

## **POISONED BY NICOTINE.**

### **Movement for the Relief of Girls Employed in Tobacco Factories.**

From the Chicago News-Record.

Reclaiming children from a slow death by nicotine poisoning is a work which Mrs. Florence Kelley, the state factory inspector, has undertaken. She has discovered that over 1,000 boys and girls are employed in cigar factories and tobacco packing establishments in Chicago. Without exception, where the child has worked in the factory for any length of time his physical condition has been found to be most lamentable. The tobacco has affected the eyes, the skin is yellow, almost green, from the effects of the nicotine, and there are disorders which medical examination has shown to prevail in eight cases out of every ten.

Since the establishment of the state inspection of factories, medical certificates of the health of their employees under 16 years of age have been required from the owners of cigar factories and wholesale tobacco houses. In this way the physical standard of the cigar factory children has been bettered, but still is in such a state that Mrs. Kelley thinks that radical measures are necessary. The illiteracy of the children is unprecedented in any other branch of employment. Of twelve boys and girls who have recently applied for certificates, not one could read or write. For the most part they are of Polish parentage and come from exceedingly poor homes.

At some of the factories in the city the children are required to work ten and twelve hours a day. Many of the parents of the children have complained and steps are being taken for the prosecution of employers for violation of the eight hour law. At a tobacco factory on Michigan street the records of the factory inspector's office show that eighty-nine girls and three boys under 16 years of age are employed. In another on Dearborn street fifty-three girls are employed in the stripping of tobacco leaf and packing of cigars. About the city there are several score of factories where from ten to twenty children are hired.