

DEPARTMENT STORE GIRLS DEMAND CHANCE TO FIGHT THEIR OWN BATTLES

WHEREAS, The evidence given during the past two weeks before the senate committee of Illinois, investigating white slavery and its causes, has strikingly emphasized low wages as the greatest single cause of vice;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That this meeting respectfully urge the clergymen of Chicago and vicinity of all denominations to make, on Palm Sunday (being the last Sunday in Lent), an appeal to their congregations asking them to support a minimum wage law for women and also to encourage the organization of women as an indispensable means of raising their industrial standard.—The cry of the working women of Chicago to the churches.

There never was a more significant meeting held in Chicago than that of the underpaid working women held last night in Musicians' hall, 175 West Washington street.

And it wasn't so much because of any one thing that was said at the meeting. It was because of the spirit of the women who listened.

The meeting was called a mass meeting. But it had been arranged on a few days' notice, and the big department store and factory owners had fought any spreading of the news of the meeting among their employees viciously.

Yet long before the hour set for the first speaking, Musicians' hall was crowded to the doors with women workers.

Young girls, mere children, with fresh complexions and shining eyes; old women, bowed with toil, their eyes dulled with the long years of it; small women and big women; well dressed women and shabby women.

But all of them with the same look on their faces—a look of weariness, with hope and the sense of their own chance to fight for themselves, shining through it.

And the meeting was not what anyone expected.

It had been thought the women would get together; that they would timidly pass resolutions begging the legislature to help them; appealing to

the MEN of Illinois to do something for their sisters—an ordinary sort of here-we-are-let-somebody-else-do-the-rest meeting.

But it wasn't anything like that at all.

They began by singing songs, and all of the 800 of them stood on their foot to join in the choruses. And they finished by standing up together and singing "My Country, 'Tis of Thee." And you could see in their faces that they were thinking more of their country than ever they had done before, and more of what their fight would mean for their country than what it might mean for their own individual selves.

And through the words of every speaker rang the courage of women who had prepared themselves and were ready to fight, and to fight hard.

There wasn't any begging for help. True, they passed one resolution that might read that way. But if you read that resolution, addressed to the churches of Chicago, a second time you will see that it just asks the churches to ask the men of Illinois to keep their hands off and give the women a chance to do something for themselves, a chance to organize, a chance to fight.

That's really all these tired looking women with the new hope in their faces, asked—a chance to fight their own battles, a chance to or-