

PREFACE.

SOME two years since, having been commissioned by the chief of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor of this Commonwealth, to make certain inquiries as to the conditions of homes and employments of working-people whereby their health might be unfavorably affected, I had my attention called, while visiting a factory near my home, to the marvellous rapidity of the digital manipulations required by the processes of a light manufacture conducted by girls. A reflection upon the possible physiological tendencies of such extreme celerity opened a wide door of inquisitive thought; and the interest thus awakened, heightened by the immediately subsequent appearance of Prof. Edward H. Clarke's "Sex in Education," which contained much bearing directly upon the subject, stimulated a wider study of the true relations sex sustains to industry.

The very considerable effort involved in such further inquiry was undertaken, with many misgivings, for the Bureau referred to ; and its results have appeared in part in its annual report for the current year. The earnest interest and encouragement of Hon. Carroll D. Wright, chief of the Bureau, who from the first has manifested a deep concern in the investigation of the subject, and the more than generous co-operation of Prof. Clarke, have prompted this attempt to place in a form for more general consideration the facts thus obtained on this subject of daily-increasing importance. I have made free use of the wisdom and experience of others throughout this little monograph, believing that the testimony of many strong ones is better than the assertion of a single observer, which, however careful and veracious, taken alone, might be deemed the over-expression of an enthusiast or specialist. I have not hesitated to speak with directness, or to call things by their right names, believing the cause of truth to be best served thereby. That the subject is full of difficulties, the most casual thinker cannot but perceive. In approaching them I have endeavored to keep both the present

and future in view, woman's material and spiritual worth, her enforced position, and her true intent. I shall be more than compensated for whatever of time and labor I have expended, if my rushlight shall have discovered any path that shall lead into broader day. Of my inability to deal with so broad a subject, except in the most ephemeral way, and the many evidences of this that this little volume contains, I am well aware. I have made no attempt at assuming Saul's armor, and shall be amply compensated if any of "the smooth stones from the brook," I have thrown from a novice's sling, may have found a vulnerable point in a giant wrong.

WAKEFIELD, April, 1875.

