

**RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION.
SALESWOMEN
IN MERCANTILE
STORES, BALTIMORE, 1909**

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Russell sage foundation. Saleswomen in mercantile stores, Baltimore, 1909 by Elizabeth Beardsley Butler

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ELIZABETH BEARDSLEY BUTLER

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SALESWOMEN
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BALTIMORE, 1909

BY

ELIZABETH BEARDSLEY BUTLER

AUTHOR OF "WOMEN AND THE TRADES"

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P R E F A C E

I N the latter part of 1908 the Consumers' League of Maryland, desiring to prepare a "white list" of stores, asked the Russell Sage Foundation to send Miss Elizabeth B. Butler, who had recently investigated for the Pittsburgh Survey the conditions under which Pittsburgh women worked,* to make a similar study in mercantile stores in Baltimore. The Foundation readily acceded to this request, believing that it offered an opportunity to obtain important information that would be of general value. The investigation was begun in January, 1909, on a co-operative basis. The Consumers' League of Maryland paid Miss Butler's salary and expenses for the months during which she was engaged in the examination of stores in Baltimore, while the Foundation assumed the responsibility for her report and for its publication.

While this report deals only with one set of industrial conditions in a single city, it seems wise to publish it. It tells facts which are accessible to only a few people and presents the particular situation in Baltimore comprehensively. It is

* See Butler, Elizabeth B: *Women and the Trades*. (The Pittsburgh Survey.) Russell Sage Foundation Publication. New York, Charities Publication Committee, 1909.

PREFACE

hoped that the volume will enable the public as well as employers in Baltimore to understand local working conditions better and lead them to give more thoughtful attention to questions affecting employes and store management; it will be suggestive to other cities, and is an example of fair and careful work which should be imitated elsewhere. Sweeping conclusions must not, however, be rashly drawn from so limited a study. For a wider view the interesting volume entitled *Wage-Earning Women in Stores and Factories* recently issued by the United States Department of Commerce and Labor should be consulted. This gives in more condensed form facts gathered in various cities.

During the months that were spent in this investigation, Miss Butler got a clear and comprehensive view of Baltimore stores, of their plans and methods of operation and of the people who formed their working forces. She was quiet and thoughtful and thorough, sympathetic and ready to enjoy all sorts of people and so made friends in all ranks. All who have worked with her feel that the cutting short of her career by tuberculosis has taken from them a valued friend and from society a valuable worker.

JOHN M. GLENN

General Director, Russell Sage Foundation

INTRODUCTION

MERCANTILE establishments employ a large proportion of the women wage-earners of this country. Although the types of saleswomen vary from district to district, from city to city, yet the requirements for salesmanship in all cities are fundamentally the same. Whether they chance to be in small houses or in large, saleswomen are in great measure in a class by themselves. Reaction against the idea of the department store, demand for the finer sort of merchandise, and appeal to an exclusive trade, have brought into being many specialty shops, but their greater specialization in merchandise does not as a rule mean that a more thorough knowledge or a more professional attitude is required of their employes. The saleswoman in a small specialty house or in a neighborhood store is a cog in a small wheel, just as the saleswoman in a department store is a cog in a large wheel. In both cases, the duties of her occupation are for the most part the same.

This occupation, simple as it appears, involves prompt personal adjustments and quick understanding. It is upon the intelligence of the saleswoman, and upon her attitude to the customer,