high-water mark in earnings from home work for the entire group, but even these two weeks did not lift the family weekly average for the thirty-four weeks in which they were able to get work beyond \$5.09. Only one family registered a higher average than this (\$5.14), and for them the work lasted only seven weeks. Anywhere from 60 cents to a dollar was considered a good day's earnings for work which the mother would start in the morning after her household tasks were finished—sometimes before—the children take up on their return from school, and the older daughters when they came home from the factory at night.

No compensation for low earnings, as has been pointed out, is found in regularity of the work. The averages quoted have all been based on the number of weeks when home work was to be had. If the average for the year of \$98.31 per family were to be apportioned out among the entire fifty-two weeks of the year it would leave only \$1.89 for each week of the year. Many individual families would show a much blacker record if their annual income from home work were to be divided by 52. Only four were able to secure home work as long as nine months. None had been busy a full fifty-two weeks, the record of fifty weeks being held by one family.

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**Lodgers and Boarders:** Nine of the families supplemented their income by taking into their already crowded homes some of their fellow-countrymen or women as lodgers or boarders. The family coffers were not greatly increased in this way, nor were the living accommodations made more comfortable. The keeping of lodgers did not lead in every case to serious overcrowding, but the addition to four of the households made the family exceed the measure accepted as constituting congestion; that is, an average of more than one and one-half persons per room. Eight members of the Caruso family lived in the three-room apartment which they occupied in return for Mrs. Caruso's services as janitress. In order to increase their income by \$3.50 a month, they took a man as lodger, who for some unfathomable reason was willing to put up with their crowded quarters. The crowding of eight people into three rooms would have seemed bad enough without adding a ninth to their misery, and the low rate the lodger paid does not explain his reason for enduring this discomfort since he could have found less crowded quarters for his money. The monthly rate ranged for the majority from \$3.00 to \$5.00 and rarely did this secure for the lodger a separate room. Not alone did he or she share a room with members of the family, but often the bed was also shared. Two households also had boarders. One, a family of five in which both mother and father were home workers on

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flowers, had two women lodgers in addition to its man boarder, making a total of eight persons living in its four rooms without bath. They drew a monthly income of \$22 from this source, \$12 from the boarder and \$5.00 from each of the lodgers. In most of these nine families, however, only one lodger was accommodated and the added increment to the budget from his payments was negligible. That the discomfort caused by added crowding was not considered worth while by most of the 48 families is attested by the fact that less than one-fifth of them "bothered" with the inconvenience of keeping lodgers.

**Other Sources of Income:** Few households had other means of support than the earnings of their wage-earners, both in and outside the home, and the payments of lodgers. The nine who could count on some other contribution represented, however, a variety in sources of income. One family had bought, with their savings and a small inheritance, the old-fashioned three-story house on Macdougall Street in which they lived and at the first of each month received the tidy sum of \$62 for the rentals of the two upper floors and the basement. After interest on the mortgage and taxes had been paid, a net profit of more than \$400 remained for the year. In another family a scholarship of \$2.50 a week for one of the girls from a vocational guidance committee was the substitute for the small earnings which this child, just fourteen, might have made.

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had she gone to work in some dead-end job instead of taking the training as a stenographer at Washington Irving High School, which she was doing. Two families had received sick benefits from fraternal societies for a few weeks during the illness of one of their members, and a third had secured a small compensation for an elevator accident. Another had received assistance from a relief society to tide it over a particularly troublous time; still another had borrowed a small amount from a friend and not repaid it; and two others had spent substantial parts of their savings or life insurance in order to make both ends meet.

## THE INCOME AS A WHOLE

To realize the family's assets before considering its liabilities, and to view its income as a tangible whole, the contributions from its various sources must be drawn together. We have seen how the fathers, the sons, the mothers, the daughters, and even the little children do their bit toward supporting the home. The whole which these bits form and the importance of the part played by each is shown by an itemized résumé for each family, given in Table 29.

In this small group of families we find a wide range in incomes for the year, extending from \$457 all the way to \$3,716. Two had less than \$600, four less than \$700, six less than \$800, 12 less than \$900, and 16, or a third of the whole group, less than \$1,000. The median income for the group



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TABLE 29.—INCOME IN YEAR OF INVESTIGATION FOR 48 ITALIAN FAMILIES, SHOWING NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTORS AND PROPORTION FROM EACH SOURCE

Family number	Total yearly income	Per capita yearly income	Number of contributors	Per cent of income from each source				
				Wage-earners		Home work	Lodgers or boarders	All other
				Men	Women			
1	\$ 457	\$ 76	5	2	65	33	..	..
2	532	106	3	1	99	..	..	..
3	605	86	6	27	53	20	..	..
4	626	157	3	40	38	16	6	..
5	737	123	4	22	78	..	..	..
6	753	151	4	27	73	..	..	..
7	809	90	5	69	30	1	..	..
8	810	203	3	29	67	..	4	..
9	819	205	4 <sup>a</sup>	69	18	13	..	..
10	852	142	4	53	26	..	21	..
11	854	171	5 <sup>a</sup>	15	42	20	23	..
12	894	149	5	37	54	9	..	..
13	907	76	4	25	75	..	..	..
14	942	235	4 <sup>a</sup>	54	34	9	..	3
15	944	236	3	2	93	..	4	1
16	996	166	6 <sup>a</sup>	74	19	6	..	1
17	1,008	168	5	33	39	18	8	2
18	1,035	115	9 <sup>a</sup>	47	42	11	..	..
19	1,039	208	2	70	30	..	..	..
20	1,052	263	3	81	17	2	..	..
21	1,078	180	5	..	100	..	..	..
22	1,140	228	4	63	32	..	..	5
23	1,140	190	4	..	71	9	20	..
24	1,141	163	4	49	51	..	..	..
25	1,171	167	6	74	12	14	..	..
26	1,175	196	3	22	78	..	..	..
27	1,179	147	6	64	33	3	..	..
28	1,200	171	5	57	43	..	..	..
29	1,229	154	5	62	27	11	..	..
30	1,240	155	6	42	51	4	3	..
31	1,269	159	5	45	55	..	..	..
32	1,272	141	6	44	55	1	..	..
33	1,348	123	7	36	53	11	..	..
34	1,369	114	8	28	65	7	..	..
35	1,401	280	4	37	58	..	5	..
36	1,421	355	3	70	30	..	..	..
37	1,429	179	6	52	30	17	..	1
38	1,494	374	3	40	60	..	..	..
39	1,555	222	5	33	61	6	..	..
40	1,676	335	5 <sup>a</sup>	49	41	7	3	..
41	1,753	159	5	79	21	..	..	..
42	1,900	271	5	80	17	3	..	..
43	1,917	320	4	55	45	..	..	..
44	2,009	167	6	65	35	..	..	..
45	2,042	408	5 <sup>a</sup>	31	65	1	3	..
46	2,049	256	4	52	48	..	..	..
47	2,843	355	6	73	13	..	..	14
48	3,716	286	9	43	23	4	..	30
Average	1,267	195	4.8	47.7	43.7	4.2	1.7	2.7

<sup>a</sup> Indicates that all members of family are contributors.

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was \$1,156, and the average \$1,267. Ten had more than \$1,500, and five more than \$2,000.

But the sum of money which flows into the family treasury during a year does not mean much unless the size of the family it is to support is also taken into consideration. The per capita income, therefore, gives a better gauge of adequacy than the lump sum itself, even if it furnishes but a rough basis for comparison. Although there is a general tendency toward an increase in per capita income with increase in total income, this tendency is subject to some astonishing variations. The family with an income of \$810 had a higher per capita income than one with \$2,009, and a family of six would hardly have less difficulty in getting on with the wretched sum of \$457 than a family of 12 with \$907. The average was \$195 for the 48 families—29 falling below the average, 19 above it.

If the sum total of the income does not indicate its sufficiency to cover family needs, neither does the number of contributors seem to bear a definite relation to the size of the income. The lowest income in the entire group (\$457) was gathered together by the efforts of five breadwinners, while in another family which had only three contributors the income was nearly \$1,500. Families 18 and 19 with almost identical incomes, had nine and two contributors respectively. No family, however, attained an income of more than \$1,500 with less than four contributors. Nevertheless, the income does not necessarily increase with the number of

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those sharing in its accumulation. The important thing is not the number of wage-earners but rather who they were, what they did, and how regularly they did it.

The families in which the contributions of women were proportionately important were not necessarily those in which the incomes were small or in which the number of contributors was large. A family whose income was nearly \$1,500 and which had only three breadwinners, received 60 per cent of its support from its women wage-earners. Another whose income was over \$2,000 counted on 69 per cent from its women, 65 per cent from wage-earning outside the home, and the other 4 per cent from home work and keeping lodgers. On the other hand, some of the lowest incomes were in families in which the women played a leading part in their support, and vice versa. It seems evident, therefore, that no definite relation exists between the size of income and the importance of women as contributors to it. Whether greater or less, however, the share of the women in maintaining the household is large for the entire group. In 22 of the families the earnings of women in work outside the home constituted more than 50 per cent of the total income, and in only eight families did the quota from this source fall below 25 per cent. In counting the women's total contributions it is only fair, moreover, to include with their wages from factory work the additional funds which are secured through home work and the extra labor entailed in

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keeping lodgers or boarders. Taking this total contribution as a basis, only four families were receiving less than 25 per cent of their support from their women members, while 17 received from 25 to 50 per cent, 18 from 50 to 75 per cent, seven from 75 to 100 per cent (in two of which the women's contributions were 98 and 99 per cent respectively), and two the entire income. The average contribution from the women in work outside the home was 43.7 per cent of the total income, and in all branches of work 49.6.

It should be remembered, of course, that these are families selected because they contained women wage-earners. That it is common among Italians, however, for women to be contributors to the family budget is borne out by the reports of the United States Immigration Commission,<sup>1</sup> which places them second in this respect among the important immigrant nationalities. These 48 families, therefore, should not be considered as abnormal in the importance of their women wage-earners.

While it is true that in few cases would the women's earnings alone have been enough to provide an adequate income, and there is no intention to belittle the substantial share contributed by men, nevertheless in eight families the men's contributions constituted less than 25 per cent of the income and in two of these no men were contributing. Among these eight families were those in

<sup>1</sup> United States Immigration Commission, Reports of. Vol. 27. Immigrants in Cities, p. 321. Washington, 1911.

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which the father was either dead or too old to work, and the sons either too young or too shiftless to be of value as wage-earners. In the other 40 families, 20 received 25 to 50 per cent of their incomes from their male members, 17 received 50 to 75 per cent, and three received 75 per cent or more. From the nature of the study the cases selected included no families wholly supported by men wage-earners.

## EXPENDITURES

The assets of this group of families are before us. It now remains to balance against them the liabilities and mark how the two tally. It should be emphasized here that the object in securing information in regard to expenditures was not to find out the minimum cost of living for wage-earning immigrant families, but rather to measure the demands on the incomes of these families and to gauge their adequacy to cope with the needs of daily life. The data on expenses, therefore, were not an end in themselves, but rather a means to an end. The chief items of expenditure regarding which definite data were obtained were rent, food, heat and light, and life insurance. Except in a few instances it was impossible to get a complete account of the cost of clothing, but enough typical expenditures were cited to give an idea of the importance of this item for some of the families. The proportion of the income spent by each family for the main necessities of life, except clothing, and the margin available to cover this and other expenditures as well as savings are shown in detail in Table 30.

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TABLE 30.—INCOME AND EXPENDITURES IN THE YEAR OF INVESTIGATION OF 48 ITALIAN FAMILIES, SHOWING PROPORTION SPENT FOR EACH PURPOSE AND MARGIN OR DEFICIT FOR MEETING EXPENSES FOR CLOTHING AND MISCELLANEOUS PURPOSES

Family number	Total yearly income	Number in family	Number of contributors	Per cent of expenditures for each purpose				
				Rent	Food	Fuel and light	Life insurance	Margin for other expenditures
1	\$ 457	6	5	29	97	9	4	—39*
2	532	5	3	32	47	5	..	16
3	605	7	6	43	62	4	3	—2*
4	626	4	3	24	52	7	1	16
5	737	6	4	16	44	6	..	34
6	753	5	4	18	45	2	1	34
7	809	9	5	22	58	6	8	6
8	810	4	3	20	42	3	..	35
9	819	4	4	13	45	4	1	37
10	852	6	4	27	57	6	..	11
11	854	5	5	20	55	4	..	21
12	894	6	5	23	52	7	6	12
13	907	12	4	17	52	5	..	26
14	942	4	4	14	33	5	..	48
15	944	4	3	17	47	5	1	30
16	996	6	6	18	31	4	5	42
17	1,008	6	5	23	46	5	3	23
18	1,035	9	9	17	60	3	1	19
19	1,039	5	2	17	50	3	5	25
20	1,052	4	3	17	48	5	5	25
21	1,078	6	5	16	48	4	1	30
22	1,140	5	4	15	46	4	1	34
23	1,140	6	4	22	48	4	3	23
24	1,141	7	4	15	56	3	3	23
25	1,171	7	6	13	43	4	8	39
26	1,175	6	3	17	49	6	10	18
27	1,179	8	6	16	62	4	3	15
28	1,200	7	5	14	35	1	2	48
29	1,220	8	5	11	55	4	..	30
30	1,240	8	6	16	42	3	4	39
31	1,260	8	5	13	54	3	..	30
32	1,272	9	6	16	49	4	..	31
33	1,348	11	7	15	57	3	..	25
34	1,369	12	8	13	46	3	3	35
35	1,401	5	4	14	44	3	..	39
36	1,421	4	3	11	31	2	..	56
37	1,429	8	6	11	51	3	..	35
38	1,494	4	3	13	45	2	3	40
39	1,555	7	5	12	40	2	..	45
40	1,676	5	5	11	37	3	..	49
41	1,753	11	5	12	45	5	..	38
42	1,900	7	5	12	42	4	3	39
43	1,917	6	4	7	41	2	1	49
44	2,009	12	6	15	52	5	4	28
45	2,042	5	5	10	38	4	..	48
46	2,049	8	4	11	42	3	5	44
47	2,843	8	6	11	30	1	..	58
48	3,716	13	9	6	31	2	3	58
Average	1,267	6.8	4.8	14	45	4	2	35

\* Represents deficit between expenditures and actual income.

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While exceptions could be cited all along the line, certain general tendencies are noticeable in the proportion of the income going to the different main objects of outlay. As the income becomes greater the proportion expended for rent, heat, and light tends to become less, as does also the outlay for food. On the other hand, the greater the income the greater is the margin for clothing and general expenses, such as health, recreation, carfare, and the like. Since the low incomes are barely enough to cover the mere necessities of life, the items for shelter, food, and heat naturally claim the greater part of the budget in such cases. While the amount for rent, food, and heat is not absolutely constant it does not increase in nearly the same ratio as the income, and hence as the income expands a constantly increasing margin is available for other needs. These tendencies are in agreement with the findings of other studies of family budgets such as those of More<sup>1</sup> and Chapin.<sup>2</sup>

The average income of \$1,267 for these families is divided up into the following proportions for the main items of expenditure: \$183, or 14 per cent, for rent; \$571, or 45 per cent, for food; \$47, or 4 per cent, for heat and light; \$19, or 2 per cent, for life insurance; and \$447, or 35 per cent, remaining to cover the cost of clothing and sundry other

<sup>1</sup> More, Louise B.: *Wage-Earners' Budgets*. New York, Henry Holt and Co., 1907.

<sup>2</sup> Chapin, Robert Coit: *The Standard of Living in New York City*. Russell Sage Foundation Publication. New York, Charities Publication Committee, 1909.

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expenses. Of the 30 families whose incomes were less than the average 25 spent more than the average proportion for rent, 21 spent more than the average proportion for food, and 13 spent more than the average proportion for fuel and light, while only six had more than the average margin for other expenses. With the 18 families having incomes larger than the average the opposite was the case, a decided majority having expenditures for food, rent, fuel, and light proportionately less than the average.

**Rent and Housing:** Half the families paid less than \$15 a month for rent and half paid \$15 or more. Both the Chapin and More studies, as well as that made by Professor Streightoff<sup>1</sup> for the New York Factory Investigating Commission, fixed \$14 a month in New York City as the allowance for rent in their estimates of the budget giving the minimum requirements for living for a family of five. Fifteen of these Italian families, or nearly a third, were paying less than this, and as only four of them had less than five persons living in the household, it is apparent that for nearly a fourth of the families the amount spent for rent was below that which has been set as a minimum, low as that seems. In the larger group of Italian families covered in the entire investigation, practically the same proportion, 152 out of 502, or 30.2 per cent,

<sup>1</sup> New York State Factory Investigating Commission. Fourth Report, 1915. Vol. IV, Report on the Cost of Living, p. 1,669.



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paid less than \$14 a month.<sup>1</sup> The average proportion of the income going for rent, 14 per cent, was also below that of the standards set in the three studies mentioned above for less homogeneous groups. The rents paid ranged from \$9.00 a month for two rooms for a family of four to \$25 for seven rooms for a family of 12. The monthly rent per room for most of the families was from \$3.50 to \$4.50. In the Streightoff study it is stated that \$6.00 per room is the lowest rate at which a new law tenement in New York City can be rented commercially.<sup>2</sup> Several of the Italian families earned a part or all of their rent by giving janitor's service. In tabulating, this has been counted at the current rental value of the flat occupied.

All of the families lived in tenements, varying from the "new law" to the railroad and dumb-bell types, or in some of the old three-story houses, relics of Greenwich's days of glory, but since fallen from their high estate and now remodeled into flats. The colonial doorways and marble mantelpieces were still to be seen here, though dingy and dilapidated in their incongruous surroundings. This variety in building is due to the fact that the district is an old one, the old dwelling houses not yet fully transformed to its present character. It remains a museum of the different stages of building operations in the city. One of those remodeled houses was owned, as has been said, by a family

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix C, Table 8, p. 333.

<sup>2</sup> *Opus cit.*, p. 1,656.

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included in the investigation. They themselves occupied the first floor, renting the two upper floors and basement to other tenants.

Forty-one of the 48 families lived in apartments of three or four rooms. Thirty-three households showed actual congestion (*i. e.*, more than one and one-half persons per room). Of these, 19 had from two to three persons per room, two had three to four per room, and two had as many as four persons per room. A bootblack's family with 12 members lived in a three-room flat the rental value of which was \$14 a month, but which they had rent free because Rosina, the wife, acted as janitress for the building. The bedroom back from the kitchen had no window, the kitchen was almost totally dark, and the third room was gloomy enough to necessitate frequent burning of gas, and hence a large gas bill at the end of the month. Of necessity all three rooms, including the kitchen, were used for sleeping, though some semblance of a "parlor" was maintained in the front room by having a large couch and a folding bed instead of the regulation bedstead, and a miscellaneous collection of bric-a-brac for decoration. Despite the fact that in addition to her own housework and her duties as janitress the mother had the care of two babies, a year and a half and six months old respectively, she managed to do home work on roses and to keep her rooms very neat and clean.

Another family of 12, but one with less care for the decencies of life, lived in three ill-kept, scantily

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furnished rooms for which they paid \$13 a month. These were the two most extreme cases of congestion, but conditions nearly as bad existed in a number of other households, and the family of four who had four rooms and paid \$16 for them was unique in the group.

At all events, many of the apartments were dark, ill-ventilated, and far from clean. None had a dining room, nor any room besides the kitchen not used for sleeping. In some cases even this was converted at night into a bedroom. Sanitary arrangements were also poor. Only 10 had the exclusive use of a toilet in their own flat, while 30 shared the use of one in the hall with two or more other families, and eight lived in buildings in which the toilet was located in the yard. Only three families had the luxury of a bathroom.

The living quarters as a whole were distinctly below the American standard of a parlor, a dining room, and a kitchen distinct from the sleeping rooms. The consequent congestion and the lack of sanitary arrangements mark a generally low standard of housing, but one unfortunately not unique among Italian tenement dwellers.

**Food:** The outlay for food is by far the largest single item in the list of things necessary to the family's well-being. It has been claimed by various students of the cost of living that Italians spend more for food than people of other nationalities. Though nearly half of the income of these Italian families went for food, this proportion is no greater than

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that noted in two other recent studies of working class budgets.<sup>1</sup> The weekly expenditure for food for the group ranged from \$4.69 for a family of five to \$22 for a family of 13. According to the accepted system of computing dietary requirements by man units, the cost of food per man unit was set by Streightoff at \$1.89 a week in 1914. Sixteen of our Italian families fell below this standard in their outlay for food, while the other 32 exceeded it. The average for the group was \$2.10.

The general impression gained from a study of the weekly food purchases in these families is that they are more generous in providing food for themselves than for any other need of life. Bread and milk are bought and consumed in large quantities. The typically Italian spaghetti and "pasta" are popular, but meat and fish also form an important and regular part of the dietary. Most of the families, probably because of the limited means at their disposal, buy their food in small quantities day by day, a method not conducive to economy or good management. Some paid cash for all purchases, while a number ran weekly or monthly bills for food. In times of dearth they were all glad "to take out a trust with the grocery man." And at such times fear of exceeding their credit would lead to a reduction of the amount of food consumed,

<sup>1</sup> Streightoff, Frank H. *Opus cit.*

New York City Bureau of Standards. Report on Cost of Living for an Unskilled Laborer's Family in New York City (submitted to committee on salaries and grades of Board of Estimate and Apportionment). 1915.

## FAMILY BUDGETS

sometimes to the detriment of health. As one girl said, "If there is no money, we eat less." It is in the stomach often that the pinch is first felt.

Most of the workers buy at least some part of their lunch, while a small number bring part or all of it from home. In 23 families workers lived near enough to their places of employment to go home at noon. The expenditure for lunches where there was any, however, was small, usually 10 to 20 cents a day. This amount has been included in the total cost of food for the year.

**Fuel and Light:** The average expenditure for fuel and light formed 4 per cent of the total income, at least 1 per cent less than the estimates of Streightoff and the Board of Estimates committee. The fuel used for heating was for the most part coal, and this was usually bought in the expensive way—a bushel at a time. A few families bought it by the ton, but the great majority had no place to store so large a quantity. They also feared that if the coal were to be left in the cellar it might be stolen. Gas was used for lighting and cooking, while kerosene was occasionally used for both light and heat. A number of families also used wood for cooking or heating, but few actually bought it. The wood used was whatever could be picked up by the younger children.

Only three of the families had a stove in their front rooms, and many of the apartments were poorly heated. One woman in speaking of a recent illness said: "When I was sick last week I stood

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home and it was awful cold. I like to go to work. It's warmer there than at home."

The dark rooms also necessitated considerable use of artificial light and consequently high bills for gas, oil, or anything else used for the purpose.

**Insurance:** Nineteen of the families did not have any member insured. For some unaccountable reason more of the low-income families carried life insurance than did those with the higher incomes, and the size of the policy or premium also had no apparent relation to the size of the income. The reason given by most of the uninsured families for not being insured was the all-sufficient one that they "did not believe in it." One young girl said that they were not carrying insurance because her mother thought "it looks like we were all going to die." Another objected to "having them men running here every week like we owed money to somebody."

The policies carried were of the usual industrial kind requiring weekly payments of 5, 10 or 15 cents. Occasionally only one member was insured, but most of the insured families had policies for all the children and the grown-ups as well, so that the weekly premiums often amounted to over a dollar. Annual premiums ranged from \$2.60 to \$115.96. A few larger policies were carried, as for instance, the thousand-dollar one that was paid during the year at the death of a young man from tuberculosis.

The small policies were taken out usually with a view to covering the expenses of the elaborate fun-

## FAMILY BUDGETS

eral which is a part of the Italian standard of living. Often the entire amount went for this purpose and there was little left to cover the accumulated debts of the illness which preceded death. In one family every child was insured at a premium of 15 cents apiece a week, or \$1.05 for the seven boys and girls. The policies had been taken out after the mother's experience in losing a nine-month-old baby whose life was not insured. "I had to pay \$95 for the funeral; with the drinks it came to \$115. It took us some time to pay it up. I thought it was bad enough to lose the child without having to do without insurance money, so since then I have had insurance."

In 30 families, members, usually the father, belonged to benefit societies for relief in time of sickness. Two families had drawn benefits during the year studied. Only nine carried fire insurance.

**Clothing:** Only one family kept an account of the expenditures for clothing during the year for all its members. This was one whose income was \$1,175 and whose standard of living was high. The amount spent during the year to provide clothing for the widow who was head of the family, for her mother, a son of sixteen, a daughter of fourteen, and two younger girls was \$146.61, or 12.5 per cent of the entire income. This is approximately the proportion allowed for clothing in several other budget studies. Indications, however, from the clothing accounts kept by a number of the girl wage-earners, point to a larger proportion for cloth-

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ing in many of the other families for which complete accounts were not secured. Louisa Gambino, an attractive girl of nineteen, whose family had an income of \$1,917, spent \$149.41 for her own clothes. If her sister who was only a year younger, spent as much and the four remaining members of the family provided for themselves adequately, considerably more than a fourth of their income would have been spent for this purpose. Yet these two girls made many of their own clothes. The account, however, did include such an extravagance as a "ball dress" at \$21. Another individual account placed the total at \$106.32, while the five others which were secured ranged from \$40 to \$50.

Only three families did all their own sewing, though all but one made some of their clothes at home. Twenty-seven families had a part of their wardrobes made by dressmakers, or even custom tailors. Only two bought no ready-made clothes at all. The purchases of ready-to-wear clothing were usually made in the Fourteenth Street department stores, or the Jewish shops on the east side. The dressmakers and tailors patronized all lived in the neighborhood. Materials, underwear, and even ready-made clothes were sometimes bought from push carts.

**Other Expenditures:** Doctor's bills were an important item in the family budget of these Italians. The scant margin to cover such emergencies as illness did not suffice to keep the family out of debt in cases of prolonged illness. Moreover, Italians do



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not trust free dispensaries and are in deathly fear of hospitals. Hence they did not avail themselves of free medical care. One family incurred a large bill because the old mother who was ill objected to being sent to a free convalescent home and had to be sent to a paid one. The Italians are also inclined to call in two or three doctors in quick succession if the first does not effect an immediate cure. A number, as has already been indicated, did attempt to make some provision for sickness through membership in sick benefit societies, but the members were usually the fathers, and the benefits did not cover the rest of the family.

In this connection the prevalence of tuberculosis should be noted, a fact commonly recognized regarding Italians in New York City. In 15 families there had been 23 cases of tuberculosis during the preceding six years. The study of these 48 households would seem to indicate that this susceptibility to disease is induced not only by undernourishment but perhaps even more by overcrowding.

The expenditures for recreation and education were small. The mother had no recreation and the father took his alone. In some families, especially those of south Italian origin, tradition was still so strong that the girls were not permitted to go out unless accompanied by the father or mother. Even if the parents did not seriously object the girls were afraid of neighborhood gossip if they should be seen out alone after dark. As the mother was usually

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too tired to accompany them and the father did not want to "bother," it meant that the girls were practically prisoners at home during their leisure hours. For those favored ones who were allowed to go out without their parents, moving-picture shows, the Fourteenth Street Theater, and an occasional dance sometimes at a nearby settlement, were the chief means of amusement.

It was still the custom in the Italian colony to arrange weddings by conference between the parents, though some of the girls had been independent enough to adopt the American method of making their own choice and had even gone so far as to turn down their fathers' suggestions. The services of "ambassadors" were occasionally made use of to suggest marriage to young men. The suggestion would then be followed by a call on the girl by the man, after which the business negotiations might be taken up by the parents. But whether the new or the old method of matchmaking was followed, it was considered essential for every girl to be married before she reached the age of twenty-one.

The restraint exercised on the girls was in distinct contrast to the treatment of the sons of the family. After they reached working age they were free to come and go as they would and to spend their money without question as to the purposes to which it was put. They were their own masters, and in many cases the rest of the family did not know the details of their lives either at work or at

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play. The result of this freedom was not always fortunate. A number of the young men became shiftless ne'er-do-wells, one or two were drunkards, and several of the younger boys got themselves into scrapes with street gangs which landed them in the reformatory for a term.

Only one family spent any part of its income for education during the year. This was a payment of \$40 to send a boy to an electrical school. For the most part the standard of education was low. It was felt that as soon as legally possible the child should go to work, and many of them had slipped through with less schooling than the present law requires. One mother voiced the typical attitude in regard to the girls' education when she said, "Why should she go to high school, when she's goin' to be married anyway?" A few girls attended public evening school. Many of the families bought and read newspapers, sometimes Italian and sometimes English. This usually measured the extent of any reading done and there were a number for whom reading was an unachieved accomplishment.

The expense of carfare did not play a large part in the budgets of most of the families, as the majority of the wage-earners lived within walking distance of their work places. In fact, the proximity to the factories and warehouses of the lower west side was one of the chief reasons for the settling of these families in this district, and for their reluctance to leave it for sections where more commodious quar-

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ters could be obtained without much, if any, greater cost.

Church contributions did not play a large part in the family expenditures. Though all were Roman Catholics the church was not an important factor in their lives. The older generation seldom went to services. The attendance of the girls seemed to compensate for the shortcomings in this direction of the remainder of the family.

Unions, too, were not considered worth while in these families, and few of their members belonged to them. Only five had union members and they were inclined to be rather inactive. This attitude of indifference toward collective industrial action is often said to be typical of the Italian. He is an individualist at bottom and as long as he gets along well and sees no reason to concern himself about what is happening to his fellow-workers.

## SAVINGS

With the many drains on earnings and the large families to be supported, even those who had incomes well above the usual average for wage-earners' families did not find it easy to put aside the bit for a rainy day. Insurance in one form or another was perhaps their most regular method of saving. A number of the families did manage to put aside a small amount from time to time, sometimes in a savings bank and sometimes in that time-honored receptacle for family funds—the stocking. Several families found to their distress

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that money accumulated in the bank only to be drawn out and used for some matter of urgent necessity. For many even such temporary savings were out of the question. Irregularity and uncertainty of income complicated management until both ends would not meet. Two families with low incomes had a deficit rather than a margin beyond the cost of food, shelter, heat, light, and insurance. In one case the difference was made up from savings left to the widow at the death of her husband five years before; in the other a relief society came to the rescue. Eight other families were recorded in the files of relief societies, but only five of them actually received assistance in money or goods.

## REGULARITY OF INCOME

To the holder of the household purse strings the fact that her average income is \$8.75 a week or \$71.46 a week (as the case may be, according to whether she happens to be in the family with the lowest or the highest income), is almost of less significance than that this \$8.75 or \$71.46 will come into her hands regularly every one of the fifty-two weeks of the year. Unfortunately in most wage-earners' families the holder of the purse strings is not assured of this. She very often does not even know that the same amount, however high or low, will come into her hands for three or four successive weeks of the year. An evenly distributed income would admit of a plan and a regular apportionment of expenditures, but this is impossible under the

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existing irregularity of our industrial employment. None of the 48 families included in this study had an income during the year whose curve, if plotted week by week, would present a straight line or even a waving one. Most of their incomes were subject to fluctuations as violent as those of a war stock market. The causes of these zigzaggings of the family budget are found mainly in the maladjustments of industry—seasonal industry, casual industry, irregular industry of all kinds. Sickness and accident are to blame for occasional irregularities, and shiftlessness, especially among the young men, for a little more; but the bulk of the responsibility rests on industry as affected by the weather, freaks of fashion, and the lack of thoughtful management.

These facts have already been noted in discussing the individual wage-earners. Furthermore, weeks of unemployment and part time are likely to coincide for the different members of the family. Slack season for home work is slack season for the industries to which it contributes. Nor are the fat weeks fat enough to provide for the lean ones, weeks sometimes so lean that they have no substance whatsoever. In addition, emergencies must be met such as illness, accident, death. The problem is too complex a matter of mathematics for the simple Italian housewife. Those that confronted some of these families indicate typical difficulties in adjustment of income for the entire group.

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Mrs. Roma is a Genoese woman whose husband had died five years before, leaving her five children under twelve years of age and savings of \$3,000. By drawing heavily on these savings Mrs. Roma had been able to support her family by making flowers at home with the help of her young children until two became of working age. At the time of this study the oldest girl was sixteen and at work during the daytime in an artificial flower factory. At night she helped her mother and younger brothers and sister with home work. Toward the end of the year Mamie, the child next in age, became fourteen and went to work at once, also in a flower factory at \$5.00 a week. The oldest boy, aged eleven, during the last three months of the year ran errands after school for \$1.00 a week. For the major part of that year, therefore, the family had been dependent for support on home work and on the earnings of sixteen-year-old Carolina. For twenty-one weeks no home work was to be had on account of slack season. Carolina was on the payroll of her shop the entire year, but on account of part time over a considerable dull period during which she worked only two to four days a week, she lost the equivalent of nearly six weeks' earnings. In addition, two days' pay for legal holidays and three days' during a shut-down because of a fire at the factory, was lost. Her wage at the beginning of the year was \$4.50 a week, which was raised to \$5.00 during the course of the year. For eight weeks of rush season she had been put on piece

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rates whereby, with overtime work until eight or nine at night, she was able to make the following earnings: \$8.20, \$10.15, \$11.95, \$14.87, \$9.57, \$9.27, \$8.10, \$7.57. At the end of the eight weeks she was put back on the \$5.00 a week rate. Diagram 1 shows the fluctuations of this family's income.

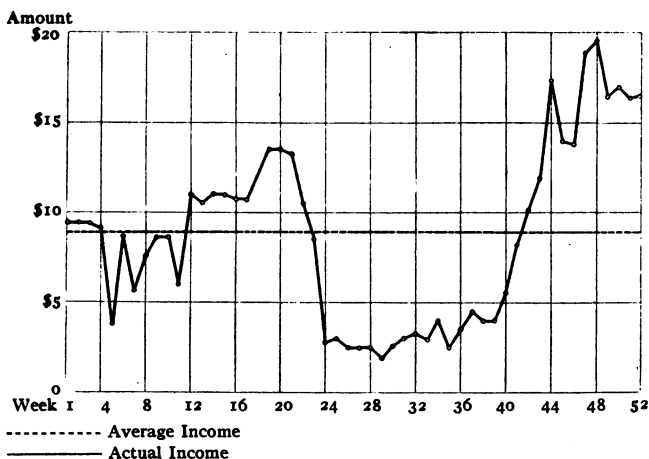


DIAGRAM 1.—INCOME OF AN ITALIAN FAMILY FOR FIFTY-TWO WEEKS

The lowest income in any week was \$1.95, and the highest was \$19.50 toward the end of the year when the other children began to contribute. To tide them over the year Mrs. Roma drew from \$15 to \$20 a month from the savings left by her husband and an extra \$5.00 to \$10 more in slack season. By October of the year of the investigation only \$200 of the \$3,000 was left, so that this resource was fast slipping away.



## FAMILY BUDGETS

The family whose income is charted in Diagram II was composed of only four people: a pathetic old couple, a man of seventy, and his wife aged sixty-eight, who tried feebly in spite of illness and failing powers to earn a little from home work on flowers, their daughter, thirty-three years old, an artificial flower maker and the mainstay of the family, and their son, twenty-nine years old, a habitual drunk-

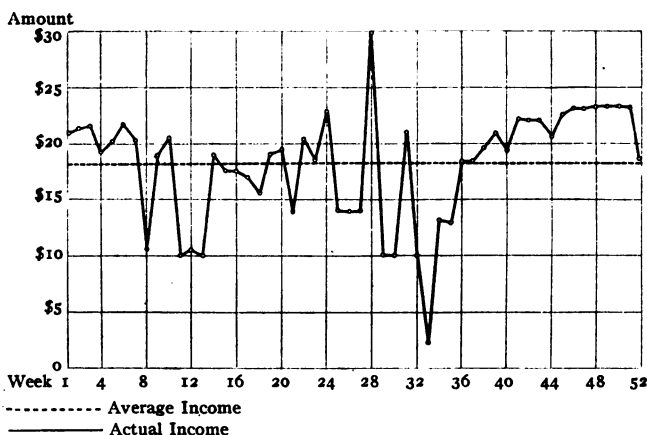


DIAGRAM II.—INCOME OF AN ITALIAN FAMILY FOR FIFTY-TWO WEEKS

ard, whose earnings as a salesman could not be relied on as a regular family resource. The income ranged from \$2.25 in one week to \$31 in another in which a relief society gave \$20 in order that Rose, the overtaxed daughter, might have a week's much needed rest. On another occasion during Rose's slack season the same society paid the rent. The son's earnings of \$10 a week were regular enough,

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but he paid only half into the family treasury, and as most of the rest of his money was squandered on drink, he often asked his sister for reimbursements for his needs. During the year Rose had nine weeks of total unemployment. During the weeks in which she worked, there was much part time and consequent irregularity in her earnings which never exceeded \$9.00 a week and were sometimes as low as \$2.25 and \$3.00. For twenty-one weeks the old people had no home work and their earnings in the other thirty-one weeks ranged from 60 cents to \$4.28. To make this they got up at six o'clock in the morning and sat bending over their work all day and sometimes until late at night. "They sit there and work when I leave in the morning," said Rose, "and they are still there when I come home, as if they hadn't moved all day." An income of such uncertainty and such meager dimensions did not afford a surplus to cover the emergency demands of illness which had to be met during the year, and a burden of debt for the necessities of life accumulated, to the great distress of the aged parents and their daughter.

The family in Diagram III had an income of \$907.34 with which to support a family of twelve. The father, a peddler of cheese, whose earnings were casual and spasmodic, preferred bullying every cent of their wages from his two young daughters, who were the chief support of the family, to going out himself in disagreeable weather to sell his wares. During twenty-eight weeks of

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the year he had made nothing, and his total earnings were somewhat less than a fifth of the entire income. The two girls, sixteen and eighteen years old, worked in a factory where negligees were made, and their piece-rate wages were subject to decided seasonal fluctuations. In addition the firm failed in October of the year of the investigation, and both girls, in trying to find new work, shifted

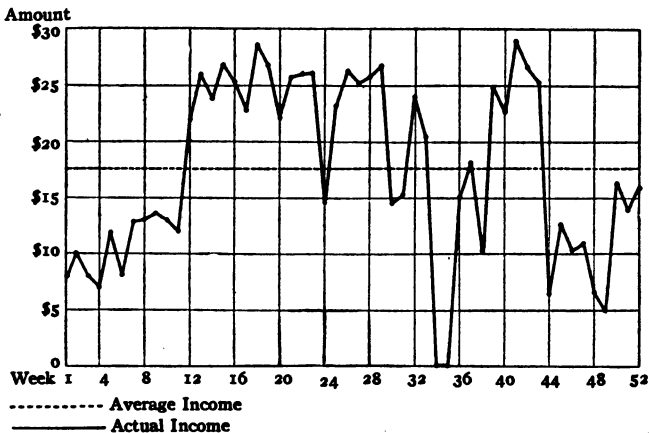


DIAGRAM III.—INCOME OF AN ITALIAN FAMILY FOR FIFTY-TWO WEEKS

around with a few weeks in one factory and then in another and another, and a consequent loss of time and wages between each shift. With such a group of wage-earners the vagaries of the income as seen in the graph are not surprising. The income ranged from nothing for two weeks to \$29 in one. Toward the end of the year the oldest boy became fourteen and went to work, but he, too,

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shifted from one job to another and was sick in addition, so that his contribution was negligible. The mother, a woman of only thirty-six, who had had 15 children, 10 of whom were living and three of whom were babies two years old or less, was too worn with childbirths and the care of her family to undertake even home work. The irregularities of their income had infected the family with a restless spirit and every few months they moved. In two years they had lived in eight different places. They never had enough to cover weekly expenses, and the condition of overcrowding with 12 people in three rooms and five in a bed was intolerable. This was the family selected by the investigator as having the lowest standard of living in the group, and is one of those with the most irregular income.

In extreme contrast with these three families is one in which a widow, a woman of thirty-six years, was the head of the family. This was the family which in the opinion of the investigator had the highest standard of living. The widow was an agent for a philanthropic society and made a regular monthly salary of \$60 throughout the year. Her mother, in return for her services as janitress in the tenement in which they lived, secured their four-room apartment rent free. This much of the income suffered no fluctuation whatsoever. The sixteen-year-old son, the oldest child, lost sixteen weeks through unemployment, but the margin of need in this family was not great enough for the loss of his wages to interfere seriously with the

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business of making both ends meet. There were three other children, seven, twelve, and fourteen years old, and the standard here was high enough to permit even the oldest to remain in school—in fact, in high school. The total income was \$1,175, and the range in weekly income from \$17.66 to \$25.16. This family was able to meet the expenses of the mother's illness and to keep out of debt because of comparative regularity of income.

To a greater or less degree the facts about the first three families are true of the group as a whole. The fourth is exceptional in its regularity. Four families had weeks of absolutely no income, and practically all had an almost weekly variation in the amount flowing into the family coffers. The result of this uncertainty was a hand-to-mouth existence with consequent bad management, inability to cope with the emergencies of life, hopelessness and depression that led to shiftlessness, illness, and even for some whose income seemed above the border line, to all the ills of poverty.

In these families of irregular income crowded, ill-kept living quarters brought a lowered resistance to disease. Weeks of slack season and unemployment meant a skimping in food and consequent undernourishment. The rent could not be pared down and it had to be met regularly or the game was up. On the other hand, less food was an easier method of economy. Efforts to add to the income through home work cut into the normal time for recreation, and lack of money as

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well as Italian traditions further interfered. Large families might mean many wage-earners but they also meant many little mouths to feed before the children could rise to the status of breadwinners. During the full weeks the lean ones were forgotten and many a time the lean ones came without warning. In so disorganized a state of industry, with ignorance of the American manner of living, and a nature not easily assimilable, the Italian immigrant is not in a position to get the best out of American life.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE WOMAN WHO DOES NOT LIVE AT HOME

**I**N MOST investigations into the cost and standards of living of women workers, emphasis has been laid upon those who do not live at home although they form but a minority of women wage-earners. It is easier to estimate the relation between income and cost of living for this group of women who are presumably self-supporting than for those who form a part of a family group. For the woman not living at home, or "the woman adrift,"<sup>1</sup> the answer is much simplified for such questions as "What standard of living does she maintain?" "Is she self-supporting on her own earnings?" or "Is she aided by contributions from other sources to enable her to maintain a decent standard of living?"

#### COMPOSITION OF GROUP

To classify Italian women wage-earners, however, according to whether or not they live at home

<sup>1</sup> "Women adrift" or "women practically without homes" are terms used in the government reports for women who enjoy none of the essentials of a home, whether they are boarding or lodging, or "those whose so-called homes have become only impeding wreckage." United States Bureau of Labor. Report on the Conditions of Woman and Child Wage-earners in the United States, 1910. Vol. V, p. 10.

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is not an easy task. Even when they live nominally as boarders with distant relatives or friends, they often regard themselves as part of the household, sharing alike in its prosperity and adversity. It was found that about one in eight, or 147, of the 1,095 Italian women included in this investigation might justly be classed as not living at home. But certainly few of these were "adrift," inasmuch as there was often a tie of relationship with the family with whom they lived; but in all the cases chosen for study definite arrangements had been made for a weekly or monthly payment for room and board, so that while the woman might be living on very friendly and intimate terms with the family she nevertheless did not share in any responsibility for its welfare.

As a matter of fact, only 40 women were staying with friends or strangers, while 107 were with kinspeople. As many of these were recent immigrants, it was but natural to find them living with relatives whom they had sought out when they first arrived, perhaps the one who had painted the glories and possibilities of the new country in letters to her family in Italy.

Only a little more than a fifth, or 32 of the 147 women, had been here as long as five years, while more than a third had come during the preceding year. The majority had come over alone, or perhaps with a sister or brother or friend to make a living for themselves or to help their families in Italy. They were naturally older than the other



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women included in the study. Only 24 were under eighteen years of age, while 49 were between eighteen and twenty-one years, and 74, or one-half of all, were twenty-one years of age or older.

## OCCUPATIONS AND EARNINGS

With the exception of three laundry workers and one salesgirl, these women were employed in factory work. The making of men's and women's clothing claimed about half of the number, while 17 were flower and feather makers, 15 were in candy, and nine in tobacco factories. Their weekly wages ranged from \$3.00, which one woman earned as a finisher on dresses, to \$16, earned by a draper in a wholesale dress house and by a finisher on women's cloaks and suits. Table 31 shows the full time weekly wages and actual earnings during one week of the women not living at home.

This table shows that even with full-time earnings every week in the year at the given rate, half of the women would have had less than \$7.00 a week to spend for food, lodging, clothing, and other necessities of life. As a matter of fact, the figures of full time weekly wages represent only possibilities. While it was impossible to secure adequate information as to yearly earnings, especially as many of the women had been in this country less than a year, the actual earnings of the group during the week preceding the visit of the investigator throw some light upon the amount of time and wages lost. Only a third of the women had earned

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as much as \$7.00 during this one week, as compared with a half who had been listed at a weekly rate

TABLE 31.—WEEKLY WAGES AND ACTUAL EARNINGS DURING WEEK PRECEDING INVESTIGATION OF 147 ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS NOT LIVING AT HOME

Wages and earnings	Women	
	Wages	Actual earnings
None . . . . .	..	16
Less than \$4 . . . . .	4	15
\$4 and less than \$5 . . . . .	13	8
\$5 and less than \$6 . . . . .	31	30
\$6 and less than \$7 . . . . .	24	24
\$7 and less than \$8 . . . . .	14	17
\$8 and less than \$9 . . . . .	11	7
\$9 and less than \$10 . . . . .	19	11
\$10 and less than \$12 . . . . .	15	8
\$12 and less than \$15 . . . . .	9	5
\$15 or more . . . . .	7	5
Total . . . . .	147	146 <sup>a</sup>
Median . . . . .	\$7.11	\$6.17

<sup>a</sup> Of the 147 women not living at home, one did not state actual earnings.

of \$7.00 or more. Some were entirely out of work, others had worked only a day or two. On the other hand, some of the women had received payment for overtime or home work in addition to their regular weekly wages. Yet only 18 had earned as much as \$10 in comparison with 31 who were paid a weekly rate of this amount or more.

## WOMEN LIVING ALONE

### MODE OF LIVING

With an average weekly wage of \$6.00 or \$7.00 to count upon throughout the year, what standards of living were the women not living at home able to maintain? How did these compare with "the absolute essentials of decent self-support" laid down by the Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission<sup>1</sup> which include decent lodging, three meals a day, suitable clothing, and some provision for recreation, self-improvement, and care of health?

Practically all the women were living in tenements, usually with a private family. But the arrangements for room and board were almost as varied as the number of women. Some paid a definite weekly or monthly amount, and in return secured a room or sleeping space, two or three meals a day, and washing. Others lived on a co-operative housekeeping plan, sharing in the general expenditures for rent, furniture, light, fuel, and food, and helping with the housework. Still others rented a furnished room, alone, or with one or two other women, and prepared their own meals. The cost of the room frequently included the privilege of using the kitchen to prepare meals and do washing. Some typical instances will illustrate their ways of living.

Tessa, a finisher on dresses, who had earned \$9.85 in the week before the visitor talked with her,

<sup>1</sup> Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission: Statement and Decree Concerning the Wages of Women in the Brush Industry in Massachusetts. Boston, 1914, p. 19.

## ITALIAN WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

was paying \$9.00 a month for lodging, board, and washing, in a sixth-floor tenement on Thompson Street. Two other women shared a bedroom with her, but she owned the folding bed on which she slept. Her clothes were kept in a trunk in a corner. Her meals for one day consisted of coffee with milk, bread, and butter for breakfast; eggplant sandwiches from home and 10 cents' worth of fruit and cake for lunch; "pasta," beans, meat, and beer for supper.

Another woman, who had earned \$8.50 in the preceding week as a finisher on cloaks and suits, but who had been idle about five months during the year, rented an unfurnished room with the privilege of gas and the use of the kitchen stove for \$1.50 a week. A folding bed, two trunks, three chairs, and a table made of a soap box, were the principal articles of furniture, but the room was decorated with several shelves of gay dishes. The images of 18 different saints adorned the head of the bed, bright pictures of the rulers of Italy, advertising calendars and panels, an alarm clock, and a guitar hung on the wall. The care of her room was a daily joy and her only recreation. She prepared her own meals which cost between \$2.00 and \$3.00 a week. She was an economical housekeeper, buying what she could in large quantities and selecting nourishing food. On the day when the visitor called, her menu had been as follows: bread and milk for breakfast; two eggs,

## WOMEN LIVING ALONE

bread, and apple for lunch; and two eggs, "pasta," lettuce, bread, and wine for supper.

Caterina, twenty-six years old, who sewed on men's coats and earned \$6.00 a week, shared the household expenses with a brother and his wife. As she helped considerably with the housework her share of the rent was only \$2.00 a month, although she enjoyed the luxury of being the sole occupant of a bedroom. She bought her own lunch at the factory and shared the cost of breakfast and supper with the family. The expense was generally about \$2.25 a week. Her meals for one day consisted of a breakfast of coffee with milk and bread; two eggs, bread, two apples at noon; and an evening meal of "pasta in brodo," artichokes, bread, beer.

## LIVING EXPENSES

Table 32 gives the weekly cost of lodging and meals for this group of women.<sup>1</sup>

TABLE 32.—WEEKLY COST OF LODGING AND BOARD  
FOR ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS NOT LIVING AT  
HOME

Cost of lodging and board	Women
\$1 and less than \$2 . . . . .	20
\$2 and less than \$3 . . . . .	57
\$3 and less than \$4 . . . . .	30
\$4 or more . . . . .	4
Total . . . . .	111 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Of the total 147 women not living at home, 36 did not supply information on living expenses.

<sup>1</sup> The cost of lunches is included, as part of the lunch is frequently brought from home.

## ITALIAN WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

In this group of women who reported what they paid for room and board, whether it was all paid out in a lump sum to a landlady or in small amounts by the woman who prepared her own meals, over two-thirds, or 77, were paying less than \$3.00 a week, and only four were spending as much as \$4.00 a week. One of these last was a flower maker who rented an unfurnished room and cooked her own meals. She was spending \$5.00 to \$6.00 a week out of \$6.00 or \$7.00 weekly earnings, but her "home" represented all she had to live for.

This money cost, however, did not always represent the full payment. Frequently the woman helped with the general housework or sewing, or even with the washing and ironing. In one instance the energetic lodger, when she did her own washing in the kitchen, "picked up" things around the flat and washed these too. On the other hand, the cost sometimes covered all expenses for washing and ironing, as well as for bed and meals.

In some cases the relatives with whom the women were living admitted that the cost did not cover expenses. For instance, two sisters, living with an aunt who provided them with a sleeping space in a flat already crowded and three meals a day, gave her only \$1.50 a week each so that they might send money to Italy. A married brother allowed his two sisters to occupy a folding bed in the kitchen gratis and charged them only for their meals—\$1.50 a week—"because they are relatives." Others of the group were similarly subsidized by

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relatives, even friends, who undercharged them or kept them without payment when they were out of work. Such generosity and kindness often serves to conceal and to relieve the hardships of women who are trying to be self-supporting on a wage that is both insufficient and uncertain. Even with such subsidies many are able to obtain only the barest necessities.

Rarely did a woman enjoy the luxury and privacy of a room to herself. "Room" frequently meant sleeping space, perhaps only in a folding bed or on a cot in a room with two or three other women. Their clothes they stowed away in a chiffonier shared with the family, or in a trunk, box, or valise. If their wardrobes had been more extensive many would have been hard put to it to find a place for them.

The presence of these boarders and lodgers means great overcrowding in the household, especially at night, when every bit of floor space in the small flats is covered with a great variety of sleeping devices. Folding beds are dragged out from corners, and imposing pieces of furniture that by day appear to be chiffoniers or sideboards become beds for two or three lodgers at night. Even the kitchen, which serves as the common cooking, dining, and living room, and in the absence of a bathroom as a washing place where the various members of the household have to perform their morning ablutions at the sink, must do service at night as a bedroom. For 50 cents a week, one wo-

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man who earned \$3.00 a week was entitled to share a folding bed in the kitchen. Two sisters were each paying 50 cents a week for sleeping space in a four-room flat, the home of nine other adults. Another woman was boarding with a brother's family on Elizabeth Street where eleven persons were huddled into two rooms. This crowding often means three or four persons to a bed.

One of the most serious phases of overcrowding is the mingling of the sexes. Not only were men and women lodgers found in the same apartment, but adults of both sexes actually slept in the same room. In one instance, two young women of seventeen and twenty-two years occupied a room with a man and his wife, and in another a young woman and a grown brother rented a room together. Such congestion and indiscriminate crowding together is referred to by the Commission on Immigration in Massachusetts<sup>1</sup> as the cause of one of the most serious moral dangers which surround the immigrant girl or woman.

The low cost of room and board is reflected likewise in the food which these women receive. The Italian is perhaps slower than the people of other nationalities to make changes in the diet to which he has been accustomed in his native land, and years after he has reached this country his meals still consist chiefly of green vegetables with plenty of olive oil, "salami" (salt meat), macaroni, fish,

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Massachusetts Commission on Immigration, 1914. The Problem of Immigration in Massachusetts, p. 60 et ff.



## WOMEN LIVING ALONE

and wine. When earnings are small and boarders pay but \$2.00 or \$3.00 a week, the diet is limited not only in quality but in quantity. A few of the women who were not living at home were asked to describe their meals. Many of their menus seemed totally inadequate. Breakfast usually consisted of coffee with milk and bread or buns. If eggs appeared on the menu, the girl usually explained that it was because she was anemic or otherwise run down. After such a light breakfast their lunches seemed all the more meager. A sandwich or two from home and an apple or piece of pie or cake bought of the peddler at the factory, made up the lunch which they ate at their work tables. Supper was the one substantial meal during the day, at which all the favorite Italian dishes appeared. Meat and potatoes were not often mentioned, but their places were taken by fish, macaroni, and vegetables. Wine was the substitute for the tea and coffee of the American. The Sunday dinner, however, was a more elaborate affair. It was a poor family indeed that did not scrape together enough for a chicken or a roast to add to the daily fare of macaroni, vegetables, and soups. The menus on the whole, however, showed only one substantial and adequate meal a day for these adult working women.

## COST OF CLOTHING

Expenditures for clothes, while a necessity, are secondary in importance to lodging and three

## ITALIAN WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

meals a day. If earnings cease it is at this point in the budget where retrenchments are first made. Moreover, clothing is not bought every day. A new garment is not as urgent a necessity as food and a place to sleep. On this account the expenditures for clothes showed a much wider variation than that for room and meals. If a girl has a job a new suit is forthcoming for the winter; if not, last year's suit must do service again. As none of the women had kept any record of clothing expenditures for the year, the budgets were not complete, but they showed the main expenses. Their greatest value, however, was the information they supplied on the grade and price of clothing bought.

At any one time these women had only a very limited supply of clothing, with few changes. A new coat, a hat, or a pair of shoes, was bought only when the old ones were worn out. They had neither the money to invest in clothes which they were not actually wearing nor any place in which to keep an extra supply.

Although many of the girls could sew, most of their clothes were bought ready-made, because they had neither time to sew, except late at night, nor a sewing machine. A few made underwear, plain shirtwaists, and aprons; others could afford to patronize a dressmaker for a new dress or a tailor for a new suit, but the majority relied upon what they could buy ready-made in department stores, in small stores in the neighborhood, or even from push carts. Immigrant women usually

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bring large quantities of clothing with them from Italy, representing sometimes their accumulations for a dowry—heavy linen underwear, thick, heavily lined waists, clumsy shoes, and wide, bright skirts. A colored scarf or shawl completes the wardrobe. But they have scarcely landed at Ellis Island before they begin to discard these Italian costumes for American clothing. Only some of the older women have the courage to appear at their factories in the garments which they brought from Italy. The first year in this country frequently means much skimping and saving to get new clothes, especially among the younger women who want to look American.

In selecting their clothes the women were usually limited, on account of shortage of money, to buying the cheapest and poorest quality. Consequently the clothes wore badly and had frequently to be replaced, but, as one girl explained, they never had enough money saved to pay a higher price for clothing which might give better service.

A few typical budgets of expenditures for clothing during a year indicate both the quality and quantity bought. As was stated previously, they are only rough estimates including all the items that the women could remember.

Anna, a woman of twenty-two, who had been in this country for three years, but who was earning only \$6.50 a week, had spent less than \$35 on clothes during the previous year. Her brother-in-law, a tailor, made the skirt without charge. She

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sewed the underwear herself, and although the stockings cost only 7 cents a pair, she carefully darned them. Since she had left Italy she had never worn a hat or gloves. The principal articles were as follows:

Coat . . . . .	\$ 5.00
Suit . . . . .	7.50
2 Waists at 50 cents . . . . .	1.00
1 Corset at \$1 and 2 at 75 cents . . . . .	2.50
4 Corset covers at 12½ cents . . . . .	.50
4 Pairs of shoes at \$2 . . . . .	8.00
2 Underskirts at 25 cents . . . . .	.50
3 Yards material for underwear . . . . .	.36
6 Pairs of stockings at 7 cents . . . . .	.42
Skirt material . . . . .	5.00

A flower maker thirty years of age, who earned \$6.00 to \$7.00 a week, during the year had spent between \$40 and \$50 on clothes, chiefly as follows:

Suit . . . . .	\$12.00
Silk petticoat . . . . .	5.00
1 Pair shoes at \$2.50, and 3 pairs at \$2 . . . . .	8.50
1 Hat . . . . .	3.00
2 Corsets at \$2 . . . . .	4.00
2 Sets wool underwear at \$1.25 . . . . .	2.50
2 Pairs drawers at 25 cents . . . . .	.50
6 Corset covers at 15 cents . . . . .	.90
1 Pair kid gloves . . . . .	.79
1 Set combs . . . . .	.75

Mrs. Cuneo, a widow, had been earning her own living as a finisher on men's clothing since she came to this country eight years ago. Although she made \$12 in the week preceding the interview, her yearly income, owing to seventeen weeks of idleness besides many days of little work, had amounted to only \$350. Mrs. Cuneo never wore a hat, and a cape served the purpose of a coat.

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She did some of her own sewing, and the supply of stockings which she had brought with her from Italy had not been exhausted. During the year she had likewise bought about \$40 worth of clothing.

Cape	\$ 3.00
Silk shawl (summer)	3.00
1 Skirt at \$2 and 1 at \$3	5.00
4 Shirtwaists at \$1	4.00
3 Pairs shoes at \$2, 1 pair at \$2.10, 1 pair at \$2.25	10.35
3 Corsets at 75 cents	2.25
Material for 6 petticoats	4.50
4 Undershirts at 30 cents	1.20
4 Pairs drawers at 30 cents	1.20
15 Yards material for aprons	1.50
6 Corset covers at 25 cents	1.50
1 Umbrella at \$1 and 1 at 75 cents	1.75

A younger girl who was earning about \$10 a week steadily as an operator, was more extravagant. Her expenditures had amounted to about \$75 in the course of a year. The budget shows a leaning toward luxuries in the way of a silk dress and three hats, but the girl paid for these indulgences by sewing her own shirtwaists and underwear. The list given below is complete, except for a few minor items which she had forgotten.

1 Blue winter suit at \$12 and 1 green summer suit at \$10.50	\$22.50
1 Princess dress at \$5 and 1 silk dress at \$10.50	15.50
1 Black silk waist at \$3, 1 white at \$2, and 1 at \$2.60	7.60
5 Yards waist material at 12 cents, and 6 yards at 10 cents	1.20
3 Petticoats	2.55
Material for petticoat	.50
1 Corset at 75 cents and 1 at \$1	1.75
1 Corset cover	.25
Material for corset covers	.40
1 Pair gloves at 10 cents, and 1 pair at 69 cents	.79
3 Pairs shoes at \$2	6.00
3 Hats at \$2.49, \$3.50, and \$2.30	8.29

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These budgets illustrate the relation between earnings and expenditures for clothing. When earnings were less than \$7.00 a week the women apparently were unable to get more than the barest necessities of the cheapest grade. Shoes could not cost more than \$2.00 a pair, suits \$8.00 or \$10, shirtwaists less than \$1.00, and only the simplest or cheapest underwear could be had. Some women were found to be paying as little as 10 or 12½ cents for their corset covers, 50 cents for corsets, 10 and 15 cents for gloves, 20 cents for drawers, 5, 6, and 7 cents for stockings, \$1.50 for shoes, 25 cents for a petticoat, 49 cents for shirtwaists, and \$1.25 for a hat. The cheap stockings were not worth darning, sometimes not even worth washing. One woman bought three dozen pairs of stockings at 6 cents a pair in eight months. Waists at 49 cents were of such poor quality that after a week's wear in the factory, where the woman had to bend or stretch at her work, they had to be mended and patched. Other women who worked at machines operated with pedals, complained of the hard wear on shoes and cheap stockings. They never had enough money left, after room and board were paid for, to buy any but the cheapest grade. Even if sometimes they might have been able to afford a better grade they had become accustomed to the low standard. "Hand-to-mouth" buying makes for a high cost of clothing, but cannot be avoided by its victims.

Because their earnings are small and every week

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brings new needs which must be provided, the instalment plan appealed to some of the women. For instance, one young woman with a wage of but \$6.00 a week was buying a \$22 suit on this plan. Another who could count on an income of \$8.50 a week, spent about \$100 a year on clothing, buying on the instalment plan a \$15 coat, an \$18 suit, 50 yards of muslin for \$7.00, a gold locket and chain, and earrings. The great difficulty is that the price of articles bought on this plan is higher than their value, and they are scarcely paid for in full before they are worn out or a new season brings new needs. There is also a strong temptation to buy a larger quantity and more expensive clothing than the actual income warrants.

To solve the clothes problem many of these women have to steer between the dangers of Scylla and Charybdis. If they buy only what they can pay for with ready money, without going into debt, they must get the cheapest qualities which give poor wear. If on the other hand they appreciate the economy of buying a better grade of goods, they must pay the high prices of the instalment plan and incur a debt to be paid out of future wages.

## HEALTH

Expenditures for the care of their health were by no means negligible factors in their budgets. The majority were strong, robust girls who had come recently from the farms of Italy. Yet nearly all had to spend something in the course of the

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year for medicines or medical advice. If an illness was serious enough for medical advice, they did not make use of dispensaries but would spend a dollar for a visit to a doctor. The cost of doctor's services, prescriptions, and tonics sometimes ran up to \$10 or \$15 during the year, even for some in the small group of 44 women who were questioned on this matter. For instance, one woman had spent \$10; another, \$18 for treatment and \$20 for dentistry; another, \$3.00 on doctors and \$5.00 on medicines. Others, when they were run down, did not take tonics but bought plenty of eggs and wine. The budgets show that even in a group of healthy working women, an allowance of at least \$10 was necessary during the year for the care of their health. The need of such care is all the greater when the women live in crowded homes, are undernourished, and cannot take proper care of themselves. Their rooms are seldom heated in winter, and their clothing, of the poorest quality, is not warm.

One case illustrates the price in poor health that a woman may pay for meager living conditions. Rosa, a flower maker who was earning \$6.00 to \$7.00 a week, rented a room which she furnished herself. In the winter the gas, her means of heat, froze. As a result of the exposure she was sick in bed for three weeks with a "fever and a cough." She was too ill even to make "a cup of coffee," and the only care she received was from a married sister who lived nearby. This sister brought Rosa food



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when she had time, but she had three small children to care for. When Rosa felt strong enough to get up she went to work every other day, as much for the warmth in the factory as for the need of the money.

The cost of recreation is easily summed up. When the women and girls were visited at night, they were more likely to be found at home busy at the wash tub or ironing board than out at a dance or the theater. When they did seek recreation it was usually at a moving-picture show in the neighborhood. Some made a practice of going every week; others had gone only three or four times during the year. One woman, when the visitor asked if she went to these shows, exclaimed: "I never have enough money to eat, and you want me to go to moving pictures? I don't know where money goes to. We have no luck with it. You believe me, we have not one penny in the house. Now it's this, now it's that."

Occasionally the younger girls are taken to an Italian ball, the memories and talk of which will last them for months. A 25-cent seat in a theater or at the Italian opera almost completes the list of their pleasures. As Italian traditions do not sanction their going out unprotected they stay at home night after night helping with the housework or gossiping with neighbors.

On Sundays they go to church, and spend the afternoons in faking a walk or visiting friends. Their lives seem dull, with few other interests than

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a steady round of work. There is little to relieve the monotony of endless repetition and the deadening effects of work day after day in the factories.

As many of the women who were not living at home were employed in the clothing trades which had just passed through a period of organization, a comparatively large proportion of the group were union members. About a fifth, or 29 out of the 147 women, were paying membership dues amounting usually to about 15 cents a week. In addition, most of the women had joined the unions during the year, and their budgets contained items for initiation fees varying in amount from \$3.40 to \$27.40. In most cases, however, joining the union had meant an increase in wages, so that the dues and fees had been paid willingly.

In some cases carfare to and from work, church contributions, an occasional visit to the moving pictures, a trip to Coney Island or South Beach, a ball, a daily newspaper, or a Christmas gift for a relative or friend, add to the lesser budget items.

## DEPENDENTS

Expenditures for their own maintenance, recreation, and comfort, however, do not constitute the only demand upon weekly earnings. The fact that a woman is not living at home does not mean that she has no other responsibilities than her own support. For instance, in the government investigation of living conditions of women wage-earners in 1910, it was found that in New York City a third

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of the women factory workers who were living outside their families, besides supporting themselves, were contributing to the support of relatives.<sup>1</sup> The burden is often still heavier for immigrant women. The records of the International Institute of the Young Women's Christian Association which, as has been stated, undertakes to follow up immigrant women who arrive alone, showed that among 894 Italian women and girls arriving alone from Italy in the year July 1912 to July 1913, 48 per cent had persons wholly or partially dependent upon them.<sup>2</sup>

Some of the Italian women included in this investigation who were not living at home, were contributing regularly to the support of relatives in this country, but the larger proportion were sending sums of money to parents or other relatives still in Italy. A cloak maker earning \$8.50 a week in the busy season, was sending \$5.00 a month to her mother. A widow earning \$8.00 a week was also sending \$5.00 a month for the care of a small son. A young wife, whose husband was ill and had returned to Italy, was supporting herself and a three-year-old child on \$6.00 a week. In the course of a year a girl earning \$6.00 to \$10 a week had sent \$75 to her parents; another, out of weekly earnings of \$7.50 had sent \$47 to hers, besides returning \$15 which she had borrowed from a sister for the passage to the United States.

<sup>1</sup> United States Bureau of Labor. Report on Condition of Woman and Child Wage-earners in the United States, 1910. Vol. V, p. 144.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A, pp. 307-308.

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Frequently their earnings are not sufficient to provide both the means of decent living and aid for others. A woman earning \$7.00 a week was expected to send \$8.00 a month to her parents in Italy. In order to save this amount she was sharing two rooms with three other persons, paying a fourth of the \$9.00 rent a month. She slept in a folding bed in the kitchen, and spent less than \$2.00 a week on her meals. During the year she had had to spend about \$60 on clothes, as she had brought practically nothing with her from Italy. At the time of the visit she was going without a hat as she could not afford one. She had to pay 60 cents a month for union dues and 60 cents a week for carfare. Even without any expenses for moving-picture shows or other luxuries, it may readily be seen that she could not save for a long, slack season of twenty weeks. During the four months that she was out of work she had borrowed about \$60 in small sums to meet her most urgent needs. This case, given in some detail, is typical of other women, who are maintaining a low standard of living so that they may scrape together the money which relatives are expecting in Italy.

## SAVINGS

Even without these extra burdens there is small margin between their earnings and the cost of living. Few indeed had any savings, either for the rainy day of unemployment, illness, or other times when there was no pay envelope forthcoming, or

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for the future. One woman, earning irregular wages of from \$5.00 to \$14 a week, was unable to save anything after paying \$15 a month for room and lodging. A flower maker earning \$6.00 to \$7.00 a week had not been able in eight years' time to put any money aside, although she was now thirty years old. Six dollars a week was not enough to allow any savings for still another woman, although her work was steady. After paying \$3.00 a week for room and board and 75 cents for lunches, there had been little left even for clothes. An outlay of \$5.50 in one week for some much needed clothing meant a deficit of \$4.64 which she had to borrow. Her only provision for the future was a 25-cent weekly payment on an insurance policy.

Without any savings, a period of unemployment is an especially serious problem for the woman who is not part of a family group. Even with the strictest economy she must borrow for her most urgent needs. As a result, when work is again secured there is a heavy list of charges against her earnings, debts to be paid, clothing to be renewed, besides the rebuilding of a constitution which has been underfed and neglected. As one woman complained, the debts for one slack season are scarcely repaid before the next slack season is at hand.

The amount of the wages and earnings of these women shows how impossible it was to save or to maintain a higher standard of living. Table 31<sup>1</sup> shows that half were paid a weekly rate of a little

<sup>1</sup> See page 220.

### ITALIAN WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

more than \$7.00 a week, and if loss of time from work during the year is taken into consideration this rate would be reduced to something over \$6.00 a week.

When on these meager amounts they had to support others besides themselves, their case was desperate indeed. The most hopeful aspect of the whole situation for these overburdened, hard-working women, as well as for the community, is that their living conditions seemed to bear a direct relation to their earnings. It was only the lower paid who endured the poorer living conditions—the better paid had better homes, food, and clothing. Forty-two out of the 77 women who were living on less than \$3.00 a week for lodging and meals were receiving less than \$7.00, while only three of the 18 who lived on \$3.50 a week received less than \$7.00. Given a living wage, the Italian can be depended upon to maintain a standard of decent living.

## CHAPTER X

### EDUCATION AND TRAINING

**P**REPARATION for work includes not only special training for a particular occupation but also general education and development. In fact at the present time, the school offers so little occupational or trade training that the general academic education of a prospective wage-earner represents in most cases the sum total of his preparation before he enters his first work place.

While the actual ability to read and write is not always a requirement for the performance of an industrial task, yet the general education that a worker has received is an index to his strength as a competitor in the labor market. Elementary schooling, attendance at high schools, special training in some trade supplemented by training and study in an evening school or settlement class—all these contribute directly to his general intelligence, his ability to understand his work and its relation to other processes, and his capacity for further development.

#### ILLITERACY

The education and preparation for work of Italian women have a special significance because of the extent of illiteracy among Italian immigrants.

## ITALIAN WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

In fact the rapid increase in the immigration from Italy, especially from the southern districts and Sicily during the last twenty-five years, was a contributing factor to the demand for a literacy test for prospective immigrants. In 1913-14, the last year of normal immigration before the war, the proportion of illiterates was larger among southern Italians than among any other important nationality. Illiterates formed 47.4 per cent among the 218,676 immigrants fourteen years of age or older from southern Italy, as compared with only 6.2 per cent from northern Italy.<sup>1</sup>

The admission of over 100,000 illiterate immigrants from one country alone during the course of a single year is regarded by many as a serious menace to the national welfare, especially to that of the wage-earning class. The problem of women wage-earners is regarded by some as particularly serious, as the percentage of illiteracy was higher for women immigrants than for men. During the year 1913-14, 56.1 per cent of the women coming from southern Italy were illiterate, as compared with only 44.7 per cent among the men. For this reason a study of the education of a group of Italian women and the extent to which they have taken advantage of the limited opportunities for education offered in this country is especially important.

The group of 1,095 Italian women included in this investigation represented the adult and the

<sup>1</sup> Annual Report of United States Commissioner-General of Immigration, for year ending June 30, 1914, p. 42.



## EDUCATION AND TRAINING

child immigrant as well as the native born of Italian stock. As the status of education is widely dissimilar in Italy and the United States, the facts about the schooling of the three groups mentioned are hardly comparable.

### SCHOOLING

Information was secured as to the amount of schooling each had received. Table 33 shows where members of the group had last attended school.

**TABLE 33.—LOCATION AND TYPE OF DAY SCHOOL  
LAST ATTENDED BY ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS**

Location and type of school	Women	
	Number	Per cent
<b>NEW YORK CITY</b>		
Public schools . . . . .	560	51.1
Parochial schools . . . . .	95	8.7
Free privately supported schools . . .	10	.9
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>665</b>	<b>60.7</b>
<b>UNITED STATES, OUTSIDE NEW YORK CITY</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>1.5</b>
<b>FOREIGN COUNTRIES . . . . .</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>29.1</b>
<b>NO SCHOOL ATTENDED . . . . .</b>	<b>95<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>8.7</b>
<b>Grand total . . . . .</b>	<b>1,095</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<sup>a</sup>Includes one taught by governess.

Nearly two-thirds of the women had had the advantage of going to school in New York City. A seventh, or 95 of those who last attended school in New York City, had been in parochial schools. On the other hand, 38 per cent of the entire group had not attended school in the United States at all.

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Of these, 29 per cent had gone to school in Italy, or in a few instances in other countries. The most significant fact, however, is that 95, or 9 per cent, had never attended a day school at any time in their lives. Almost one out of every 11 had received no education as a preparation for her work.

This group of 95 women represents chiefly illiterate immigrants. One, it is true, had been taught by a governess, and six others had tried to secure a little education by attending evening classes for the purpose of learning English. None of the other 88 had had any sort of schooling. A closer analysis of the group presents some interesting facts. Although more than a third had been in this country five years or longer, less than one-fifth (17 in number) could speak English. In spite of the fact that 16 were under sixteen years of age when they entered this country—10 were not even fourteen years old—they had succeeded in evading the compulsory education law of New York State which required their attendance in school at least until they were fourteen years old and until they had reached a certain grade in school.

Differences appear in the proportion of illiterates among the immigrants from the various sections of Italy. Among the 92 women who were born in southern Italy and who came here after they were fourteen years old, 32, or over a third, had had no schooling of any kind. Among the Sicilians the proportion was still larger, 40 out of 72, or 56 per cent. The women from northern and central Italy,

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on the other hand, had the much smaller proportion of 9.7 per cent (12 out of 124). These results are similar to those obtained from the records of Italian immigrant women visited by the International Institute, which showed that in a group of 805 women 31.8 per cent were illiterate, the proportions ranging from 7 per cent for northern Italians and 34 per cent for southern Italians, to 45 per cent for Sicilians.

Those who had attended school in Italy we find leaving school when they were nine and ten years old, or at an age when their school days had scarcely begun. Some had shared the fate of the woman of fifty-three, who had had only six months of schooling in her life. When she was a child, she explained, they did not have schools in her country (near Genoa). The village priest used to teach the boys in the mornings and the girls in the afternoons, but "it was just like nothing. You did not learn anything." Even one girl of seventeen could boast of only six months' schooling, as she had had to work as a farm hand. Others had left school because it was too far away or they had finished the brief course provided in their district, and their parents could not afford to send them away to a neighboring district. As a result, many had attended only two or three years and their education had consisted in learning to read the simplest sentences and to write their names.

Of course there were exceptions. For instance, four sisters from Abruzzi had all attended school

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until they were fourteen years old, and had reached the highest grade in the convent. They considered the Italian school superior to the American. "When a girl finishes school in Italy she knows how to write a letter, but not here. And promotions come only once a year. The Americans are in such a hurry that they change classes twice a year."

In another family, which was reported as an "ignorant Sicilian" family, one daughter had graduated from a high school in Italy and was planning to become a teacher when the family emigrated. The report reflects the confusion that often exists in the minds of native-born Americans when they convict foreigners of ignorance and low standards, because they do not speak English and have different ideas and customs.

Nevertheless, instances of adequate schooling in Italy are rare. This is emphasized by facts about the women's years of attendance and age at leaving school.<sup>1</sup> In a group of 223 women who reported their age at leaving school in Italy, three-fourths, or 169, had left before the age of fourteen, some at less than ten years and nearly a third at the age of twelve. In fact twelve years was the predominant age at which the girls had left school. Among those who had last attended school in Italy 276 stated the number of years they had been at school. One out of every six had attended less than three, and half had attended less than five years. These proportions, of course, do not take account of the 95

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix C, Table 9, p. 333.

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immigrant women who had never attended school at all.

These statistics of schooling and meager education reflect the low standard of educational requirements throughout Italy. Compulsory education was not established until 1877 and even then, by the Coppino Act, it was only compulsory between the ages of six and nine years, or ten if the child did not pass the prescribed examination. Schools were not provided by the state but were to be maintained by the individual *communi*. Largely on this account the law was valueless, as in many districts there were neither school buildings nor teachers. In 1901 the census authorities discovered that 48 per cent of the people ten years of age or older could not read. This startling fact spurred the government to expend large sums of money to provide schools, so that by 1911 the proportion of illiterates had fallen to 30.8 per cent.<sup>1</sup> The provisions for compulsory education were made more stringent, and 3,000 evening and Sunday schools were provided for illiterate adults in those districts where illiteracy was highest. Even with these efforts on the part of the government, however, the percentage still remained high. When the electoral law of 1912 went into effect providing for universal suffrage for men, except those under thirty years who had neither performed military service nor learned to read and write, it was found that in

<sup>1</sup> Cyclopaedia of Education: Edited by Paul Monroe, Vol. III, p. 499 et ff. The Macmillan Co., New York, 1912.

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some districts in southern Italy every man was disqualified. This condition spurred the government to still further efforts, and additional large appropriations were voted for the building of school houses and for teachers' salaries.

These inadequate educational provisions account for the large number who came to this country without ever having seen the inside of a school room. Some were illiterate because there were no schools which they could attend. Others lived within reach of schools but had been kept at home to help with the farm or housework. As one girl said, "We could not go because we were poor people." Others went for short periods only, because, as one woman explained, "People didn't bother then. If I had been born later, I would have gone; but I was born too soon to get along well." On the other hand, instances are as frequent of families that had been quite able to send their children had schools been provided, or had the compulsory education laws been adequately enforced.

The Italian girls who had emigrated with their families while they were still young enough to attend school in this country, and those born here of Italian stock, could boast of longer school careers. Of the group who had last attended school in this country 59 per cent<sup>1</sup> had left school at the age of fourteen. The New York State law at the

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix C, Table 9, p. 333.

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time of the investigation<sup>1</sup> required that all children must attend school until their fourteenth birthday, when they might obtain a work certificate provided they had attended school regularly not less than 130 days in the twelve months next preceding this birthday, and had completed the first six years of the elementary school. These provisions meant that some were unable to obtain their work certificates at fourteen and had to continue in school until they were fifteen or sixteen.

Some, however, managed to leave school before the legal age. In the group of 675 women reporting who had last attended day school in this country, a sixth, or 115, had managed to elude truant officers and had left school before they were fourteen. Nor does this include the immigrants who were not yet fourteen when they landed, but who nevertheless were never brought in touch with the school authorities of the city. Some gave excuses like the girl who was only seven when she arrived here from Naples with her parents. "Nobody said anything about it, so I stood home." Because the parents were ignorant of the law and knew little or nothing about the schools, their children had not learned how to read or write. How could they know that what was practically denied them in Italy was compulsory in the new country? Others again knew the law, but by dint of lying about

<sup>1</sup> The law was amended in 1917 to provide that children under fifteen could not leave school to go to work unless they had graduated from elementary school. For children of fifteen the proviso was the same as it had formerly been for children of fourteen and fifteen.

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their children's age and hiding them from truant officers, kept them out of school and at work or to help at home. In order to prevent this last possibility the immigration authorities are now expected to supply the school authorities with lists of immigrant children when they land so that they may be followed up and brought into the schools. In any event, when children in this country, whether immigrant or native born, are allowed to grow up ignorant and illiterate or to curtail schooling because of truancy and lax enforcement of the school law, any discussion of illiteracy tests for admission to this country must appear ironical. If illiteracy among adults is such a serious menace that it justifies the exclusion of immigrants on this ground, then it must be equally serious for native-born citizens.

Even when the children had had the opportunity of attending school in New York City, their education had often been meager. The grade which they had reached when they left school is the one available test to indicate the extent of their formal education. But this information could be secured only for those who had last attended the New York public schools, as the grades in the parochial schools are not standardized. Table 34 gives the grades reached by the women and girls who last attended New York public schools.

In this group of 560 women who had last attended New York public schools, only 27 had attended high school. But not one had stayed until she had graduated, and the majority had dropped



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out before the end of the first year. In addition to those girls who had attempted to get a high school

**TABLE 34.—GRADE AT LEAVING SCHOOL FOR ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS WHO LAST ATTENDED DAY SCHOOL IN NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Grade at leaving school	Women
<b>ELEMENTARY SCHOOL</b>	
Below fifth grade . . . . .	19
Fifth grade . . . . .	57
Sixth grade . . . . .	117
Seventh grade . . . . .	159
Eighth grade . . . . .	64
Graduate . . . . .	81
Special . . . . .	6
Grade not reported . . . . .	30
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>533</b>
<b>HIGH SCHOOL . . . . .</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Grand total . . . . .</b>	<b>560</b>

education, 81 others had graduated from the elementary school. These 108 girls represented the highwater mark of education for the group. At the other extreme were 193 girls, or over a third of the whole group, who had not gone beyond the sixth grade; that is, had received only the minimum schooling prescribed by law at that time and were just eligible for a work certificate.

Many causes combined to cut short their school careers. On the one side are the children who leave school of their own volition. They do not care for study, have quarreled with their teachers, or leave for such trivial reasons as "My lady friend left," "I was too big for my class," or "It was time for me

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to leave; I'd had enough school," or "I didn't like school; I wasn't smart and it's no use going if you don't learn." Sometimes they had even been encouraged by their teachers to leave because they were doing poor work. On the other side are those who would have remained, but were more or less forced by economic pressure or hard times at home to go to work. Record after record reads, "Had to go to work," "Earnings needed at home." In the group of 623 women who had attended school in this country 262, or 42 per cent, as shown in Table 35, gave this reason for leaving. This table, giving

TABLE 35. — PRINCIPAL REASON FOR LEAVING SCHOOL OF ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS BY LAST SCHOOL ATTENDED

Reason for leaving school	Women who last attended day school in		All women
	United States <sup>a</sup>	Italy	
Girls' earnings needed at home . . . . .	262	28	290
Girl wanted to work . . . . .	55	3	58
Did not care for school . . . . .	167	20	187
Had graduated or finished school . . . . .	47	147	194
To go to trade or business school . . . . .	12	11	23
Needed at home . . . . .	41	25	66
Other causes (illness, to come to United States, and others) . . . . .	39	31	70
Total . . . . .	623	265	888 <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> With the exception of 16, the last day school attended was in New York City.

<sup>b</sup> Of the 1,095 women investigated, 95 had never attended school, two had returned to school, and 110 did not supply information as to reason for leaving.

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the reasons for leaving school, includes also those who left school in Italy.

It is significant of the brief school curriculum in Italy that 55 per cent of the girls who had attended school there gave as their reason for leaving that they had "finished" school, although half had attended less than five years, and two-thirds had left school before their thirteenth birthday. Because of the early age at which they "finish" the need of their earnings to the family is less likely to be a cause of leaving. Only 10 per cent cited this as their reason for leaving school in Italy. In this connection, of course, must be taken into consideration the fact that in many instances the poverty of the family and the need of the child's earnings had prevented her attending school at all.

In this country, however, besides the 42 per cent who had left because their earnings were needed, an additional 8.8 per cent "wanted to work"—the "want" frequently reflecting economic pressure. In contrast with conditions in Italy, because of a longer school curriculum here only 7.5 per cent stated as their reason for leaving that they had graduated from school.

Dropping out of school at fourteen is frequently the path of least resistance. The influence of neighborhood standards must not be ignored. "Everybody goes to work at fourteen," is often sufficient excuse for ending a child's education. The regret that the girls usually feel later points to the need of an organized system for a better and closer contact

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between the child and her school so that she may not leave for such reasons as "A friend left," "It was time" or "I was too big."

"Economic pressure" means sometimes the permanent hand-to-mouth existence of the family, or a temporary emergency like the illness or unemployment of a wage-earner that urges the youngest member to try to add to the family income. Antoinette had had to leave school when she was only nine years old, though still in the first grade, to help her mother finish coats at home. Rose Pasquale left as soon as she was fourteen. "My father wasn't working then; he had stomach trouble. It was hard times at home." One woman who left parochial school when she was only twelve said, "We had hard times then. My father was a stone mason—you know how it is. He didn't have steady work and my mother used to talk all the time about how poor we were. So I had my mind on work all the time. I was thinking how I could go to work and bring money home to my mother."

In spite of the importance among Italian families of the earnings of children, the proportion among these girls who were forced to leave school is probably not greater than among other nationalities. In an investigation made by the Committee on Women's Work, of working girls in evening schools, it was found that half of a group of 108 girls of various nationalities had left school for this reason alone, as compared with 42 per cent in this

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group of Italians.<sup>1</sup> It indicates that the forces which are driving the children to work in the Italian's family are potent in those of other nationalities as well. Insufficient family income and irregular employment are not peculiar to the Italian household but affect the homes of other wage-earners irrespective of nationality.

The Italian attitude toward women has an important bearing upon their education. It was not unusual to find families opposed to the education of girls, although they might furnish the principal means of support and would be likely to need preparation. For instance, one girl went to school very little in Italy because the grandmother with whom she lived used to say that it was not a good thing for a girl to get much education as when she married she would know more than her husband. Indeed, an education might prevent her getting married at all. When a girl of eighteen, who had been in this country only a year, went to evening school to learn English, her brother jeered at her until she left. "Oh," he explained, "she is going to get married. She doesn't need to know English." In one family a son, who was in his third year in the architectural course in a university and was planning a trip to Europe to complete it, remarked that few Italian girls go to college. "Well, I guess it is just as well they don't, for girls who go to college always

<sup>1</sup> Van Kleeck, Mary: *Working Girls in Evening Schools*, p. 109. Russell Sage Foundation Publication. New York, Survey Associates, 1914.

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stay single." His sister was an operator in a nearby factory, while a brother was attending high school. Another girl's mother had insisted upon her leaving school although she was promoted to the graduating class. "That is how the Italians are," complained Isabel.

This attitude toward the education and training of women is bound to have an important bearing upon the position of Italian women and girls in industry. If these women are going to compete in the industrial field with women of other nationalities which have broader ideas about the education of women, the Italians will either have to accept the less well paid and less skilled work or recognize the necessity for better equipment and preparation.

Instances were not lacking where the children had been kept in school at a great sacrifice, and where the parents had been ambitious for them to receive a better education than they themselves had had. In one family the mother complained that she could get no better work than office cleaning to do because she had never been to school. "So she wanted me to stay in school," said her daughter, "as long as I could." The father in another family had never had a chance to learn to read or write, but owned a successful newsstand. Realizing his own handicaps, he sent one boy to high school, another to business college, and a girl to a trade school, so that they might have the opportunities he was denied in his childhood.

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### WORK BEFORE LEAVING SCHOOL

One phase peculiar to the Italian population in this city is the extent to which children are gainfully employed before they leave school. Among 504 children whose last schooling had been in New York City and who supplied information on this point, 256, or 51 per cent, had done some sort of work before leaving school. Forty-two per cent had done various kinds of home work—pasting flowers, finishing coats, picking nuts, pulling bastings, or willowing feathers. Some had gone to work after school, on Saturdays, or during summer vacations in factories in the neighborhood.

There is a close relation between the proportion of retardation and the prevalence of home work. Such work done by a child after school hours cannot but interfere with his progress and dull his zest and interest in school. An investigation of school children in New York City in 1909 showed that 36 per cent among Italians were retarded, as compared with 16 per cent for Germans, 29 per cent for Irish, and 19 per cent for Americans. In fact in this respect the Italians led all other nationalities.<sup>1</sup> Another investigation of child workers on artificial flowers in New York City showed that "more than half the number were above the normal age for the grades in which they were enrolled."<sup>2</sup> Often the child is prevented from doing

<sup>1</sup> Ayres, L. P.: *Laggards in Our Schools*, p. 107. Russell Sage Foundation Publication. New York, 1909.

<sup>2</sup> Van Kleeck, Mary: *Artificial Flower Makers*, p. 103. Russell Sage Foundation Publication. New York, Survey Associates, 1913.

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the proper amount of home studying, or he has to do it late at night after several hours of confining work. After sitting in a school room five hours a day, the child needs an opportunity for physical action and play if he is to return to school the next morning with energy and ambition. The serious interference that home work causes to school attendance and progress is one of the most urgent arguments against its continuance. It always means child labor, and as a result not only retardation in the child's school work but retardation in his career as a wage-earner.

An evening with the Cioffari family illustrated some of the effects of home work upon the victims. Philomena remarked to the investigator that she had been backward in school and that when she left at the age of fourteen she was in a special class. The father explained that both she and Flora were stupid and could not learn anything. Whereupon Philomena flared up and exclaimed, "How could I when I had to work all the time?" The family had "always" made flowers at home, and each small child was taught how to slip and paste hideous cotton daisies and violets long before she learned the alphabet. Even at the time of the visit, although Flora and Philomena were both wage-earners, the family were still busy making ornaments. Flora in her school career had been a problem for both school nurse and visitor.

The health of both the native and foreign-born women may well have suffered from their prema-



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ture employment as children. While those born in foreign countries were spending their childhood days as farm laborers, working from early sunrise until sunset on farms in Sicily, Basilicata, or Piedmont, their present fellow-workers who were born in this country were attending school, it is true, but often with a day's work waiting for them after school. Among the 504 women who had attended school in New York City and reported whether they had had to work or not before they left school, 211 or nearly a half had been required to do home work outside of school hours. Without any opportunity for recreation, going straight from the desk in a stuffy school room to the monotonous work at home in poorly lighted, crowded rooms, it is little wonder that many of them had not looked forward with much eagerness or ambition to the time when they would become wage-earners outside their homes. Rarely having had the enjoyment and the free movements of play in the fresh air, essential to the healthy development of children, they started on their careers of wage-earning without any real vitality or ambition to succeed. By working and earning at such an early age, they lost one of the best incentives to success—the anticipation and joy of preparing themselves for the time when they should become workers. For the little home worker, all sense of novelty had been worn away from the idea of going to work, and she had had only too full an opportunity of realizing at how little her labor would be valued.

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### SUPPLEMENTARY EDUCATION

Some of the girls had endeavored to supplement their inadequate education by attending evening schools or classes in settlements. Others had been able to fit themselves better for work by spending a few months or a year in some trade or business school. More than a third, or 38 per cent of the whole group, had tried to supplement their education with such training and study.

The trade school was especially popular. In spite of the idea that girls are expected to marry young and therefore need little preparation as wage-earners, as many as 82 had spent periods varying from a week to many months in a trade school. Their willingness to attend such schools may be accounted for by the opportunity to learn sewing and dressmaking. In this group, 54 had attended the Manhattan Trade School for Girls, while others had patronized private dressmaking schools where they had paid as much as \$20 for a three months' course. They were enticed to these private schools by the opportunity offered of learning the dressmaking trade in four months for \$25. One girl paid \$13, but "there were about 50 girls to one teacher. It wouldn't do, so I got disgusted and left."

While the Italians do not take advantage of the high schools, the records of the Manhattan Trade School show the appeal that such a school makes to them. During a seven-month period in 1914, Italians made up 27 per cent, or 142, of the 532

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pupils admitted. This is a much larger proportion of Italians than in the school attendance of the general population where in 1910 they furnished only 11 per cent.<sup>1</sup> That the trade school promises monetary advancement is not an entirely foreign idea even to the raw immigrant. In some districts in Italy where there are no common schools, private classes and schools are found where girls may learn hand sewing, embroidery, and other needlework.

The evening school had not been a popular institution among the Italian women. It is true that 270, or about a fourth of the entire 1,095 interviewed, had registered at an evening school at some time or other, but the great majority had attended only a few nights or weeks. Their absence may be accounted for in two ways. When an Italian girl or woman ventures out at night to an evening school even a few blocks away she must be prepared to meet the criticism of the men and women of her country. Another obstacle is that at the end of the day's work in factory or store she is too tired to go. The following are some of the reasons which the girls gave for not attending:

"Too tired evenings to think of going. In evenings have always had to help sister with the housework."

"Have a fellow and expect to be married before long."

<sup>1</sup> Reports of United States Immigration Commission. Vol. 32. The Children of Immigrants in Schools. Vol. IV, pp. 610, 618.

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"Have to work on flowers at night at home."

"Would like to go, but evenings are too busy—have to mend and sew for sisters."

"I'm too old, and I'm ashamed to go. I think it is lovely to know how to read and write."

"I came to work, not to go to evening school."

"No time after washing dishes and putting down folding beds."

A brother said that his two sisters would like to learn English, but "the school is so far I can't trust them out alone at night. Only for that they could go. It would be nice for them to learn English. You see, it is only that the factory is across the street that we can let them work."

The fact that as many as a fourth had tried to attend such classes in spite of obstacles is significant. It shows their ambition, and the realization of the need or the craving for education and training.

A classification of the subjects that they studied in trade and business schools and evening classes shows a predominance of those for "home use." A third, or about 138 of the 417 women attending such classes had taken dressmaking and sewing, 37 millinery, 25 hand embroidery, and 13 cooking. These subjects offered practical training for home use rather than any commercial value. English had been studied by 109, and common branches by 33. Although many had been backward in school, and others were immigrants who had never been to school in this country and could not even speak

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English, nevertheless, when they had the ambition or time to attend school it was in the more practical subjects like sewing and dressmaking that they wanted training.

### TRAINING IN THE SHOPS

With such meager preparation do the girls apply for admission to the ranks of industry. Their chance of learning a skilled process in the shops which would mean advancement both in wages and in responsibility was very small. Few of the 271 firms visited that took learners had any organized system of selecting and teaching or of advancing them. Some never took learners, relying for their supply upon other employers. One dress manufacturer had formerly taken them at \$6.00 a week, but as they left when they became useful he took no more. A men's clothing manufacturer said he did too fine a grade of work to bother with learners, but shops with a cheap trade could teach them. An employer of 300 women making children's clothing made a similar statement. "They must learn in shops doing a cheaper class of goods. We pay for experienced workers and get them." This was the point of view of others. Straw hat manufacturers generally objected to learners. One said as his work was very high grade he could not afford to have absolutely green hands. He took girls who had been in some cheaper place, preferably, however, only a season, as longer practice at such work was apt to give them careless habits. Of

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the 271 firms reporting, 184 took learners or inexperienced workers.

Among those reporting on the minimum age at which they were willing to employ girls, 63 were willing to take workers under sixteen, while 103 required them to be at least sixteen years old. Some refused young girls under sixteen because they objected to being hampered by legal restrictions governing their employment. Others refused them on account of their immaturity and tendency to "fool" at work. Others again stated that the work in their shops was too skilled or too heavy. One employer who had himself been compelled to go to work at fourteen had made it a rule never to employ anyone under sixteen, while another believed that girls should attend school until they were sixteen.

The proportion of children under sixteen years of age among the 1,095 women interviewed was much larger than the census returns of 1910 showed for the total female working population in the city or for those engaged in manufacturing. In the group of Italians studied here, 115, or 11 per cent, were still under sixteen years of age. In 1910 children under sixteen formed only 3 per cent of the total female population at work in New York City, and only 4 per cent of those engaged in manufacturing.<sup>1</sup> The large proportion of children at work

<sup>1</sup> Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910. Vol. IV. Population. Occupation Statistics, p. 574. Of the total 586,193 women gainfully employed, 17,161 were under sixteen. Of the 166,785 engaged in manufacturing, 6,770 were under sixteen.

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among the Italians indicates the need of more information about their conditions of employment.

The number under sixteen varied in different occupations. The largest proportion was found in textile and miscellaneous sewed goods where they were employed for such unskilled work as labeling boxes of ribbons, cutting out Swiss embroidery, or tending shuttles. Their employment was most extensive in occupations where there was simple mechanical hand work which could be easily learned. In candy making they were usually found carrying plats, packing, or tying up boxes. In dress and waist factories they were floor or errand girls, cut off threads or marked for buttons. In underwear houses they did ribboning or trimming.

## SUBDIVISION OF LABOR

One of the most striking features that stood out in visits to shop after shop and industry after industry, was the monotony and unskilled nature of most of the processes, so that there was obviously nothing to learn and no chance for advancement. "Nothing to learn," or "It takes only a few minutes to learn" were frequent comments of employers. When they were asked whether it would be feasible to have the work taught in a trade school, they made such replies as, "It would be superfluous," "The process is too simple to make trade school training wise or useful," or "No training is necessary."

The expert makers of corsets, for instance, have

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been replaced by a group of workers each one of whom does one simple, distinct process. "Coats go through 40 odd processes in the making. There is no such thing as a tailor in the ready-made business now," said a manufacturer. "This specialization has produced better clothing. A man who does the one process all day long is more expert than one who does also 50 others."

In one men's clothing shop the 85 women were distributed over the following list of distinct occupations:

- Basting sleeve buckram
- Basting sleeve linings
- Felling, finishing
- Buttonhole making
- Pulling bastings
- Busheling
- Button sewing
- Canvas padding
- Machine operating
- Padding lapels
- Tacking canvas in pockets
- Felling edge tape
- Tacking facings
- Padding collars
- French felling of collars
- Felling collars in the neck
- Taping armholes
- Thread stitching armholes

In work thus subdivided the prime requisite for success is not any special skill, but speed, and this comes with practice after the worker has been shown how to do the work.



EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
METHODS OF TRAINING LEARNERS

"The forelady showed me once," usually summarized how a girl learned the work, and practice did the rest. Speed, with accuracy, was the only qualification necessary for the slight advancement possible. The problem of learning depends upon the processes within the industry rather than upon the industry itself, as processes require differing degrees and kinds of skill. In the straw hat trade, employers agreed that it took three seasons for a girl to become a good operator, but only a few weeks or a month to become a crown sewer. In the olive industry a girl can learn to wash bottles in a few minutes, to label in a few days, but it requires six months to become a good olive packer. Therefore employers stated that school training might be feasible for some operations. It is significant, however, that employer after employer, in industry after industry, reported that in all the different processes in their establishments there was "nothing to learn" and school training would be unnecessary.

The few employers who had given any thought to the organization of teaching learners or devising a system of advancement were conspicuous because they were rare. An underwear manufacturer employing 50 girls took five or six learners a year. "We almost always take on our girls as learners, and then train them in the way we want things done." The reports of several girls working here showed his statement to be true, but also revealed

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the fact that learners at \$3.00 a week were quite profitable.

Another underwear firm took learners at \$5.00 a week to be taught by a sample maker. A corset factory maintained a school where 20 could be taught at a time. The teacher showed them how to operate the 12 different machines in the room and then let them specialize on one. The training lasted from two to six weeks during which period they were paid \$5.50 a week.

In an ostrich feather factory, where 100 women were employed, learners, who had to be sixteen years old, began at preparing. They could become curlers or sewers at \$10 to \$22 a week. A girl usually showed preference or ability for some special process and she was developed along that line. A skilled girl that had learned here said, however, that one in this trade usually had to learn by watching and trying; it took about two years to become a good curler. In a handkerchief factory where five or six learners were taken on every year, the time for learning was estimated as six or eight weeks. "When I have machine room, I take on learners. Also it must not be rush time because I have to give my time to the training," said the foreman. Learners sixteen years or older in a neckwear shop were trained for three or four months. "It is better to train our own workers. Then they do the work up to our standard. They begin as packers and then do hand-finishing and finally they learn machine operating."

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A plan of progression had been worked out in a paper-box factory. The learner, who might be as young as fourteen years, first covered boxes, then pasted on tapes, put on labels, put in paper lace and tissue paper, did turning-in, and finally became a stripper, which is the best paid process. In one large candy factory, where learners had to be over sixteen years and were paid \$5.00 a week, the manager explained that it cost about \$50 to train a dipper, considering the forewoman's time and spoiled materials.

If a girl wanted to learn buttonhole making in a certain men's clothing factory, the foreman allowed her to sit beside the buttonhole makers and to ask one of them as a favor to show her; or the girl might have a friend who was willing to show her. The owner of a large tobacco factory boasted that every one of the 400 workers in one department had been trained there. He claimed that his was practically the only firm willing to take the responsibility of training learners. Girls paid \$5.00 to the firm to learn, but at the end of a year the amount was returned doubled. He believed that learners could be taught in the factories in co-operation with the schools. In a hair goods factory the system of teaching was described briefly by the investigator as "nagging." The firm tried to hire only those with some experience. A girl was appointed to "nag at them." Whenever they let snarls go through, or allowed knots to be unevenly

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tied, they were corrected. In two months the work had to be perfect.

In some establishments employers had found that it paid to let workers learn more than one process. On the finer grades of dresses, for example, one employer had each worker learn to make the whole garment, as the dainty fabrics could not be passed from one worker to another without injury. Other employers had found that all-round training made better workers, even though the girl worked ultimately only on one process. Workers with such training could be transferred according to need. It was very common, however, to find women and girls who had been in an industry for several years without any opportunity to try any other work than one special process. For example, it was found in some instances that a packer had never done examining; an examiner had never done operating; an operator had never done hand sewing.

Monotony of the work and specialization is no doubt a contributing cause to frequent changing of positions. In a paper-bag factory where the work was very monotonous the force of 17 women was continually changing. Candy manufacturers complained of the instability of their forces. "They stick about a year and then they go into something else."

While some employers emphasized the value of trade school training in developing in the girls a sense of responsibility and industrious habits, when the processes required training and practice, others

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believed it would be impracticable to have the work taught in a school. Expensive machinery would have to be installed, and with new inventions and devices it would be difficult to keep this up to date. There would be, moreover, the serious problem of getting rid of the product. Such important objections point to the need of developing better systems of training in the workroom. A combination of shop and school instruction is beginning to find favor among progressive employers. Actual training in the processes of work within the factory, where the proper machinery and latest devices may be provided, with sufficient raw materials to work upon and with no problem of disposing of the output, may be combined with school instruction. It is doubtful whether any system of trade schools will ever cover adequately all the trades in a city like New York, yet some form of supervision of learners in industry is needed. The responsibility for such training even in the factory should be in the hands of trade school authorities, and ought to be supplemented by school room work and physical education. The specialization in present-day industry is an added argument for better training and preparation for work, unless the worker is to degenerate into a machine knowing only one minute process or motion of an occupation, without understanding its relation to the rest of the work and without ability to shift into any other process.

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### CHOOSING A TRADE

Varied as are the industries which are to be found on the lower west side within a few blocks of the homes of these girls and women, yet each girl when ready to pick out her "trade" or seek a new job, was strangely limited in her opportunity of finding the work she wanted, or for which she might be best fitted. Her "choice" usually consisted in taking what she could get, either through a relative or some kind friend, or through the more uncertain means of answering an "ad" in the *Sunday World* or applying in factories where "help wanted" signs ornamented the entrance. In most cases the sole reason why a girl was in one kind of work rather than another was because a new hand was by chance needed in a shop where a friend of hers was employed. Any personal preferences or ideas as to special fitness for certain kinds of work had to be subordinated to what the concrete job at hand offered. Whether she had to accept this first offer or could afford to wait was determined by the need of her wages at home. This need was usually urgent. Whether she was the native-born girl who had attended a public school and spoke English, or the young immigrant, handicapped by her ignorance of the language, and obliged to accept what any industry or occupation had to offer, there was no opportunity for vocational guidance. The question, "Why did you go into this trade?" sometimes brought for answer a surprised stare, because to the girl it had usually been one of those

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things that "just happened." There was rarely a question of "how." Usually the question met such answers as, "Oh, a friend brought me," "It was the only thing I could think of," or "I just went around by myself, for I didn't have any friend to take me any place." Of 874 who told of how they had secured their first position in New York City, 685, or over three-fourths, had found their first job through some friend or relative. Only 44 had had the advantage of help from a school, settlement, or agency. Without friends, 137 had secured their first position by applying at places advertising for workers, or sometimes even in places that had not advertised.

The selection of a trade in such ways must obviously lead to many misfits. Some employers may unconsciously make way for adjustments by discharging the workers least satisfactory to them, but who may be able to make good elsewhere. Sometimes the worker herself can make a readjustment by finding a better opening. Just as often, however, the misfit continues as long as the woman remains at work. The result frequently accounts for a low earning capacity even after years of wage-earning, an indifference to their tasks, and a readiness to escape from dissatisfying conditions through marriage at the earliest opportunity. A few typical histories will emphasize the small consideration given to selecting a trade at which a woman may continue day after day and year after

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year, although she may be manifestly unfitted for the work.

It was through a friend that Isabella Caroni happened to start at fancy feather making. Though she had been working five years and was nineteen, she had been able to increase her weekly earnings to only \$6.50. Her sister Rose, sixteen years of age, had gone to work at fourteen as a plat carrier in a candy factory a block away, because her cousin was a forewoman there. When visited, she was earning \$6.00 a week but didn't like the trade. "It isn't nice," she said, but she knew of no way of getting into anything else. The oldest sister, twenty-two, was a brush maker working in Brooklyn at \$8.00 a week. A friend had found her this job when she was fourteen. All three sisters had continued in the same shop and trade into which they had been brought by the merest chance, without any regard to liking, special fitness, or intelligence. A younger sister was about to leave school. When the visitor asked her plans she said she was ready to work at anything she could get. Yet all four sisters were born in this city, had attended public schools here, and had not left before they had reached grade 7A. They had not been handicapped by a lack of English as were their two cousins who had just arrived from Italy. These were rag sorters in a place on Hudson Street. Two charming girls of eighteen and twenty, still with robust health from their outdoor life as farm hands, said they could find no better work than this which a



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friend got for them at \$5.00 a week. The work was dirty, the hours long, and the pay small.

Rose Gorgoni's sister complained that Rose had always had such bad luck in finding positions. "She is always going into paper boxes or paper bags, and the girls use awful language in them places." At fourteen, while at school in grade 6B, Rose had been "crazy to go to work," perhaps chiefly because her family had had a hard struggle to get along since the father died. Fortunately the friend who was able to get her a job was at that time willowing feathers. During the next two years Rose worked at a trade having a period of prosperity. But when the demand for willow plumes died down the firm failed and Rose was without a job. Since that time she had been in a variety of positions—selling in a milk station, cleaning and finishing women's suits, glueing paper bags, and doing poorly paid willowing at home while waiting for a friend to find her a job. She never looked for a job herself, as she had no jobless friend to go around with and was "ashamed" to go alone. Besides her mother didn't like her to answer advertisements.

In contrast to this lack of initiative is the record of Nellie, an ambitious milliner of twenty-five who had to leave school at thirteen years of age, when she graduated, because the family could not afford to let her continue. As she could not satisfy her ambition of becoming a teacher she felt that she had a right to choose her own trade. She had always

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been fond of making dolls' hats and chose millinery. For six weeks she worked for nothing in a small millinery shop on Bleeker Street owned by a woman whom she knew. After twelve years of the trade Nellie had become head trimmer in a Broadway wholesale house at \$18 a week. Her intelligent interest in her own work and her trade showed why she had succeeded. Her sister Mary went into the trade because she was in it. Nellie explained that Mary did not have much taste for the trade, but that she had been able to work up to \$13. Another sister, Ida, eighteen years old, was also in the trade, but evidently had no aptitude for the work. The only reason that she was in it was because her sisters were and there seemed little prospect of her rising above her \$6.00 wage as a stock girl.

The experience of two other sisters shows the drawbacks of such accidental selecting of a trade. The older sister, Lizzie, had been a bookbinder for fourteen years, since her father first took her to a little pamphlet place on Walker Street to learn hand folding. She was a paster at \$8.00 a week. Feeling dissatisfied she tried twice to get into something else, and spent half a day at furs, which she found too dusty, and two months at packing candy, which she didn't like. These experiences reconciled her to her fate of \$8.00 a week, especially as she believed that there was no escape. Her younger sister, however, was more ambitious. With a year of high school she developed higher aspirations than

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for factory work and for three or four years spent all her winter evenings studying bookkeeping and stenography and typewriting. She sacrificed all this time so that she might leave the umbrella trade to which her brother had introduced her. At one time, although she was making as much as \$12, she took a position as stenographer at \$6.00 a week. After two such positions, both of which proved temporary, she too had to return to hand sewing on umbrellas. This return had occurred six years ago, but when she was visited she was reviewing her stenography and fondly hoping that some day she might satisfy her ambition. The hope was growing fainter as the doubt grew whether she could ever earn as a stenographer the \$14 which she was earning as an umbrella maker.

When the Cioffari girls went out to work, evidently more discussion took place as to what they should take up than is customary in most families. The father was a bookbinder, but he did not want his daughters in this trade as he thought the work very hard, and the maximum that a girl could make was \$10 a week. Paging would have paid well enough but he knew the work to be unhealthy, as girls had to stand tramping a pedal all day. The mother had been a tobacco worker, but she did not recommend this trade as "there was too much stink." The family had "always" made flowers at home, but Philomena definitely declared that she would never go into that trade, for not only would she have to work all day but all night,

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Sundays and holidays as well. With these trades eliminated, Philomena set out on her search for an occupation. She first got into a candy factory, but left after a month's trial. "You have to change yourself so often. You have to exchange your shoes, for they get all covered with the drippings from the chocolate. It is awfully sloppy." When visited she was trying her hand at fancy feather making, and seemed content chiefly because she did not have to take any work home. Her sister Flora had settled on becoming a dressmaker because she often sewed things for herself, but the nearest she could come to satisfying this ambition was sewing coat ornaments and braids.

Sometimes a girl who had been forced into a job in which she felt she would never succeed, had managed to find her real work. Angelina Palisi, although only twenty-two years old, had become forewoman in a straw-sewing place at \$20 a week. She first began work at the early age of ten and for five years worked in flower making. But she could never make over \$4.50 and considered \$3.50 "grand money." Her family then decided it was time for her to learn a real "trade." She was sent to learn hand embroidery on lingerie in the home of a neighbor. But her hands perspired, the work got dirty, and the sample of work she sent to a factory was returned with word that the work was well done but it was too dirty. For a year she struggled on, trying to overcome this trouble, but at last in despair she seized upon the offer of a

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friend to take her to learn straw sewing. As it was not the custom of the shop to take learners, she was coached by her friend to say she was experienced. It was in this work that she was finally able to succeed.

Lack of education is sometimes the barrier that cuts a girl off from the work that she wants. Kate Borsi, always hating school and never attending regularly, was glad to get a job at stripping tobacco in a cigar factory. Later, however, she developed an ambition to become a telephone operator, but she suddenly discovered that she did not know how to read or write well enough. She was anxious to learn some good trade. Tobacco work she found hard, dirty, and unhealthy. But when she sought a change she came face to face with the problem of her own poor equipment.

Even an immigrant with experience or training in work that she might use here cannot always find an opening, but must turn to other work. One girl who had been here only four months had very unsteady work at hemstitching on ties and veils. She was twenty-three years old and found her wage of \$5.00 meager support. For some time she had worked for only two days a week. She knew how to embroider, but was afraid that she could not do it well enough to suit the "boss." Because she knew no English she was timid about looking for new work, and she had no friends who might help her.

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### SHIFTING FROM JOB TO JOB

The haphazard and indefinite ways in which the women and girls have chosen their work and the difficulties that they meet with in finding a new job when they are laid off means constant changing from one industry to another. Work which requires no skill does not offer much inducement to a worker to make a special effort to advance in it. It is easier to seize the first job that comes her way, even though the work is in a different industry. Although a worker has acquired some skill and speed in a given industry, economic pressure at home sometimes forbids her waiting for another similar opening and she must take the first job she can get, even at a sacrifice of her former experience.

Only 471 of the group of 1,095 had been in but one industry, while almost a third, or 340, had been in two, 147 in three, and 54, or nearly one out of every 20, had been in five or more distinct industries. Times have indeed changed since the reign of Edward III in England when a law prescribed that men could not change their occupations. During the course of two years, sixteen-year-old Maria Viviani had tried her hand in eight such different industries as the making of aprons, straw hats, dress shields, shirtwaists, gloves, underwear, dresses, and silk embroidery. "I have worked in every trade in New York City," exclaimed Emilia, a girl of twenty, as she told of working on women's neckwear, hat pins, suits, children's cloaks, infants' caps, shirtwaists, furs, and dresses. Another

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girl had run the gamut of the trades from packing candy to spooling thread. "I have worked in lots of places. You see, I have been working ten years," she added, as if this fact was in itself an explanation.

**TABLE 36.—SELECTED INDUSTRIES IN WHICH THE ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS INVESTIGATED HAD EVER BEEN EMPLOYED, AND WOMEN IN EACH SPECIFIED INDUSTRY AT TIME OF INVESTIGATION**

Industry	Women employed in specified industry	
	At any time	At time of investigation
Artificial flowers . . . . .	171	94
Feathers . . . . .	180	62
Men's tailored garments . . . . .	129	79
Women's tailored garments . . . . .	86	50
Custom dressmaking . . . . .	62	24
Wholesale dressmaking . . . . .	157	113
Shirtwaists . . . . .	154	51
Muslin underwear . . . . .	68	40
Corsets . . . . .	29	22
Women's neckwear . . . . .	44	21
Children's clothing . . . . .	34	19
Millinery . . . . .	33	11
Infants' caps . . . . .	24	11
Millinery ornaments . . . . .	31	12
Hand embroidery . . . . .	76	42
Swiss machine embroidery . . . . .	25	18
Paper boxes . . . . .	50	29
Bookbinding . . . . .	22	11
Tobacco . . . . .	34	27
Candy . . . . .	136	68
Biscuits and bakery products . . . . .	24	11
Groceries and spices . . . . .	40	15

The table shows that from two to three times as many women have been employed at some time in

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each industry as were employed in them at the time of investigation. Millinery had been tried by 33, but only a third of these were in the trade at the time of investigation. Of course this does not necessarily mean that two-thirds of the girls have left the trade, for a few might have been in temporary work during the slack season. But frequently the temporary job for the slack season becomes the permanent trade, if it is more steady or if, when the season begins in her own trade, no opening occurs. Among those who gave feathers as their trade, two-thirds were also found in some other kind of work. Here the shifting was due to the rapid decline of the willow plume industry which formerly employed many Italians. For them it has meant starting anew in something else.

This shifting has advantages and disadvantages to industry and worker alike. It is a consequence of the lack of training, or of vocational guidance. Under the present haphazard methods by which the employer chooses his workers, and the worker her trade and employer, the shifting may represent sometimes the elimination of an unsatisfactory worker from an industry; sometimes the abandonment of an undesirable trade on the part of the worker. It is a crude trial method of finding the best worker for a trade and the best trade for a worker. Where the readjustment is voluntary on the part of the worker to advance to better work or wages the shifting is a good sign. Even if a woman does not leave of her own accord, but is



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laid off, it sometimes becomes the occasion when she feels justified in making a change which she would not have risked by voluntarily giving up a job. Where it is due to shiftlessness and a desire for novelty in change of work, it becomes a more serious matter.

But the most serious situation is faced when the worker, having acquired a certain valuable experience in her trade, is forced to enter a new industry. With no other means at her command than the advertisements in the daily paper, a limited knowledge of the location of the shops in her own trade, and without any information on prevailing labor or market conditions, she must unaided make a readjustment for herself in the vast field of industry in New York City. On the one hand, if she is the carefully guarded girl in the Italian home where the family assumes a protective attitude and forbids her going about alone in search of a job, she must wait until friends, with their limited opportunities, can help her. Sofia Caruso, a Sicilian girl closely guarded by her conservative parents, when asked whether she liked buttonhole making replied, "I would like to be in another trade, but I never had any friend to take me to any other trade."

On the other hand is the more independent girl who buys the morning *World* or *Il Giornale Italiano*, and applies in factory after factory until she finds a position. "I am never out of work long," said an unusually pretty, energetic girl. "I get the papers and go out in the morning. Sometimes

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I get into queer places, but I'm not afraid." Nevertheless, she took the precaution of getting acquainted with other applicants at the door.

From the foregoing pages it will be seen that the problem of selecting the industry and occupation by which a worker expects to earn her living is one of the most serious that faces both the native-born Italian girl who leaves a New York school to go to work and the immigrant woman. Only within the last few years has there been an awakening to this vital weakness in our industrial system; with it a beginning has been made toward solving the problem through proper vocational guidance. Schools, settlements, and other organizations in touch with these young workers are realizing that they must be helped to select an occupation for which they are fitted, and a suitable job or place of employment. Employers have been filling their work shops with children just out of school, absorbing their time and strength without giving them any training in return. The adult immigrant faces similar difficulties. Thus the industrial histories of both immigrant and native-born workers point to the urgent need of more effective and economical methods of solving this problem of selecting an occupation, closely connected as it is with other fundamental problems of industry and labor.

## CHAPTER XI

### READJUSTMENT

**I**N a cosmopolitan city like New York the industrial problems of any one nationality are inextricably bound up with those of other nationalities and with the working population as a whole. Italian women face conditions of employment and living in New York similar to those which confront women from other countries. Italians formed only a third of the working force in the establishments investigated in this study, but the whole group of women of which they were a part worked the same hours, under the same conditions, and experienced the same uncertainty of employment with the change of seasons. Testimony of employers and observation of investigators showed that Italian women were engaged in the same processes and at the same wages as their fellow-workers. Any attempt, therefore, to understand and improve conditions for them will forward the movement for women workers as a whole.

The discouraging picture disclosed by following these Italian women into their homes and into their workshops presents an indictment, therefore, not of their personal standards but rather of the social

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and industrial conditions that are permitted to exist. Filled with hope for emancipation from the poverty which in Italy had dragged them down until their only way out had been to hazard a fresh start, they came, some with their families, some without, only to find that they were unable to free themselves from their heavy burdens, and that in addition they were deprived of the fresh country air and the wide spaces of their native villages. Crowded together story upon story in insanitary tenements, often in only three or four rooms, these women and their families enjoyed none of the "modern conveniences" that we associate with American city life.

Because the fathers know neither English nor the opportunities which industry might offer them, they are likely to drift into unskilled labor, often so casual that they spend more time idle than employed. Their earnings, poor at best, do not give a margin sufficient, when they are out of work, to cover even the cost of food for their families. The mothers, in order to add a few dollars to the family income, often work as janitresses for the tenement in which they live, besides spending any spare moments during the day making artificial flowers or doing other home work. In the evening the whole family, even the three-year-old toddler, helps with the flowers. The children, both boys and girls, take out their working papers as soon as it is legally possible for them to leave school. If the daughters are old enough when

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they reach this country they immediately enter a factory, without having had the contact with American life which a year or two in the public schools would have given them. The factories afford them little opportunity for learning our customs or advancing beyond the particular task they are set to do. Here they encounter the present-day tendency toward specialization. Instead of being allowed to make a whole garment, or even a whole box, they are set to doing, hour after hour, a single more or less mechanical subdivision of a process. The simpler the process the more deadly becomes its constant repetition. Quantity, not quality, is required.

Few provisions are made by their employers for the well-being or comfort of these Italian workers. Inadequate fire protection, poor lighting and ventilation, lack of seats, in combination with long hours of work, often increased by illegal overtime and night work, impair their vitality. Very seldom are the shops equipped with lunch rooms where the brief respite at noon may be spent. In fact, lunches are often eaten at the machines. If sufficient time is given to leave the workroom, the women can exchange the close atmosphere of the factory only for the noise and bustle of the street. Moreover, the earnings from their long hours of work under unhealthy conditions are not only pitifully small but also very irregular. Never free from the strain of trying to make a few dollars cover all their absolute needs,

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they are underfed, wretchedly housed, ill clad, and able to look forward to no secure future.

Employed, as they are, chiefly in seasonal industries, without either a general education or training for any particular trade, these girls are doomed to a weary round, first looking for a job, then overworking during the busy season when they can get work, and laid off when it is slack. Often marriage does not free them from this anxiety and grinding poverty; it merely changes their work and adds children to their burden. The Italian woman is also handicapped in her efforts to adjust herself to her new life because of Italian traditions and ideas. Regarded by her family primarily as a homemaker, she is usually denied any opportunity for self-improvement beyond the most elementary education. Nor is she allowed to participate in civic or social activities, and is therefore cut off from all contact with American life. Such are the conditions under which Italian women and those of other races, working side by side with them, live and labor. Seldom are they able to reach even a minimum of decency and comfort, while the great majority of them have to struggle against a series of obstacles which they individually are powerless to overcome.

One of the points clearly illustrated by this study of Italian women is the fallacy and waste of a *laissez faire* policy in dealing with our immigrant workers. The results of this policy, especially in industry, have been brought home to us by the

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stoppage of immigration and the entrance of the United States into the world war. The retarded production of ships, planes, and munitions has shown us the need of an organized and stable labor force, united in its purpose and willing to put its shoulder to the wheel with its whole strength. And it is with something of a shock that we have waked up to the true situation as regards immigrant labor. We have permitted aliens to live among us for twenty or thirty years who have learned little more about our institutions, our ideals or our standards than they knew when they landed. Except for attempts here and there under private or public auspices to establish evening classes where English and sometimes civics and history are taught, we have made no comprehensive provision for giving them a knowledge of our institutions.

On the lower west side, in the Italian section where the women lived who were included in this investigation, there was but one evening school, situated between tall factories dark at night. Nor throughout the city was there a single day school for minors between sixteen and twenty-one years of age where English for foreigners was taught. Very few of these Italian women and girls or those studied by the International Institute had supplemented their education by attending evening schools. The chief reasons given for their non-attendance were the fatigue resulting from a long day's work and the Italian convention

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which forbade their walking on the streets alone in the evening. The frequency with which the former objection was heard raises the question as to whether it would be wise to make attendance at evening classes compulsory.

In addition to our failure to offer these immigrants adequate opportunities for bettering themselves we have not sought to discover what their assets were on their arrival. We have let them shift for themselves as best they might. What trade training they have had has not been put to use. For example, few of the Italian women investigated who had learned to do fine hand embroidery in Italy were employed on a process where this knowledge was of value to them. Although a number were employed in the needle trades, the majority were doing unskilled finishing.

By this policy of *laissez faire*, then, we have failed to teach them our language, to familiarize them with our customs, or to make use of the assets which they have brought with them. But worst of all, we have let die that ambition and precious spirit of initiative which led these immigrants to come here. While we have been busy arguing about literacy tests for their admittance, we have been ignoring the much more vital problem of what to do with them after their arrival. Whether an immigrant can read a few words of his own language when he reaches this country, or whether he can give a verbal definition of democracy is not the important point; but whether



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he can speak and read our language after a period of two or three years and whether he then understands our institutions and knows our laws—this should be our chief concern.

Fortunately there is a brighter side to the picture. We have lately become alive to our shortcomings, and with our usual energy are trying to overcome them. Comprehensive plans for assimilating the immigrant are now being made by various organizations on a nation-wide scale. The Department of the Interior, through the State Councils of Defense, aims to reach every community where there is a colony of foreign-born and to teach them English, civics, and other subjects that will develop a better understanding of their new country. In New York State the Department of Education is extending a system of evening classes, already long established, especially in New York City, and has put before the legislature acts which are intended to aid this work.<sup>1</sup> One of the chief efforts of the New York State Woman's Suffrage Party is the Americanization of foreign-born women to fit them to be more

<sup>1</sup> The state legislature has voted an appropriation of \$20,000 to the Commissioner of Education "to organize, maintain, and operate training institutions and regular courses of study in connection with the state normal institutions and in the cities of the state, for the purpose of training regular public school teachers and others in the best methods to be pursued in giving instruction to illiterates over sixteen years of age."

Another act requires that non-English speaking and illiterate minors between sixteen and twenty-one years of age shall attend some public day or evening school or some school maintained by an employer. The acts fall short in that they make no provision for the establishment of such public day or evening schools.

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intelligent voting citizens. A study of Americanization, or "Fusion of Native and Foreign-Born," undertaken by the Carnegie Corporation, will enable us to see just what progress we have already made on this vital question and how best to continue the work.<sup>1</sup> These are but a few of the measures now being taken to weld into a homogeneous nation the foreign with the native population, not only of this great city, but of the country at large.

A knowledge of English is, of course, but the first step on the way. It is the key by which the immigrant can understand our customs and ideals; but until social and industrial conditions which are beyond his individual control have been bettered, so that in his own life he can reach some of our standards, his assimilation is incomplete. Here his problem merges into that of all workers, whether foreign or native born. Hitherto organized labor as a whole has been inclined to view the immigrant as a hostile, ignorant competitor. If, instead of assuming this attitude, trade unionists were to teach him to co-operate in their efforts to better conditions of work and to promote sounder relations between employer and employe, they would help to reach the goal of an "all American" nation at the same time that they were strengthening their organization. In New York City some

<sup>1</sup> This will cover such subjects as schooling for the immigrant (adult and juvenile), adjustment of home and family life to new conditions, naturalization and political training, industrial and economic amalgamation, and contributions from the immigrant.

## READJUSTMENT

progress has been made in organizing foreign-born women, though among the Italians it has been slow. Recognizing the danger to their standards in the employment of newly arrived Italian women, ignorant of the language and trade conditions, women unionists in the garment industries have made it a part of their work to teach these women and to urge them to join their organizations. Their efforts bore fruit in the men's clothing strike in 1910, when women who could not speak a word of English stuck loyally to the strike to the end, even at great personal sacrifice. Such instances as this prove that sincere and well-directed efforts toward organization are likely to meet with a ready response from these women.

The state also can do its part in fostering better living and industrial conditions by setting up certain legal minimum standards for the protection of the health and welfare of its workers. To be effective, however, legislation must not only be adequately enforced by representatives of the state but must have the co-operation of employers and employes alike. It is essential, in order to gain this co-operation, that all workers be instructed in the provisions of the laws. For immigrant workers this is especially necessary. A beginning in this work has already been made by the Consumers' League of New York City, which has been co-operating with girls' industrial clubs and other groups of working girls, both to teach the terms of the labor law and to arouse the in-

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terest of the girls to help in their proper enforcement. More educational work of this character should be done by trade unions, clubs, settlements, and evening schools on the one hand, and by far-seeing employers on the other. These efforts which are an essential part of any Americanization program should not be confined to instruction concerning the labor law, but should include also information as to industrial opportunities and as to the maintenance of high industrial standards.

This investigation of Italian women has shown very clearly the need for better means of adjustment than have heretofore been provided through the efforts of either the state or organized labor. Instead of chance friends to show her what jobs are open to her, what wages she should accept, and what conditions she may expect, the Italian woman, in common with other immigrants, needs bureaus of information and employment which shall not only provide a job promptly but shall be able to fit her into a suitable occupation. The United States Employment Service, as recently expanded, should do much to meet this need. Strong, healthy, and ambitious men and women who come to this country with a great capacity for work, are assets too valuable for us to waste. The power of these people should not be allowed to deteriorate for lack of direction to proper employment, or by their acceptance of lower wages and worse conditions than would be accepted by

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workers more familiar with American standards. Employment for long hours at low-grade work on small wages prevents them from taking advantage of educational opportunities, or of sharing, in any real sense, in American life. It is a vicious circle that can be broken no more effectively than by the establishment of minimum standards of employment for all workers.

The war has emphasized the necessity for adopting such standards. The government, as the largest consumer, assumed the responsibility not only for establishing but also for enforcing them. It has been formulating new regulations of industry and appointing new boards to administer particular phases of industrial problems. The recruiting of workers for war industries, for instance, has been centralized in the system of federal employment offices which has been extended over the entire country. Home work on soldiers' uniforms has been abolished; minimum standards of shop conditions, where government work was carried on, have been defined. The principle of a basic eight-hour day has been accepted; wage scales, adequate for a standard of decent living, have been established; and the right of workers to organize has been affirmed. If the government has thought it important to take such steps in war time for the purpose of improving and speeding production, in time of peace it will be equally essential to efficiency to maintain such standards as shall have stood the test.

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It is clear, then, that while a study of women workers of any of the immigrant nationalities is a study of a special class, the problems that confront the particular group will never be solved until we attack along the entire industrial front. The maladjustments and the inequalities of industry, root causes of industrial unrest, must be entirely removed in order to make decent living and an opportunity for the development of happy, useful citizens more generally possible. The chief point of difference between the problem of the native and of the immigrant worker, man or woman, is found in the fact that the foreigner, as a rule, gets the very worst end of an already bad bargain. This is in large measure due to his or her ignorance and the lack of effective effort on our part to dispel it. But after all it is a question solely of degree of difference. The problem for either alien or native worker is fundamentally the same; that is, to secure a fair share of the fruits of his labor, under conditions conducive to enjoyment of them. Under the pressure of war some significant steps toward this goal have been taken. We must see to it, however, that during the troublous period of reconstruction such constructive gains as have emerged in spite of the waste of the great war shall not be lost, but shall be made the basis of further progress toward industrial justice.

## **APPENDICES**





## APPENDIX A

### SUPPLEMENTARY STUDY OF ITALIAN WOMEN

**T**HIS study was undertaken for the purpose of supplementing the investigation of Italian working women by the Division of Industrial Studies described in the foregoing pages. It is based on records of visits made by agents of the International Institute for Young Women of the Young Women's Christian Association to 894 newly arrived Italian women during the year extending from July 1, 1912, to July 1, 1913. The purpose of the International Institute, as stated in its annual report, is "to give protection, instruction and advice," as soon after landing as possible, to all immigrant girls who arrive alone in New York. Their names are secured at Ellis Island from the ships' manifests. Each girl is then looked up by an Institute visitor, who speaks her language, and whose object in calling is not so much to record information regarding the girl as to help her in adjusting herself to her new surroundings.<sup>1</sup>

#### COMPOSITION OF GROUP

The composition of this group of Italian women is different from that of the slightly larger one investigated by the Division of Industrial Studies. The 894 women visited by the International Institute were all born in Europe, and were at least fourteen years old when they came to the United States. On the other hand, of the 1,095 visited in the larger investi-

<sup>1</sup> A copy of the card used to record the visit will be found on page 327 of Appendix B.

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gation, though all were of Italian parentage, only 599 were themselves Italian born, and of this number only 373 came to the United States after reaching the age of fourteen, so that about one-third only of this second group is of a similar composition and in the strictest sense comparable with the International Institute group.

At the time when the International Institute information was gathered, the women had been in this country from periods varying from three days to one year, 29 per cent having been here less than one month, 64 per cent less than two months, and 81 per cent less than three. This study, therefore, shows the conditions that exist among our most recent immigrant women, these Italians having had, of course, hardly time to become adjusted to their new surroundings. It shows us the characteristics of the group as a whole—the age, family relationship, and education of the women, their background in their native country, how it has shaped their lives, what gifts and burdens it has given them to bring to their new homes, and the social and industrial strata in America into which they have drifted.

## AGE AND CONJUGAL CONDITION

First, these immigrants are for the most part young. One reason for the preponderance of younger women in this group is doubtless that being young, they were not bound by such family bonds as keep older women tied down to their homes. They were freer to come and go alone. Furthermore, it was easier for them to uproot themselves from accustomed surroundings and adapt themselves to the transplanting in new ground. The fact that it is younger women who predominate among wage-earning women in general points to the likelihood that the majority of these women, attracted by tales of industrial prosperity, had come here to work. Table 1 gives their ages.

The ages ranged from fourteen to fifty-six years, but of the 891 reporting as shown in the table, 712, or 80 per cent, were

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under twenty-five, and of the 179 who were twenty-five years old or older, 147 were under thirty-five, and only two were over thirty-nine.

TABLE 1.—AGES OF ITALIAN WOMEN INVESTIGATED BY THE  
INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE, JULY 1, 1912—JUNE 30, 1913

Age	Women	
	Number	Per cent
Less than 16 years . . . . .	1	.1
16 years and less than 18 . . . . .	217	24.4
18 years and less than 21 . . . . .	302	33.9
21 years and less than 25 . . . . .	192	21.5
25 years and less than 35 . . . . .	147	16.5
35 years or more . . . . .	32	3.6
Total . . . . .	891 <sup>a</sup>	100.0

<sup>a</sup> Of the 894 women investigated, three did not state age.

As a natural corollary to the youth of the majority was the large proportion of unmarried women; 92 per cent were single, and only 8 per cent married, widowed, or deserted. Furthermore, of the married women, about one-half had been married since their arrival in the United States, the expectation of marriage having been the cause of their coming to this country.

## NATIVITY

Though the women with a few exceptions were Italian born, they came from different sections of Italy. Because of differences in the character of the people from the various provinces, it is worth while to note the districts of their nativity. Table 2 gives these facts.

A distinct trend in the Italian immigration of the last few years is shown in the large number coming from Sicily. Almost half of the entire number, or 48.8 per cent, were Sicilians. The other two large groups—southern Italians and northern Italians—are about equal in number, but their combined sum

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is slightly less than the group from Sicily. The southern Italians, however, because of similar racial characteristics,

TABLE 2.—DISTRICT OF NATIVITY OF ITALIAN WOMEN INVESTIGATED BY THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE, JULY 1, 1912—JUNE 30, 1913

District of nativity	Women	
	Number	Per cent
Sicily . . . . .	413	48.8
Southern Italy <sup>a</sup> . . . . .	199	23.5
Northern Italy <sup>a</sup> . . . . .	195	23.0
Central Italy . . . . .	27	3.2
Other countries <sup>b</sup> . . . . .	13	1.5
Total . . . . .	847 <sup>c</sup>	100.0

<sup>a</sup> Southern Italy includes Calabria, Apulia, Basilicata, and Campania. Northern Italy includes Piedmont, Lombardy, Venetia, Emilia, Liguria, and Tuscany. Central Italy includes Abruzzi and Molise, Latium and Marches.

<sup>b</sup> Other countries include Austria, France, Spain, and Sardinia.

<sup>c</sup> Of the 854 women investigated, 47 stated that they were born in Italy, but did not state the district of nativity.

should properly, if they are grouped at all, be put with the Sicilians rather than with the northern Italians. If this is done, we have almost three-fourths of the total number in these two groups, which it is generally conceded, contribute a less desirable element to our population than do the northern Italians.

## LITERACY OF THE WOMEN

A study of the literacy of the women in relation to the district in Italy from which they came reveals the fact that Sicily contributed an undue proportion of illiterates as compared with the various districts of the mainland. The Sicilians formed 68 per cent of the total number of illiterates, although they were only 48 per cent of the entire group studied. The facts regarding literacy are shown in Table 3.

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TABLE 3.—LITERACY OF ITALIAN WOMEN INVESTIGATED BY THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE, JULY 1, 1912–JUNE 30, 1913, BY DISTRICT OF NATIVITY

District of nativity	Women who were				All women
	Literate		Illiterate		
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	
Sicily . . . . .	216	55.4	174	44.6	390
Southern Italy . . .	122	66.3	62	33.7	184
Northern Italy . . .	180	92.8	14	7.2	194
Central Italy . . . .	21	84.0	4	16.0	25
Other countries . . .	10	83.3	2	16.7	12
Total . . . . .	549	68.2	256	31.8	805 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Of the 804 women investigated, 46 records did not give the district of nativity, 42 did not give information as to literacy, and one had no information on either of these points.

Forty-five per cent of the women born in Sicily could neither read nor write their native language or any other, while among the southern Italians the proportion was 34 per cent. On the other hand, central Italy had only 16 per cent illiterate, and northern Italy only 7 per cent.

The ability to read and write must be accepted as the measure of the girls' education, since the information called for on the cards regarding schooling was found to be too variously interpreted to be of great value. The records show that 281 girls had attended "primary" school, and two "high school"; but the Italian and American school systems are too widely divergent for us to be able to judge the education of these girls according to American standards of high and primary schools. For 216 women we have information as to the number of years they were in school. These periods varied from one to ten years, with the largest number, 94, attending for three years, the next, 47 for five years, and the third in size, 39 for two years. Two hundred and seventy-two women had never attended school and 107 gave no information whatso-

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ever on this point. Ten girls reported their age at leaving school, and five made such vague statements as "teacher's education," or "little." The only summary possible from such uncertain data is that of the 787 women giving any information on this question, 515, or 65 per cent, had attended school of some kind, and 272, or 35 per cent, had never attended school. The test of literacy though crude is, therefore, most valuable in corroborating the more or less inaccurate information as to the school education of the entire group. The figures in Table 3 show 31.8 per cent of illiterates, which bear out the proportion (35 per cent) who had never attended school. Of the 68.2 per cent who were literate, the literacy represents a knowledge of Italian, not English. Out of the total of 894, only five had even a speaking knowledge of English.

## REASONS FOR EMIGRATION

Some insight into the home surroundings from which these girls came can be secured from the mere recounting of the reasons for their having left them. That 646 came because of economic reasons is significant, even though these reasons may not in all cases imply actual economic pressure. That pressure is implied in a great majority of cases is substantiated, however, by the statements made by the women, which were a monotonous repetition of "hard times," "poor living conditions," "family needed help," or "father unable to support family." Of this group 279 emigrated to begin their work careers; 238 who had already worked in Italy had hopes of earning higher wages here; 86 for the express purpose of making money to help or to support entirely their families in Italy; 24 wanted to earn enough money for a dowry; and 19 found the field of work in Italy too narrowly circumscribed, and were seeking more varied opportunities in "pastures new." All the 646 girls needed to earn a living. More than half of the 894 women had worked in Italy before coming to this country, but 401 had never done so. The occupations of those who had been employed in Italy were in

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- order of importance, dressmaking, farm work, domestic or personal service, textile manufacturing, hand embroidery, and a small group of miscellaneous unrelated occupations of such variety as fruit peddling, teaching, and the manufacture of matches. An interesting fact which indicates an adaptation of employment to season is the item "dressmaking in winter; farm work in summer," thus showing how these women solve their seasonal problem. Practically no trustworthy data on wages were available, although occasionally such entries as "6 cents a day," "10 cents a day," "14 cents a day," or even "20 cents a day," show the extremely small sums earned.

The other reasons for coming to this country have been classed together as personal, for though the element of economic pressure might have entered in, the cause was family and social relationship. The largest group in this class had wished to join relatives already here. The large number in this group shows the strong family feeling of the Italian. Sometimes a sister came to keep house for unmarried brothers, sometimes a girl left alone through the death of parents came to an aunt or uncle who had settled here; sometimes a girl homesick for a certain member of her family came to join him or her, entering the industrial field here instead of in Italy. The next largest group came to find husbands. Two-thirds of the women had definite prospects in view, a number marrying immediately after landing, while the remainder cherished hopes that after arriving here they might find a man who would want to marry them. They were for the most part in the twenties and early thirties—ages at which, according to Italian standards, the prospects of marriage are getting slimmer and slimmer, as the ideal of Italians is an early marriage for their women. Another cause for immigration was the death of a parent or husband which led the woman in question to desire a change of surroundings, as well as wider opportunities for self-support. Sometimes unhappy home conditions—maltreatment by a father,

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dislike of a stepmother—led the girl to leave home; a few naively said that curiosity to see this country had brought them here. Table 4 shows the reasons given for coming to the United States, by age groups.

**TABLE 4.—REASONS FOR COMING TO THE UNITED STATES OF ITALIAN WOMEN INVESTIGATED BY THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE, JULY 1, 1912-JUNE 30, 1913, BY AGE**

Reason for coming	Women who were						All women
	Less than 16 years	16 and less than 18	18 and less than 21	21 and less than 25	25 and less than 35	35 years or more	
<b>ECONOMIC REASONS</b>							
To work or make more money	1	129	177	117	74	19	517
To help family in Italy	..	20	36	16	11	3	86
To earn dowry	..	2	6	12	4	..	24
To find different work	..	7	5	3	4	..	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>646</b>
<b>PERSONAL REASONS</b>							
To join relatives	..	29	40	12	17	4	102
To get married	..	5	17	23	26	2	73
Family death or quarrel	..	14	13	6	9	4	46
Miscellaneous	..	8	6	2	2	..	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>239</b>
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>885<sup>a</sup></b>

<sup>a</sup> Of the 894 women investigated, three did not state age, and six did not give reason for coming to the United States.

A large number of women twenty-five years of age and over came here for economic causes. We are apt to think that the young girls come to work, and the older women to join their families. It is true that the women twenty-five years of age and over formed a larger percentage of all those coming for "personal reasons" than of those coming for "economic reasons." On the other hand, however, 64.2 per cent of them came here to begin or to continue their work careers, a proportion large enough to be significant, though the percentages in the younger groups are higher—74 per cent among those under eighteen years, 74.7 per cent among



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those between eighteen and twenty-one, and 77.5 per cent among those between twenty-one and twenty-five. As among the younger women, some of these older ones had had experience in a trade, and some had never worked before. The fact, however, that a large proportion of these did come with the expectation of engaging in gainful occupations is evidence that we have not only the young inexperienced immigrant girl to deal with in questions of women's work, but also the older, often inexperienced, and usually unskilled woman.

### DEPENDENTS

The financial burdens, aside from self-support, which these women brought with them were often very heavy. Only 86 gave definitely as their reason for coming to this country that they had to help support their families, but an analysis made of those dependent on them shows that 164 had relatives in Italy wholly dependent on them for support, and 266 had relatives partially dependent on them. Only five were supporting anyone in the United States. This makes a total of 430—almost half the entire number—who were obliged to stretch their meager earnings to cover their own living expenses and a contribution to the support of their families in Italy. This dependence of a large number of families either partly or wholly on the earnings of their women members is only another indication of the poverty-stricken homes from which they came. It means, too, another handicap in their struggle in the industrial world which they entered upon their arrival in this country. The knowledge that others were relying for their bread and butter on her earnings made a girl readier to accept the first work and wages which were offered. And the privations which she had to undergo because of her reduced income for personal maintenance made her less fit to endure the strain of daily work.

A smaller number had yet another financial burden to carry—that of debt contracted for passage money. About 20 per cent, or 175 of the 881 reporting, had borrowed the

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money with which they paid for the journey to the United States. With the exception of 11 cases this money was loaned by relatives. The debt did not have to be paid back immediately, or in a lump sum, as is shown in the note reappearing frequently on the cards—"must pay back as she is able"—but it was a definite obligation which was a further drain on her small income. A few who had contracted no money debt for their passage had to pay for it in service. These were not counted in the number who borrowed money for that purpose. One girl whose passage had been paid by her present employer had to work for him at a nominal wage as a domestic servant. Another whose aunt and uncle undertook the expense of bringing her to New York had to bear the entire burden of the housework in their boarding-house without receiving any remuneration except her maintenance. The husband of another woman, who was still in Italy, paid her passage, and in return she had to earn enough money to pay for his. When visited she was working in a factory at \$4.00 a week.

Of course a much larger number—608 in all—had their passage paid by some member of the family without their incurring any obligation to repay this outlay. Ninety-eight women used their own money, one selling some property she owned in Italy in order to raise it.

## RELATIVES IN THIS COUNTRY

Though these women had all crossed the Atlantic alone, in all except 19 cases where they were met by friends, and in two where the girl was met by her fiancé, they were "discharged" by the Ellis Island authorities to relatives—over half of them to brothers and sisters, about a fifth to aunts or uncles, and the rest to cousins. Almost all these women thus had relatives sufficiently interested to undertake the responsibility of their not becoming "public charges." A tabulation of their nearest relatives living in New York, as given in Table 5, shows slightly different results.

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TABLE 5.—NEAREST RELATIVE IN NEW YORK CITY OF ITALIAN WOMEN INVESTIGATED BY THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE  
JULY 1, 1912—JUNE 30, 1913

Nearest relative	Women
Father or mother . . . . .	22
Husband . . . . .	34
Brother or sister . . . . .	568
Aunt, uncle or cousin . . . . .	253
Child . . . . .	2
None . . . . .	14
Total . . . . .	893 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Of the 894 women investigated, one did not give information on this point.

Only one girl was discharged to her father and none to her mother, but 22 had one parent or the other living in New York. Thirty-four had husbands here at the time of investigation, but only 17 at the time of arrival, while not one had been discharged to her husband. The group of sisters and brothers is even larger in this classification than in the other, and of aunts and uncles somewhat smaller. Only two women had children in New York, but 21 had left them in Italy to be taken care of by relatives, though in every case the mother was to send money back for the support of the child, even though it had been left in the care of its father. Only 14 had no relatives in New York. The fact that practically all these women did have some family ties in this city is important, first, because it is a strong factor in keeping them from scattering to different parts of the United States, and, second, because it determines the character of their social life, and even of their wage-earning activities. The first is demonstrated by the fact that only four women went farther than New York in seeking their new homes.

In regard to the home surroundings of these women we have already seen that almost all had relatives here. Only 29, when visited, were living in what is considered the normal family group; that is, made up of mother, father, and children.

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In only four households was the head the father of the girl, and in 25 her husband. Table 6 shows the relation to the girls of the heads of the households in which they were living at the time of investigation.

**TABLE 6.—RELATIONSHIP OF HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS TO ITALIAN WOMEN VISITED BY THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE JULY 1, 1912—JUNE 30, 1913**

Relationship of head	Women	
	Number	Per cent
Father . . . . .	4	.5
Husband . . . . .	25	2.8
Sister or brother . . . . .	258	29.0
Brother-in-law . . . . .	187	21.0
Aunt or uncle . . . . .	199	22.3
Cousin . . . . .	132	14.8
Other relatives . . . . .	6	.7
Friend . . . . .	50	5.6
Employer . . . . .	29	3.3
Total . . . . .	890 <sup>a</sup>	100.0

<sup>a</sup> Of the 894 women investigated, four records did not give information on this point.

The largest group was living with brothers and sisters. It constituted 29 per cent of the total, which, added to the 21 per cent of brothers-in-law, makes a total of 50 per cent living with brothers and either single or married sisters. Of the other groups, that made up of the women living with their employers is, though small, the most interesting. They were in all cases engaged in domestic service. Some had their headquarters at a cousin's or friend's house where they probably went on their "days off." It is noteworthy, however, that these relatives or friends rarely knew the name or address of the girl's employer, and hence would have had no way of tracing her had she dropped out of sight. Five employers were also relatives who kept boarding-houses and found it profitable to have a relative as general houseworker, judging

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from the wages paid to these women who, according to their own reports, were doing the greater part of the work of the entire house. Three out of the five received only maintenance in return for their very taxing labors.

### COST OF ROOM AND BOARD

Data regarding that important part of a working girl's budget—the amount paid for board—are always difficult to secure with any degree of accuracy, or for very large groups. In the case of the International Institute records this is true. Because of variety in the manner of statement, the impossibility of measuring some of the estimates in money, and the large number not giving any information on this point, it was found impossible to tabulate the material so as to give fair or just results. One point, however, of special interest is that a large number of these immigrant Italian girls had gone to homes where they did not have to pay board for a time, at least, after their arrival in this country. Ninety-two had free board without any restriction, with relatives or friends, though this number included about 20 women living with and supported by their husbands. For 135 it was "free at present," meaning probably that it would be free until employment was secured or adjustment to new conditions effected; 123 gave in return for board some slight service or help with the housework. Again, we have the women in domestic service whose board was part of their wages. There was also a small group of 39 who shared expenses equally with those with whom they lived. Amounts actually given for board were ridiculously small. Furthermore, in all instances, the recipients of this money were relatives or friends. Indications were that these Italian girls were not heavily taxed for their living expenses, and were really subsidized by their relatives and friends who had already settled here, for surely the latter could not have found it profitable to board anyone for \$1.50 or \$2.00 a week, which were the amounts given in a majority of the 230 cases recorded. These data,

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then, while they prove nothing definite concerning either the average or the minimum cost of living for other immigrant working girls, showed that the expenses of these Italians for food and shelter were negligibly small; and while this fact made it easier for them to make both ends meet, it also made it easier for them to accept a wage that would mean starvation to a girl who had to support herself entirely through her own efforts, thus tending to keep down the level of women's wages.

## AMERICANIZATION

Of their desire to become Americanized something can be learned from their attitude toward joining the English classes of the International Institute. Of those who expressed themselves on the subject 466, or 54 per cent, desired to join a class to learn English; 33, or 3 per cent, were undecided as to whether they wished to enroll or not; 370 women, or 43 per cent, did not care to join. The fact that so large a percentage of the entire group did not care to grasp this particular opportunity of learning the language of their new country does not necessarily imply that they were altogether indifferent to learning it, although of the entire number only five already had a knowledge of the language. While a certain apathy exists among this class of immigrant girls toward taking what means are at hand for their assimilation in our American life, a powerful extenuating circumstance is to be found in the long hours that they work, which leave them little energy for an evening of study. Some of the reasons given by those not joining the classes bring out interesting facts and standards. A large number found the Institute classes too far away to attend, and some girls were probably already attending classes in the public evening schools. It is noteworthy that though 31.8 per cent of the entire group were illiterate, the illiterate women formed as much as 51 per cent of those not joining and only 16 per cent of those who did join. Many of the women who thought English "too hard" or themselves "too old" to learn were of this illiterate group.

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Of 23 who considered themselves "too old," five were between twenty-five and thirty years of age, 11 between thirty and thirty-five, and seven between thirty-five and forty-two. It is probable, therefore, that the added handicap of illiteracy was a factor in assigning this ground.

### OCCUPATIONS

Of the industrial life of these women the records give perhaps the most significant information. We have already seen that about half had already worked at some gainful occupation before coming to the United States. After their arrival in this country an even greater number—608, or 70 per cent of those reporting—were employed at some paid work, and 135 more were hoping to obtain employment, though they had not been able to do so at the time of the investigator's visit. Only 111 did not intend to work, and of this number, 92 had not worked previously. Table 7 correlates the occupations of these women in Italy and America.

Of the 203 women who had been employed at dressmaking and other kinds of sewing in Italy, 121, or almost three-fifths, were working in the manufacture of clothing in America. As the majority of this group in the clothing trades were hand finishers rather than machine operators, the connection between the occupations here and in the "old country" is evident. The second largest occupational group in Italy, that of 144 farm workers, naturally found no similar labor in this city. The largest section from this group was found in the tobacco industry, the second in the clothing trades, and the third in laundry work. In the other occupational divisions the groups were too small to indicate a trend. Of the 11 women who had been engaged in hand embroidery, a really skilled occupation in Italy, only one continued in it in the United States. Of those employed in domestic service in Italy, about one-third continued that work in this country. Another interesting feature of this correlation of the two occupations is the large number, 131, working in the clothing

# ITALIAN WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

trades who had never before been gainfully employed, an apparent indication of the unskilled nature of these trades.

TABLE 7.—OCCUPATION IN THE UNITED STATES OF ITALIAN WOMEN INVESTIGATED BY THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE, JULY 1, 1912-JUNE 30, 1913, BY OCCUPATION IN ITALY

Occupation in the United States	Women whose occupation in Italy was							All women
	None	Sewing	Hand embroidery	Textile manufacture	Farm work	Domestic and personal service	Miscellaneous	
<b>MANUFACTURING</b>								
Clothing . . .	131	121	6	6	20	11	1	296
Artificial flowers and feathers . . .	10	4	..	..	4	..	1	19
Headwear . . .	..	..	..	..	2	..	2	4
Hand embroidery . . .	14	4	1	1	..	..	..	20
Tobacco . . .	13	6	..	2	41	2	..	64
Candy . . .	13	5	..	..	4	2	..	24
Other food-stuffs . . .	13	..	..	..	1	1	1	16
Paper goods . . .	3	1	..	1	3	..	..	8
Textiles . . .	3	4	..	1	..	..	..	8
All other manufacturing . . .	6	1	..	1	3	1	..	12
<b>Total . . .</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>471</b>
<b>DOMESTIC AND PERSONAL SERVICE</b>								
Domestic service . . .	5	2	..	1	9	21	1	39
Laundry work . . .	14	7	..	1	15	5	1	43
Hotel and restaurant work . . .	2	..	..	1	7	3	..	13
Day's work . . .	..	..	..	..	..	2	..	2
Hairdressing . . .	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
<b>Total . . .</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>STORE WORK</b> . . .	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>HOME WORK</b> . . .	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>NOT YET WORKING</b> . . .	<b>62</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>135</b>
<b>NOT INTENDING TO WORK</b> . . .	<b>92</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>111</b>
<b>Grand total . . .</b>	<b>401</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>854*</b>

\* Of the 894 women investigated, 40 did not give information as to their occupation either in Italy or in the United States.



## SUPPLEMENTARY STUDY OF ITALIAN WOMEN

The small number employed in stores in this country is readily explained when the ignorance of the English language prevailing in the entire group of women is taken into account.

As to the method of securing their positions, it is a case of the exception proving the rule. Out of the 608 women gainfully employed when visited, only four had secured their positions through agencies—all of these in domestic service—and only three through advertisements. All the rest who gave information on this point had obtained work through either relatives or friends. Hence it may be seen how important both these are in the industrial as well as in the social life of an immigrant. They make every possible effort to get a "job" for their newly arrived sister, niece, or cousin.

As might be assumed from the unskilled nature of the work at which most of these women were engaged, the wages were low. Of the 608 women gainfully employed, 493 gave information as to the "pay"<sup>1</sup> received; but 41 of these, employed in domestic service, received entire or partial maintenance in addition to their money wage, and hence have been omitted from the wage tabulation. The nine home workers who stated their earnings have also been left out, as for obvious reasons their "pay" is not comparable with that of women working outside the home. After deducting these two groups, a total of 443 is left whose wages were stated. For this number the median wage was \$5.49. Table 8 gives the facts as to wages.

This table brings out the prevalence of a low wage scale for the type of work in which these women were employed on first arriving in this country. As many as 63.6 per cent were earning less than \$6.00, and 90.9 per cent less than \$8.00 a week. When we consider that \$9.00 has been generally accepted as the lowest wage on which a girl can live in New York City and maintain a decent standard, the small propor-

<sup>1</sup> With the week workers this "pay," as it is called on the record card, was evidently the wage rate, and with the piece workers it denotes the *usual* earnings. Of 421 women stating method of payment, 291 were week workers, and 130 piece workers.

# ITALIAN WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

tion of these women, only 9.1 per cent, earning \$8.00 or more shows more vividly than anything else could, the hopeless

TABLE 8.—WEEKLY WAGES OF ITALIAN WOMEN INVESTIGATED BY THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE JULY 1, 1912—JUNE 30, 1913

Weekly wages	Women employed in		All women	
	Clothing trades	All other occupations <sup>a</sup>	Number	Per cent
Less than \$3 . . . . .	3	13 <sup>b</sup>	16	3.6
\$3 and less than \$4 . . . .	23	16	39	8.8
\$4 and less than \$5 . . . .	47	62	109	24.6
\$5 and less than \$6 . . . .	62	56	118	26.6
\$6 and less than \$8 . . . .	81	40	121	27.3
\$8 and less than \$10 . . . .	19	15	33	7.5
\$10 and less than \$12 . . . .	2	3	5	1.1
\$12 or more . . . . .	2	..	2	.5
All women . . . . .	239	204	443 <sup>c</sup>	100.0

<sup>a</sup> Includes tobacco, 56; all other manufacturing occupations, 95; domestic service, 48; stores, five.

<sup>b</sup> Twelve of these were learners not paid while learning the trade.

<sup>c</sup> Of the 894 women investigated, 256 had not yet found employment or were not intending to work, 186 did not give information as to pay, and nine were employed at home work.

inadequacy of their wages. Only 36.4 per cent, a little more than a third, earned even \$6.00 or more. Throughout all the industries and occupations in which these girls were employed the same low level of wages prevails. It has, therefore, not seemed worth while to divide the second group in Table 8 into its smaller component parts. The preponderance of workers in the clothing trades is so great that they have been separated from the rest, although the distribution of wage groups is much the same as in the other occupations. The significant fact brought out by the table is not so much the kind of industries in which the women were engaged as that so large a proportion of those belonging to a nationality as

## SUPPLEMENTARY STUDY OF ITALIAN WOMEN

important in immigration as the Italian were not receiving even a bare subsistence wage. Despite the low standard of living which prevailed to a great extent in this group, it was inevitable that these women, unable to live on their own earnings, should be subsidized either by their relatives, as has been seen in the matter of board and lodging, or by other means.

Among those earning less than \$3.00 were the 12 girl apprentices in the tobacco industry. They were paid nothing while learning the trade. In fact almost all of them had paid \$5.00 for the privilege of learning this trade.

An evidence that ignorance of our customs placed these women at a disadvantage in the labor market is found in the statement made frequently by girls who had just started work, that they did not know what their "pay" would be, as their first pay day had not come around yet. Apparently there was no understanding on this point when the position was first secured.

The weekly hours of work could not be obtained from the records, since they did not show whether Saturday was a short working day. In a majority of the cases, however, the daily hours were given. These were from eight to six o'clock, or from seven forty-five to five forty-five, with an hour off at noon. There was a great number of variations from the usual day, however, always tending to longer rather than shorter hours. The most flagrant example of exhaustingly long hours was the case of a sixteen-year-old girl, who worked as a shaker in the laundry of a large and fashionable hotel. She started at five-thirty in the morning and worked until eight-thirty at night with an hour's intermission at noon—a total of fourteen hours' steady labor. For this work she was paid \$6.00. This was an extreme case, but many of these poorly paid immigrant girls worked excessive hours in factories, to say nothing of those engaged in domestic service.

To sum up the industrial data which these records give, we have in this group typical young immigrant girls, many of them

### ITALIAN WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

illiterate, going to work immediately after their arrival in more or less unskilled occupations at extremely low wages, which they were able to accept only because they could rely for actual food and shelter on relatives already here, and from which they often had to send a goodly sum to help support relatives in Italy. Thus, instead of raising their standard of living to that of the new country to which they had come, often with high hopes, they were forced to remain at their own lower level, or even to sink below it. This group happened to be Italian, but the facts are probably true of any similarly constituted group of immigrant women of the other nationalities which form the mass of our newer immigrant stock.

HENRIETTE R. WALTER.

**APPENDIX B**

**RECORD CARDS USED IN THE  
INVESTIGATION**

- A.—INVESTIGATOR'S RECORD OF WORK PLACE**
- B.—WORKER'S RECORD OF FACTORY**
- C.—RECORD OF WORKER**
- D.—WORK HISTORY**
- E.—HOUSEHOLD OF WORKER**
- F.—WEEKLY INCOME OF FAMILY**
- G.—WEEKLY EXPENDITURES**
- H.—RECORD USED BY INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE**



# B.—WORKER'S RECORD OF FACTORY

NAME OF FIRM		ADDRESS		BUSINESS DEPARTMENT		FLOOR
NAME OF WORKER		ADDRESS		DATE OF ENTERING, LEAVING	NATIONALITY	DATE OF BIRTH
PROCESSES OF WORK		POSTURE AT WORK				
TRAINING IN WORKROOM		BY WHOM GIVEN		KIND OF WORK		LENGTH OF TRAINING
WEEKLY WAGES		T. P.	T. P.	T. P.	T. P.	T. P.
FIRST IN THIS ESTABLISHMENT, LAST		MAXIMUM WITHOUT OVERTIME		MAXIMUM WITH OVERTIME		IF STILL HERE, WAGE LAST WEEK
FINES		CHARGES FOR SUPPLIES		VACATION WITH PAY		NO. WEEKS
RATE FOR LATENESS		SPOILED WORK		OTHER		
REGULARITY IN PAST MOS.		VACATION, HOLIDAYS (WITHOUT PAY)		ILLNESS (SELF)		OTHER CAUSES
WEEKS LOST IN THIS JOB, DUE TO		BLACK SEASON		PART TIME		TIME IN OTHER JOBS
HOURS OF LABOR		A. M.	P. M.	HR.	TOTAL DAILY	HRS.
NOMINAL BEGIN		END	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	SUPPER	MIN.
OVERTIME		P. M.		P. M.		HRS.
NUMBER OF TIMES PER WEEK		CLOSURE	HR.	DAY	WEEKLY	SEASON OF OVERTIME IN YEAR
HOME WORK		KIND		HOURS		EARNINGS
WORK ROOM		LUNCH ROOM PRIVILEGES		DRESSING ROOM		TOILET (CONDITION)
ILLEGAL EMPLOYMENT OF WORKER		LIGHTING		DRINKING WATER		
DATE		INVESTIGATOR		SOURCE OF INFORMATION		
COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S WORK. FORM 12, DEC. '11.—WORKER'S RECORD OF FACTORY						

# C.—RECORD OF WORKER

SURNAME		FIRST NAME		ADDRESS		FLOOR	EMPLOYMENT	
AGE		DATE OF BIRTH (MONTHS) NO., DAY YR.		CONJUGAL CONDITION		NATIVITY		YEARS IN U.S. IN NEW YORK
REASON FOR COMING TO NEW YORK						DISTRICT CITY OR COUNTRY?		
NATIVITY OF FATHER		DISTRICT		NATIVITY OF MOTHER		DISTRICT		OCCUPATION BEFORE COMING
SCHOOLS ATTENDED (STATE PLACE)		FOREIGN		U.S. NOT N.Y.C.		N.Y.C. (CHECK) PRIVATE, PAROCHIAL, PUBLIC		
LAST SCHOOL		PLACE		NAME OR NUMBER		GRADE		DATE OF LEAVING, AGE
YEARS IN SCHOOL		REASON FOR LEAVING		DATE OF BEGINNING WORK		DATE OF WORKING PAPERS		
WORK BEFORE LEAVING SCHOOL								
HOME WITH FAMILY (CHECK)		FATHER		MOTHER		SISTERS		BROTHERS
HUSBAND		CHILDREN		RELATIONSHIP TO HEAD OF FAMILY		BOARDING PLACE		CONSPY WITH
MEMBERSHIP		TRADE UNION		DUES		CHURCH		CLUB
WEEKS OUT OF WORK IN PAST YEAR		DUE TO SLACK SEASON		PART TIME		VACATION		HOLIDAYS (WITHOUT PAY)
BUDGET		ESTIMATED YEARLY INCOME		EARNINGS IN PAST WEEK (PAST WEEK)		CONTRIBUTION TO HOME		INSURANCE
PHYSICAL CONDITION		DEFECTS NOTED		COMPLAINT		LUNCHES		SPENDING MONEY ALLOWED
REFERRED TO		FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT		FOR WORK		FOR OTHER AID		
NAME GIVEN BY		LANGUAGE SPOKEN		BY WORKER		MOTHER		OTHER RECORD FORM NO.
DATE		INVESTIGATOR		SOURCE OF INFORMATION				
COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S WORK. FORM 4, DEC. '11. WORKER								







# F.—WEEKLY INCOME OF FAMILY

SURNAME		FIRST NAME		ADDRESS		EMPLOYMENT			
NAME OF ALL WORKERS	EMPLOYMENT	WEEKLY EARNINGS	AMOUNT OVEN TO HOME	DATE WORKED	EMPLOYMENT	WEEKLY EARNINGS	AMOUNT OVEN TO HOME	DATE WORKED	
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
WEER EENDING		TOTAL		TOTAL INCOME	TOTAL		TOTAL INCOME		
OTHER SOURCES OF INCOME: AMOUNT					OTHER SOURCES OF INCOME: AMOUNT				
RELATIONSHIP TO HEAD				DATE WORKED				DATE WORKED	
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
WEER EENDING		TOTAL		TOTAL INCOME	TOTAL		TOTAL INCOME		
OTHER SOURCES OF INCOME: AMOUNT					OTHER SOURCES OF INCOME: AMOUNT				
INTERVIEW BY		DATE		INVESTIGATOR					
COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S WORK		FORM T. JAN. '18		WEEKLY INCOME OF FAMILY					
SOURCE OF INFORMATION									

# G.—WEEKLY EXPENDITURES

SURNAME	FIRST NAME	ADDRESS	EMPLOYMENT
RENT			
HEAT AND LIGHT			
FOOD			
MEALS BOUGHT OUTSIDE HOME			
CLOTHING			
CARE FOR WORK			
FURNITURE			
HEALTH			
INSURANCE			
GUNS, GIFTS, ETC.			
PERSONAL EXPENDITURES			
OTHER			
WEEK ENDING			
SAVINGS			
TOTAL EXPENDITURES			
INTERVIEW NO.		DATE	INVESTIGATOR
COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S WORK, FORM B, JAN. '18—WEEKLY EXPENDITURES		SOURCE OF INFORMATION	

# H.—RECORD USED BY INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC		Date Arr. _____ Date Vlt. _____	
SURNAME		FIRST NAME	
INST. NO.		DATE	
COUNTRY OF BIRTH		AGE	
RACE		S. M. W. D.	
ADDRESS		F. R.	
NAME		FLOOR	
TO:		RELATIONSHIP	
AMOUNT		ADDRESS	
NAME		WHAT ORN. HOPED TO FIND	
CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO		R. R.	
S. S.		OBLIGATIONS FOR	
HOW RAISED		IN EUROPE	
REL. IN AMERICA:		NAME AND ADDRESS RESPONSIBLE RELATIVE	
F. M. S. R. H. CH. V. A. G.		MUST SUPPORT	
LIVING CONDITIONS:		FURNISHINGS	
INDOOR C. I. D.		PAYS:	
LIVING WITH:		IN EUROPE	
NAME OF HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD		FOR BOARD FOR LODGING	
MEMBERS OF HOUSEHOLD:		EXTRA SERVICE	
N. W. CH.		SHARED WITH	
BOARDERS—LODGERS:		COMMENTS:	
MEN		WOMEN	
OCCUPATION:		EMPLOYED BY	
INDUSTRY		ADDRESS	
KIND OF WORK		T. OR P.	
BEGIN		END	
NOON		PAY	
HOW SECURED		IN EUROPE	
IN AMERICA		A. M.	
P. M.		W. L.	
MO.		MO.	
DESIRED		WHAT TRAINING FOR:	
NAT.		ENG.	
OTHER LANG.		LITERACY:	
CHURCH		NAT. SOCIETY	
ATTENDS		BENEFIT	
SPEAK		WOULD LIKE TO	
WRITE		DESIRES TO JOIN ENGLISH CLASS	
SCHOOLING IN EUROPE:		WHEN	
HEALTH:		RECORDED	
INFORMANT (GIRL) OF:		VISITOR:	
Form 1. Immigration Work—National Board of Young Women's Christian Associations		NO.	
BIRMINGHAM CO., N. Y. 1920			

## APPENDIX C

**TABLE 1.—PERSONS PER ROOM IN HOUSEHOLDS OF ITALIAN  
WOMEN WORKERS**

Persons per room	Households of women coming from			Persons in households of women coming from		
	Sicily and southern Italy	Central and northern Italy	All districts	Sicily and southern Italy	Central and northern Italy	All districts
Less than 1 person . . . . .	9	10	19	28	30	58
1 person but not more than 1½ persons . . . . .	107	85	192	524	436	960
More than 1½ persons but less than 2 . . . . .	50	27	77	337	176	513
2 persons and less than 3 . . . . .	126	59	185	985	475	1,460
3 persons and less than 4 . . . . .	25	5	30	232	46	278
4 persons and less than 5 . . . . .	8	1	9	83	9	92
Total . . . . .	325	187	512 <sup>a</sup>	2,189	1,172	3,361
More than 1½ persons						
Number . . . . .	209	92	301	1,637	706	2,343
Per cent . . . . .	64.3	49.2	58.8	74.8	60.2	69.7

<sup>a</sup> Of the 544 families, 16 did not report both number of rooms and total persons in household, and 16 more did not state district from which they came.

# SUPPLEMENTARY TABLES

TABLE 2.—SIZE OF FAMILIES OF ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS,  
BY DISTRICT OF ITALY FROM WHICH THEY CAME

Persons per family	Families from				All families
	Sicily	Southern Italy	Central Italy	Northern Italy	
2 members . . .	6	5	..	12	23
3 members . . .	7	21	3	19	50
4 members . . .	13	28	3	28	72
5 members . . .	6	37	4	27	74
6 members . . .	14	42	3	20	79
7 members . . .	10	36	6	23	75
8 members . . .	5	33	4	23	65
9 members . . .	2	26	2	10	40
10 members . . .	3	7	1	2	13
11 members . . .	4	14	1	3	22
12 members . . .	..	9	..	1	10
13 members . . .	1	2	..	1	4
14 members . . .	..	1	..	..	1
Total . . .	71	261	27	169	528 <sup>a</sup>
More than 6 persons					
Number . . .	39	170	17	83	309
Per cent . . .	54.9	65.4	62.9	49.1	58.5

<sup>a</sup> Of the 544 families, 16 did not report district from which they came.

TABLE 3.—CONTRIBUTORS TO THE INCOME OF FAMILIES OF  
ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS

Contributors per family	Families
1 contributor . . . . .	8
2 contributors . . . . .	94
3 contributors . . . . .	159
4 contributors . . . . .	129
5 contributors . . . . .	87
6 contributors . . . . .	37
7 contributors . . . . .	16
8 contributors . . . . .	7
9 contributors . . . . .	4
10 contributors or more . . . . .	3
Total families . . . . .	544

# ITALIAN WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

TABLE 4.—WEEKLY WAGES OF FATHERS IN FAMILIES OF ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS, BY REGULARITY OF EMPLOYMENT

Weekly wages	Fathers whose employment was		All fathers
	Regular	Irregular	
Less than \$5 . . . . .	1	1	2
\$5 and less than \$8 . . . .	9	3	12
\$8 and less than \$10 . . . .	7	4	11
\$10 and less than \$12 . . . .	21	15	36
\$12 and less than \$15 . . . .	18	5	23
\$15 and less than \$20 . . . .	24	17	41
\$20 and less than \$25 . . . .	3	4	7
\$25 or more . . . . .	5	2	7
Total . . . . .	88	51	139 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Of the 287 fathers employed as wage-earners, 137 did not report weekly wages, and 11 did not give information on regularity of work.

TABLE 5.—YEARS IN THE UNITED STATES OF ITALIAN-BORN WOMEN WORKERS, BY AGE AT COMING AND ABILITY TO SPEAK ENGLISH AT TIME OF INVESTIGATION

Years in the United States	Women who at time of coming were				All women		
	Less than 14 years		14 years or more		Speaking English	Not speaking English	Total
	Speaking English	Not speaking English	Speaking English	Not speaking English			
Less than 1 year . . . . .	..	1	..	91	..	92	92
1 year and less than 2 . . . . .	..	1	4	70	4	71	75
2 years and less than 5 . . . . .	7	1	12	72	19	73	92
5 years or more . . . . .	214	2	58	66	272	68	340
Total . . . . .	221	5	74	299	295	304	599



# SUPPLEMENTARY TABLES

TABLE 6.—WEEKLY HOURS OF WORK INCLUDING OVERTIME  
OF ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS, BY INDUSTRY

Industry	Women who worked				All women
	54 hours or less	More than 54 but not more than 60	More than 60 but less than 70	70 hours or more	
Manufacturing					
Flowers and feathers . . .	3	17	12	1	33
Men's and boys' clothing . .	2	6	7	1	16
Women's tailored garments . .	4	16	2	..	22
Dresses and waists . . .	15	54	15	..	84
All other women's and children's clothing . .	5	24	16	..	45
Paper goods . . .	5	9	4	2	20
Candy . . .	..	4	17	5	26
Tobacco . . .	3	7	2	..	12
Headwear . . .	..	3	3	..	6
Textiles and miscellaneous sewed materials . .	2	10	14	..	26
Miscellaneous manufactured goods . . .	1	10	9	..	20
Store and office work . .	2	4	3	2	11
Total . . .	42	164	104	11	321 <sup>a</sup>
Number	13.1	51.1	32.4	3.4	100.0
Per cent					

<sup>a</sup> Of the 367 women who had worked overtime, 46 did not supply information as to weekly amount of overtime.

# ITALIAN WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

TABLE 7.—WAGES OF LARGEST GROUP OF WOMEN IN FACTORIES INVESTIGATED, BY INDUSTRY

Industry	Shops in which wages of largest group were								All shops
	Less than \$6	\$6 and less than \$7	\$7 and less than \$8	\$8 and less than \$9	\$9 and less than \$10	\$10 and less than \$12	\$12 and less than \$15	\$15 or more	
Flowers and feathers . .	1	..	1	1	4	7	3	3	20
Men's and boys' clothing . .	..	..	3	4	9	6	2	..	24
Women's tailored garments . .	1	..	..	..	1	1	7	5	15
Wholesale dressmaking . .	..	..	..	2	..	4	1	2	9
Muslin underwear and corsets . .	..	..	1	1	3	8	6	1	20
All other women's and children's clothing . .	..	..	3	5	5	8	9	1	31
Paper goods . . . .	2	4	4	8	3	1	1	..	23
Tobacco . . . . .	..	..	..	..	..	5	..	..	5
Candy and other food-stuffs . . . .	..	7	11	5	1	1	..	..	25
Headwear . . . . .	..	..	..	2	..	5	2	5	14
Textiles and miscellaneous sewed materials . .	..	1	5	14	6	5	3	..	34
Rubber, fur, and leather goods . . . . .	..	..	5	2	3	2	1	1	14
Miscellaneous manufactured goods . . . .	..	1	1	1	..	1	1	..	5
Laundry . . . . .	1	..	1	2	..	..	..	..	4
Total . . . . .	5	13	35	47	35	54	36	18	243
Number . . . . .	2.1	5.4	14.4	19.3	14.4	22.2	14.8	7.4	100.0
Per cent . . . . .									

# SUPPLEMENTARY TABLES

TABLE 8.—MONTHLY RENT PAID BY FAMILIES OF ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS

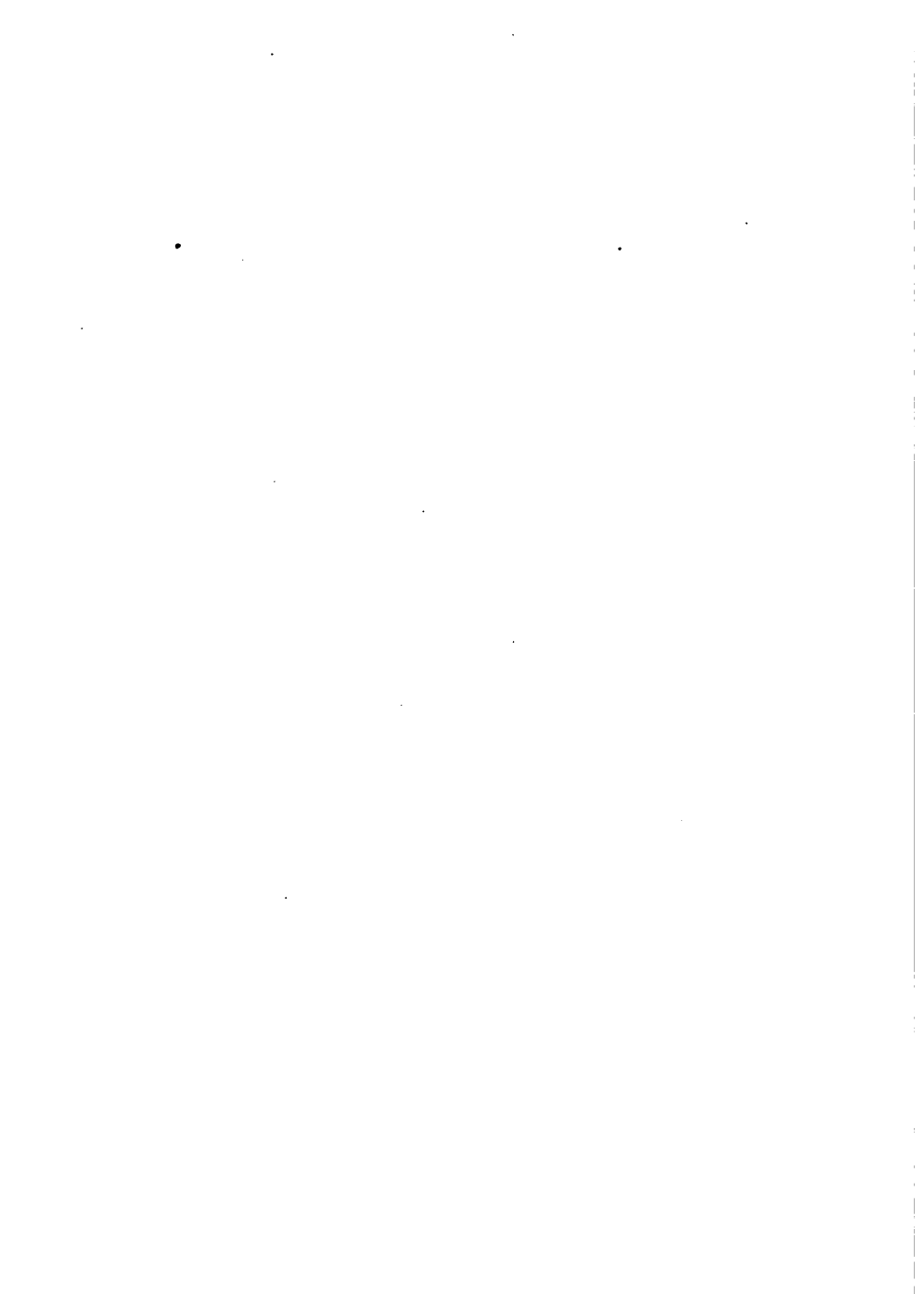
Monthly rent	Families
Less than \$10 . . . . .	26
\$10 and less than \$12 . . . . .	44
\$12 and less than \$14 . . . . .	82
\$14 and less than \$16 . . . . .	93
\$16 and less than \$18 . . . . .	95
\$18 and less than \$20 . . . . .	58
\$20 and less than \$25 . . . . .	71
\$25 or more . . . . .	33
Total . . . . .	502 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Of the 544 families investigated, three owned their own homes, 10 leased the whole tenement house in which they lived and sublet to other families, 14 were receiving rent in return for janitor service, two lived in the rear of stores, and 13 did not state amount of rent.

TABLE 9.—AGE AT LEAVING DAY SCHOOL OF ITALIAN WOMEN WORKERS, BY LOCATION OF LAST SCHOOL ATTENDED

Age at leaving	Women who last attended day school in			All women
	New York City	United States outside New York City	Italy	
Less than 10 years . . . . .	3	..	17	20
10 years and less than 11 . . . . .	3	..	21	24
11 years and less than 12 . . . . .	5	2	37	44
12 years and less than 13 . . . . .	31	1	65	97
13 years and less than 14 . . . . .	67	3	29	99
14 years and less than 15 . . . . .	397	6	32	435
15 years and less than 16 . . . . .	120	3	14	137
16 years or more . . . . .	34	..	8	42
Total . . . . .	660	15	223	898 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Of the 1,095 investigated, 99 did not state age at leaving, two had returned to school, one had last attended school in Brazil, leaving school at twelve years of age, and 95 had never attended school.



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