

CHILD-LABOR.

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INTRODUCTION.

Under the title of the labor problem are embraced all those diverse social movements, breaking out here in one form, and there in another, which are stirring all society to improve the welfare of the people, and to remedy the many apparent injustices of the modern social organization. It has been treated by writers voluminously, but not as yet in an exhaustive and economic manner. Political economy is, however, rapidly proving itself a science, whose laws can be applied to the solution of practical problems. Political economy of to-day is practical rather than philosophical, dynamic rather than statical. The theory of the proper functions of the state has in the past received profound consideration by deep and able thinkers, but as yet no generally accepted creed has been formulated. The attitude of the state towards industrial interests is one of the prominent elements to be considered in a treatment of all social problems. It is however such a wide subject that one answer for all cannot be given. Each problem must be governed by the peculiar circumstances of the case.

Government has had new tasks thrust upon it in late years, with no precedent to guide it in its course. With the greater complexity of business transactions, and the concentration of power in the hands of a few, to directly, or indirectly, affect the welfare of thousands, has arisen the necessity of state supervision of some sort. The line of demarcation between

interference with individual freedom, and the protection of the helpless in their freedom, and the consequent greater or less restriction of the free action of the individual; has become so difficult to draw, that certain classes, in their uncertainty, wish to obliterate it entirely, on the one hand by state socialism, or, on the other, by the extreme individualism of anarchy. It remains for intelligent legislatures to steer safely between these two extremes.

Many realize the imperfections and injustice of our present social organization, and the grounds for the prevalent discontent, but are unwilling to accept any of the radical measures of reform advocated in the different socialistic and communistic plans. They believe that, at the bottom, our present system is good, and is capable of such improvement as will remove these grievances. With them, the writer believes that the true solution of the problem lies in the gradual betterment of the condition of the masses by state action; by such state action as will provide a remedy for some of the most patent and grievous hardships now resting on the working classes. With this secured, a position will be obtained, from which the more difficult and uncertain problems around us can be attacked with greater intelligence and experience. This would require but the extension of state activity into fields already entered by government, such as factory legislation, shorter hours, increased sanitation, tenement-house regulation, and many others.

The progress of factory legislation in the different nations, furnishes us the principal and most interesting example of the gradual education of the people, as regards the proper attitude of government towards

industries. The policy of unrestricted competition in the employment and service of labor has received its death blow, and whatever may be the nature of future legislation, a return to this policy need never be anticipated.

Among these subjects for public regulation, and embraced under the general head of factory legislation, is the abolition, or at least regulation, of the employment of young children in our industrial establishments. No one reform could be accomplished with as little difficulty and friction. From no other would follow such immediate beneficial results, to employer, employé, and the community alike.

Certainly it is desirable that the improvement of the condition of factory operatives should be accomplished, if possible, through their own efforts. The healthy growth of labor organizations has partially enabled, and will continue to render it more possible for the operatives themselves to improve their condition. But unfortunately there is a rapidly growing class of laborers who are not in a position to demand anything from their employers. Children, weak, helpless and uneducated are immured at the tenderest years in mills and workshops, to undergo severe and continuous toil. Incapable of organization and coöperation, they grow up in ignorance and crime; unaccustomed to anything but the lowest condition, they are without ability or ambition to improve their situation. The state alone is in a position to remedy this by suitable legislation, and to put them in a position where they can help themselves. In the case of the habitual drunkard, it is next to useless to tell him to save himself. The only thing to be done

is to remove him from temptation, and by proper treatment, put him where there is some chance of his manhood asserting itself, so that he may then, by his own power, continue in his improved condition. So it is with the children.

Such legislation would not be experimental or uncertain in its results. England has handed down to us a century of legislation of this character. The history of her factory system has been a fearful one, and to us, who are now having the same problem thrust upon us for solution, it should prove an instructive one. It tells the story of a condition of factory labor, that we would do well to avoid by a more prompt and enlightened grasp upon the subject, and a speedier action in regard to it. During these years almost a score of generations of young children lived the lives of brutes; steeped in every degradation of crime, ignorance, immorality, disease and starvation, much of which might have been prevented by earlier governmental action. God grant that a similar condition of affairs may never taint our civilization. If history is ever to be made of avail in the application of past history to present politics, surely we have here a lesson that cannot be disregarded.

The present pages will be devoted to a survey of this one chapter of the great labor movement, its causes, rapid growth, evils, and the many ways in which it affects all society. In the line of practical economics, next to the subject of organized charity, it has obtained, and still claims, more attention from economists and reformers than any other topic in this line of economic thought.

The phenomenon of child-labor, its effects upon society and the legislation in regard to it are insepa-

rably connected with the kindred problems of shorter hours, and women employment. They have been treated together almost invariably in monographs, reports and legislation. Constant allusion must therefore be made to these subjects, though, as far as possible, the limits of the subject will be maintained.

The causes for the growth of child labor are not difficult to discover, and can be briefly indicated. Improved machinery and minute subdivision of labor has rendered their labor as effective as that of adults, though they will invariably accept lower wages for it. Again, children and women are helpless, and have, as yet, proven themselves incapable of effective organization, and seldom carry a strike to a successful conclusion. With the present friction between the employer and employés, the former finds this no slight consideration in his choice of operatives. These, in brief, have been the causes for their employment, and they will continue to operate with greater and greater force until legislation is had upon the subject.

Drawing upon past experience, as we must, for our authority, no treatment of the employment of children in its many economic aspects would be complete without a consideration of the different phases of its existence in England. A brief history of it will therefore first be given.

CHILD-LABOR IN ENGLAND.

It is to England, more than any other country, that we must turn to learn what has been done in meeting the new problems of the modern age. More advanced in her industrial development, she has been the first to feel the evils of any defect in her machinery of production.

In no other department of state action has she left us a more complete and instructive lesson, than in her century of factory legislation. What to us is a comparatively new problem is an old one to her. While we, therefore, have only meagre sources of information, in England a succession of elaborate Parliamentary Reports on Child-labor, during a period of one hundred years, furnish us with complete and authentic information in regard to the condition of child-labor during that period. In addition to these, England possesses many excellent works, by which we can easily trace the condition and progress of the working classes, and the course of legislation in regard to them.¹

¹I have not attempted to indicate authorities in the treatment of Child-labor in England. They are multitudinous, and many of them complete and reliable. Whatever the treatise, the material for it is found in the many Parliamentary Reports on Labor. The First Report of the Mass. Bureau of Labor (1870), pages 417-20, gives a full list of these reports, besides mentioning many other authorities. Among English authorities might be mentioned: *Life and Works of the Earl of Shaftsbury*; *Evils of the Factory System*, Chas. Wing, London, 1837; *The White Slaves*, Cobden; Eden's *State*

The growth of child-labor is inseparably connected with the introduction of machinery, and forms the most important chapter in the changes consequent upon this innovation. In the year 1769 Mr. Arkwright obtained his first patent for a machine for spinning cotton yarn, and commenced manufacturing by machinery. This was the beginning of the factory system. It was he who took the manufactures out of the cottages and farm-houses of England. Then followed Compton's Spinning Mule in 1775, Cartwright's Power-loom in 1787, and in 1793 the invention of the famous cotton gin by Eli Whitney, a resident of the United States. Under the stimulus of the war, manufactures multiplied rapidly, and were accompanied by a great increase of wealth. With this increase of wealth, however, came the growth of inconceivable misery. Thorold Rogers, in his recent book, "Work and Wages," says: "I am convinced that at no period of English history, for which authentic records exist, was the condition of manual labor worse than it was in the years from 1782-1821, the period in which manufactures and merchants accumulated fortunes rapidly." It is the poor man, who, in such times of social changes as this, must bear the burdens of the evils induced by them. For, restricted by circumstances, he is unable to adapt himself to new conditions, and the privations of displaced labor cannot be

of the Poor; Grant's History of Factory Legislation; Taylor's History of the Factory System; Hyndman's Historical Basis of Socialism. Among American authorities are: Special Report on the Factory System, by Hon. C. D. Wright, 10th census; Mass. Labor Reports for 1870 and 1875; Gunton's Wealth and Progress.

The above is far from all of the valuable authorities. A complete list would number hundreds.

shifted by him. Thousands of hands were suddenly required to work at places far distant from home. The small and nimble fingers of little children were by far the most in request. Before the change had attracted much attention, large numbers of children were massed together in factories. Their employment spread rapidly, and its evils soon developed, and alarmed close observers.

The first form of child employment differed greatly from that of later years. The first system originated in the procuring of apprentices from the different parish workhouses of London, Birmingham and elsewhere. Many thousands of these little hapless creatures, ranging from fourteen down to four and even three years of age, were thus sent down into the North. Agreements of the most revolting character were often made between the manufacturers and the different parish workhouses for bands of children for a number of years, in which the condition of the children was totally disregarded. Such, for example, were those provisions whereby it was agreed that with every twenty sound children one idiot should be taken.

It may be safely said that in the period just succeeding the establishment of the modern factory system, absolutely no regard was shown to the condition of the operatives.¹ Labor was then, in its

¹The beginning of the present century found children of five and even three years of age in England working in factories and brick-yards; women working underground in mines, harnessed with mules to carts, drawing heavy loads; found the hours of labor whatever the avarice of individual mill-owners might exact, were it thirteen, fourteen, or fifteen; found no guards about machinery to protect life and limb; found the air of the factory fouler than language can describe, even could human ears bear to hear the story."—Walker, *Political Economy*, p. 381.

true sense, but a commodity upon the market. The Report of the Select Committee for the year 1816, on the State of the Children employed in the Manufactures, portrays vividly the horrors that the children endured. By that time the number of children employed had increased greatly, very nearly fifty per cent of whom were under the age of eighteen.¹

Children of all ages, down to three and four, were found in the hardest and most painful labor, while babes of six were commonly found in large numbers in many factories. Labor from twelve to thirteen and often sixteen hours a day was the rule. Children had not a moment free, save to snatch a hasty meal or sleep as best they could. From earliest youth they worked to a point of extreme exhaustion, without open-air exercise, or any enjoyment whatever, but grew up, if they survived at all, weak, bloodless, miserable, and in many cases deformed cripples, and victims of almost every disease. Drunkenness, debauchery and filth could not but be the result. Their condition was but the veriest slavery, and the condition of the serf or negro stood out in bright contrast to theirs. The mortality was excessive, and the dread diseases, rickets and scrofula, passed by but few in their path. It was among this class that the horrors of hereditary disease had its chief hold, aided as it was by the repetition and accumulation of the same causes as first planted its seeds. The reports of all the many inves-

¹According to the statement of Dr. Gould, out of 23,000 factory hands investigated by him, in 1816, 14,000 were under eighteen. In the same year a return from forty-one mills in Scotland gave a total of 10,000 employes, of which 4,404 were under eighteen, and of these 415 under ten. A similar return from Manchester gave a total of 12,940, of which 793 were under ten and 5,460 between ten and eighteen.—Gaskell, Report of 1816.

tigations showed that morality was almost unknown. It was not an uncommon thing, in the mines, for men to work perfectly naked in the presence of women; who, in turn, were bare to their waists, and below covered only by a ragged pair of trousers. In the coal mines the condition of the children was even worse. According to the report of 1842, on Child-labor, it was estimated that fully one-third of those employed in the coal mines of England were children under eighteen, and of these much more than one-half were under thirteen. The facts revealed in this elaborate report of over two thousand pages, devoted chiefly to child-labor in coal mines, would be scarcely credible if they were not supported by the best of authority, so fearful was the condition of the children found to be. Down in the depths of the earth they labored from fourteen to sixteen hours daily. The coal often lay in seams only eighteen inches deep, and in these children crawled on their hands and feet, generally naked and harnessed up by an iron chain and band around their waists, by which they either dragged or pushed heavily loaded cars of coal through these narrow ways. In nearly every case they were driven to work by the brutal miners, and beaten, and sometimes even killed. Law did not seem to reach to the depths of a coal pit. Thus these young infants labored their young lives out as if condemned to torture for some crime. But it is useless to dwell longer on their condition. Volumes might be filled in portraying their sufferings. Treated as brutes they lived with no regard to morals, religion, education or health, in a condition that will probably never be duplicated. In the course of time

a process of physical deterioration was seen to be at work among the factory population. They were stunted in size, pallid and emaciated. They were scrofulous and consumptive, and had an aptness for every disease. The foundations were rapidly laid for a population, feeble, shortlived and ignorant, and in all respects debased. The recruiting sergeant already complained that men suitable for the army could not be found in the manufacturing districts.

Where was the boasted freedom of contract of the Political Economists of that day in all this? To the babe of six, bound over to a factory lord, it meant an apprenticeship which left him or her at twenty broken down with consumption, scrofula, or with distorted and crippled limbs, if indeed death had not in the meantime relieved it of its misery. This is, and always has been, the history of employment of children wherever tried.

The injustice of such a system could not long pass without criticism, and action was demanded of parliament to remedy or abate this social disease. To Sir Robert Peel, Sr., belongs the honor of first providing a measure for the relief of this evil. In 1802 he commenced the factory legislation by securing the passage of his apprentice bill. This bill, although of the most limited scope, and applying only to cotton factories, was then considered as a measure, radical if not revolutionary. This legislation, then met with the bitterest opposition from the manufacturers and the political economists. Financial ruin to English manufacturers was predicted as the result of such interference.

With the abolition of the apprenticeship system, the law became inoperative, and unrestricted hours of

labor again became the rule, and the condition of the children became, if possible, even worse than before. Accordingly, in 1815, Robert Peel again came to the front, and in that year secured the appointment of a committee to "inquire into the expediency of extending the apprenticeship act to children of every description." The result of this examination was presented to Parliament in reports for the years 1816, 1817 and 1818. As the result of this was the passage of the Act of 1819. The constant improvement in the laborer's condition, and the absence of injury to the capitalists, which accompanied this legislation, was so marked, that, although with few exceptions it was bitterly opposed by the political economists and the manufacturers, it steadily gained in public favor, and other legislation followed rapidly.

By the Act of 1819 the employment of children under nine was forbidden, and the hours of labor for those between nine and sixteen were limited to twelve hours daily. In 1825 a partial holiday was made compulsory for the children. In 1831 night work was forbidden to all under twenty-one, and eleven hours a day was made the limit for those under eighteen.

In 1833 Lord Ashley, (afterwards Earl of Shaftsbury) became the champion of the laborers by the introduction of a new bill, extending yet farther the provisions of former acts. This act was the most substantial step yet taken in this direction. Its principal provisions were: (1) The employment of children under nine was forbidden. (2) The hours of labor for those between nine and thirteen was limited to eight hours a day. (3) The hours of labor for those under eighteen engaged in worsted, hemp, tow and linen spinning should not exceed twelve

hours a day, and night work was forbidden them. The most significant feature of this act, however, was that relating to school attendance, and the appointment of inspectors to enforce the law.

In 1835 the employment of children under ten in the mines was forbidden. These regulations were, however, by various devices, persistently evaded.

As the introduction and use of machinery became more general, and the subdivision of labor became more minute, the employment of children became more extensive. The Parliamentary report of 1833 estimated that out of 170,000 employés in the cotton mills in that year, 70,000 were children under eighteen. In 1839 there were employed in the factories of England a total of 419,590 persons of all ages, and of these 192,887 or nearly one-half were under eighteen years of age.

In 1842, through the efforts of Lord Ashley, a commission was appointed to investigate the condition of children employed in England, and in 1842 was presented their first report, already referred to. In consequence of this report, the Act of 1843 was passed, which was the most important measure that had up to that time been adopted. It applied to all laborers outside of agriculture. By it "freedom of contract" on the part of women was finally abolished. Women over eighteen years of age were put in the same category as young persons, and their toil limited to eleven hours a day. Children under thirteen were not allowed to work more than six and a half hours a day, and above all, attendance at school was required for the other half day as a condition of employment. By this act the restriction of child employment was reduced to a uniform basis.

It is difficult to measure the advancement thus given to the oppressed children. The foundation for a degree of intellectual and social development among the masses was thus laid, and a greater social opportunity was offered them than they had ever before enjoyed. From this time on, every working child in England spent as much time in school as in the work-shop.

In 1847 Lord Ashley secured the passage of another act, carrying out his plan still more fully. This completed the reduction of the working time for children under thirteen to five hours per day, and to ten hours for all women and those minors between the ages of thirteen and eighteen.

During the following years until 1878 various acts were passed extending the provisions of former acts in one or another direction. Of these, the Factory Act of 1874 was the most important. By it the minimum age for the employment of children was raised to ten.

In 1878, this long line of legislation was fittingly crowned by the act of that year. This act, entitled "An Act to Consolidate and Amend the Law Relating to Factories and Workshops" amends and consolidates in one wide embracing act, all the ground covered by the sixteen acts passed between 1802 and 1878, besides embracing, with some changes, the Provision of the Public Health Act of 1875, and the Elementary Education Act of 1876. It was prepared with the greatest care and fullness, and furnishes an admirable code for factory regulation. Never before had the paternity of government been so strongly declared, and never before had the right of the workmen to demand protection by the State against their

employers been so distinctly asserted. The importance of this act as setting forth the present regulation of child labor in England, demands a closer survey. Its provisions are as follows :

(1) The hours of employment for children shall be as follows : those under ten shall not be employed at all, and those under fourteen shall be employed only half time, either in the mornings or evenings, or on alternate days. (2) The hours of employment for young persons (fourteen to eighteen) shall be from 6 to 6 or 7 to 7, of which two hours shall be devoted to meals, and on Saturdays all work shall cease for them at 1.30. (3) Adequate sanitary provisions are provided. (4) Also ample provisions against accidents. (5) A suitable number of inspectors and assistants are created to insure the due execution of the law. (6) Medical certificates of fitness for employment must be furnished by all under sixteen. (7) Weekly certificates must be obtained from the proper authorities by the employers, showing the required amount of school attendance for every child in their employ

The direct benefits resulting to the lower classes from this act cannot be equalled by any other act upon the rolls of Parliament.

It will be seen from this brief sketch, that the English factory system was one of slow growth and development. One restriction after another was placed upon the employer, until to-day the English laborer is more taken care of by the government than in any other country, Prussia possibly excepted. It can be said of it, as of no other course of legislation, that its results have all been beneficial, not only to the employés, but to the employers as

well, as is now generally admitted by them. Its results have more than justified the acts in every particular. In it can be traced the rise of many important principles in the science of the functions of government. It has been of incalculable service to the progress of the lower classes in more ways than in the direct workings of the act itself. This series of acts first established the right of the State to regulate industry. It was the most important advance and attack that has yet been made upon the *laissez faire* doctrine, that "the less government the better," so strongly insisted upon by the old economists. It is interesting to note the change of feeling on the part of this old school of economists. Although every political economist who wrote before 1850 was uncompromisingly opposed to this legislation, not one who has written since 1865 has ventured to deny the advisability of the Factory acts.

It is also characteristic of this earlier period, that the employers were unanimous in their opposition to any abridgment of their rights to employ children, and in this were supported in Parliament by such men of the school mentioned as John Bright, proud of the name of friend of the people; Lord Cobden, and his associates, and many of the most distinguished of English statesmen. Every improvement in the condition of English labor was only obtained against the combined opposition of these two classes. Too much praise cannot be given to those men, Lord Ashley, Robert Owen, Oastler and others, who labored unceasingly to secure the passage of these acts. This change of front by the employers and economists is one of the most cheering signs of the time.

The results of this legislation have been but briefly

touched upon. The industrial history of England from beginning to end shows most conclusively its great benefits. It has advanced the material prosperity, and the intellectual, moral and political progress of the whole community. It has brought about, as a necessary consequence, an increased production and consumption of wealth; promoted the use of improved machinery, and reduced prices without lessening profits. This has been shown in the progress in every direction. While prices were falling, wages steadily increased from 1850.

The increase in intelligence among the masses has been not less marked. The working children are now, for the first time, receiving an education as a condition of employment. This requirement of school attendance has had a tremendous influence in increasing the number of the lower classes who now attend school.

It would seem that such a history, so clearly marked in its results, would present an example that all nations, having the same problem to contend with, could scarcely refuse to follow. Certain it is, that with our increasing population and the increasing concentration in large cities and establishments, the evils of unrestricted employment of children are becoming prominent, and, in some of our States, the condition of the children employed, is only a few grades better than that of the children in England before the passage of its factory legislation.

CHILD-LABOR IN THE UNITED STATES.

Owing to the especial advantages possessed by the United States as a labor market, and the better condition of the laboring population in general, children were not employed in any considerable numbers until within comparatively recent years. As population has multiplied, and the crowding together of people in large cities has gone on, the employment of young children has largely increased.

To trace this growth is, however, a much more difficult task than that offered in the case of England. There, the regulation of factories and labor was the single duty of the central government, while here it falls to the different State legislatures. As a consequence, while throughout England the laws are uniform, and but one set of statutes and reports, those of Parliament, which are easily accessible, have to be studied ; here no two States have the same laws ; only a comparatively few have any at all ; and information must be obtained through the various bureaus of labor or the reports of their inspectors of factories and workshops.¹ Many of these reports

¹The following are the States which have organized labor bureaus, with the dates of their organization : (1) Massachusetts, 1869 ; (2) Pennsylvania, 1872 ; (3) Ohio, 1877 ; (4) New Jersey, 1878 ; (5) Illinois, 1879 ; (6) New York, 1883 ; (7) Michigan, 1883 ; (8) Wisconsin, 1883 ; (9) Iowa, 1884 ; (10) Connecticut, 1885 ; (11) Indiana, 1879 ; (12) Missouri, 1883 ; (13) California, 1883 ; (14) Maryland, 1884 ; (15) Kansas, 1885 ; (16) Rhode Island, 1887 ; (17) Maine, 1887 ; (18) Colorado, 1887 ; (19) Minnesota, 1887 ; (20) North Carolina, 1887 ; (21) Nebraska, 1887.

are difficult to obtain, as the small editions are soon exhausted, and only a few libraries possess complete sets of them. When found, they are often unsatisfactory and are confessedly unreliable. Each department is conducted in its own way. Some, with adequate means, are well organized, and their reports are of the greatest value, while others, with very limited resources, can do but feeble work. The law creating them has, in most cases, been inadequate and too timid. Almost all the reports complain that factory owners refuse with impunity to answer questions, fill up blanks or afford information of any kind, and that there is no law which can compel them to do so. This has been especially so in regard to Child-labor.

Nearly every bureau has, at some time, investigated the subject of the employment of children, and has collected statistics bearing upon it¹.

These reports I have not been able to use as much as I had hoped, as in most cases the commissioner has admitted their incompleteness, owing to the refusal of the factory owners to make returns, or the gross falseness of many of those which were made. For another reason, I have not been able to refer to them, except as to the general conclusions and suggestions contained in them. In no case can the statistics of one state be compared with those of another. In some reports one standard of age has been adopted, and in others, another. Some are thorough, and others unreliable. Yet these statistics

¹Among the labor reports chiefly devoted to the employment of children are those of Massachusetts for 1870 and 1875, Rhode Island 1888; Maine, 1888, and Second Annual Report of New York.

Among the reports of Inspectors of Factories, those of New Jersey are the most important.

are not without value. They are the sole source of information since the year 1880. Many facts of importance are shown by them. From them it can be seen that beyond a doubt, the employment of children is constantly and rapidly increasing.¹

There thus remains but one available source for information in regard to the number of children employed prior to 1880, and their tendency to increase, viz., the United States censuses. Although not given in sufficient detail, yet they are by far the most available collections of statistics that can be obtained. This, however, brings the collection down to but 1880, while the greatest increase in the employment of children has probably taken place between that date and the present time. When the census of 1890 is published, an excellent opportunity will be afforded for a comparison of its returns with those of the former censuses, a comparison, which unfortunately we cannot now obtain.

¹The Second Annual Report of the New York Labor Bureau, devoted entirely to an investigation of child-labor, was summed up as follows: "My conclusions are, (1) The system of child-labor exists in the State in its worst form. (2) The compulsory education law is a dead letter. (3) The condition of the laborers is of a low standard."

The Commissioner of Labor for Ohio in his report for 1887, page 9, says: "My attention has been frequently called to the alarming growth of women and child-labor in gainful occupations. Children are crowded into workshops at twelve years of age; when they reach manhood, they are thrown out of work and their places filled with other boys."

The Inspector of Factories for New Jersey says, Second Annual Report, page 19: "Our examination shows that there are thousands of children in the State who know no change but from the workshop to the bed and from the bed to the workshop."

See also 1st Mass. p. 154. and 6th Ohio 1882, p. 326. Also Article by E. W. Bemis, in American Edition of *Ency. Britannica*, on Workingmen in the United States.

The earlier censuses contain no information in regard to the ages of employés. This was on account of the generally more limited scope of their investigations, and the infrequency and unimportance of the employment of children before that time. In 1870, however, their scope was greatly enlarged, and for the first time, the number of employés in the United States was determined according to age.

The statistics in regard to the employment of children, as given by the census of 1870 is as follows :

Total workers of-all classes returned.....	12,505,923
Of these there were children 10 to 15 years old..	739,164

Thus one out of every seventeen employés in the United States engaged in any gainful occupation was a child under fifteen years of age, showing that even in 1870 the employment of children was a considerable factor in our laboring population.

In the Tenth census this subject was yet more fully investigated, and considerable information may be derived from a comparison of its showing with that of 1870. The statistics there given show the following results :

Total number of workers of all classes returned.	17,392,099
Of these there were children 10 to 15 years old..	1,118,356

This is an average of one child out of every sixteen employés in the United States engaged in any gainful occupation, as against that of one out of every seventeen as shown by the census of 1870.

The following table contains a comparison of the results of the census of 1880 with that of 1870:

	1870	1880	Increase	Per Cent. of Increase.
¹ Whole number of persons engaged in Trade and Transportation.....	1,191,238	1,810,256	619,018	52
Number between 10 and 15 years	14,472	28,625	14,153	98
Whole number of persons engaged in Manufacturing, Mechanical and Mining.....	2,707,421	3,837,112	1,129,691	42
Number between 10 and 15 years.....	75,643	133,607	57,964	76
Whole number of persons engaged in Professional and Personal.....	2,684,793	4,074,238	1,389,445	52
Number between 10 and 15 years.....	149,491	235,395	85,904	57
² Total whole number.....	6,583,452	9,721,606	3,138,154	47
Total between 10 and 15 years.	239,606	397,627	158,021	66

Thus the number of children employed in other than agricultural pursuits increased during the decade of 1870 to 1880 sixty-six per cent., while the number of adults increased during the same period only forty-seven per cent. General Walker in commenting on this increase, says: ³“If now we inquire how the same excess is distributed according to age, we shall find that a disproportionate share falls in the class between ten and fifteen years of age, showing a further effect of the extension of the factory system

¹Compiled by the Michigan Labor Commissioner in his Second Annual Report, 1885.

²The number employed in agriculture, both adults and children, are not considered, as not practically entering into the problem.

³Tenth Census.

in the increased employment of young children." In the class of trade, and transportation, the increase of children in comparison to that of adults was as ninety-eight per cent. to fifty-two per cent.; in manufacturing, mechanical and mining, as seventy-six per cent. to forty-two per cent. In professional and personal, as might be expected, the difference in percentage was least, being as fifty-seven to fifty-two per cent. The significant portion of the table is, that in all industries to which the factory system is applicable, and in the severe labor coming under the class of trade and transportation, the percentage of the increase of children employed is nearly twice that of adults.

This statement of statistics is, however, unsatisfactory in many respects, and represents but imperfectly and inadequately, the extent of the employment of young children. In it are included all the Western States, in which Child-labor occurs but little. All kinds of employments are counted together, including many in which children cannot be employed at all. Each state and industry should be considered separately if feasible, as the problem of Child-labor is now chiefly one belonging to the Eastern States, and confined mostly to certain industries. It would be useful to determine, not simply how many children are employed at one time, but the ages of all at the time of their commencing work. If, as this census shows, one-sixth of all the children in the United States are regularly employed, a very large proportion of our laboring population must commence work before they are fifteen. In fact, to-day, in manufacturing communities, most of the children of the laborers, instead of going to school, enter the mines and workshops to aid their parents.

Mr. Crowell, in his article in the *Andover Review* of July, 1885, deduced from the ninth and tenth censuses a table showing the percentage increase of employés by ages in the manufacturing states. This table is as follows :—

	Children Per Cent.	Females over 15 Per Cent.	Males over 16 Per Cent.
Illinois.....	177	127	65
Maine.....	164	2	3
Maryland.....	160	162	37
Iowa.....	127	51	8
Ohio.....	116	60	35
New Jersey.....	95	151	32
Pennsylvania.....	54	65	11
New York.....	43	115	36
Rhode Island.....	29	24	28
Massachusetts.....	23	23	27
Connecticut.....	20	38	22

An inspection of this table shows the extremely rapid extension of the employment in those states where the factory system has reached the highest development. The good effects of wise laws are also shown by the comparatively small increase in the employment of children in those states which have early passed laws prohibiting the employment of children. The percentage in those states, is little, if any, above the normal increase due to the extension of the industries, and larger population. The reports of the labor bureaus of these states show that since 1880, the increase in the employment of children is still less, falling below that of adults.

The industries in which children are mostly found, are those of the cotton mills, where, in 1880, one in every six of the employés was under fifteen years of age. They are also found in greater or less proportion in woolen mills, where they are almost as

extensively employed as in the cotton mills, in paper-box factories, rag mills, boot and shoe, oil, artificial flower, insect powder factories, etc. In mining they numbered one in twenty, and in some localities a much larger proportion. In tobacco, one in twelve, which is much too moderate, as many of the children in this industry work at home in tenements and escape inspection.

There is one form of Child-labor of great importance, which is growing rapidly, and which is but partially reached by the census, and which, if taken, would have swelled the total of children employed to a much greater sum than that given. This is the great mass of children who work at home in miserable tenement houses, in most cases not receiving wages, but merely helping their fathers and mothers in their work. The wife brings home the cotton for the shirts and overalls, the tobacco to be picked, etc., and the child can, as early as five years of age, pick threads, strip tobacco, sew on buttons, etc. Here occurs Child-labor in its worst form. The youngest children are made to work. While children of fourteen and fifteen are found in factories, here infants of five and six labor as slaves to their parents, and out of reach of law and humanity. Helen Campbell estimates that in New York City alone, 24,000 children under fifteen are employed, a great portion of which are in tenement houses.¹

In the foregoing I have confined myself almost entirely to a consideration of the censuses of 1870 and 1880, though the enumeration is confessedly defective. My object has been merely to show that the employment of children has taken a firm hold

¹ *Prisoners of Poverty.*

on our factory system, and that its tendency has been to increase rapidly. It is impossible to state exactly how many or what proportion of the operatives are at present under the age of fifteen, though certainly their number is actually and proportionately much greater than as shown in 1880. However, here and there from the various reports of State Labor Bureaus, and Inspectors of Factories, instances can be gathered showing more strongly this fact.

Mr. Crowell, in his article already referred to, has collected from different reports instances showing the widespread employment of children in various States and industries, and I am chiefly indebted to him for the presentation of the following :

For example, in Baltimore the ratio of children to all other employés in the cotton mill is 1 : 4; in Augusta, Ga., 1 : 3; in Allegheny, Pa., 1 : 4; in Brooklyn (cordage), 1 : 3; in Lancaster, Pa., 1 : 5; and in Boston, 12 : 17. In the six north Atlantic States, in 225 textile factories of special prominence, seventeen per cent. of the employés are children. In thirty-six leading textile factories of Massachusetts, twenty per cent. of the operatives are children. In Pennsylvania the textile industries give work to 5,300 boys of fifteen years and under, and 4,300 girls of fourteen years and under. The mills and shops of Philadelphia alone give employment to twenty per cent. of the city's population, though all of these are not under fifteen. New Jersey employs fully 15,000 children ranging from eight to fifteen years in age. In Patterson, out of a working population of 20,000, there are 3,000 children at work.

In Rhode Island the children compose twelve per cent. of the whole manufacturing population.¹

In the South the employment of children has in later years increased rapidly. In North Carolina thirteen per cent. of the cotton factory operatives are children of fifteen or under. Virginia employs a somewhat greater proportion and Georgia somewhat less.

Of the different cities Chicago has probably shown the most remarkable increase in the employment of young children. The Factory and Tenement-house Inspectors of that city in 1881 reported 4,600 boys and girls of fifteen and under in the factories and workshops. In 1882 they found 6,900, an increase of sixty-eight per cent., while there was an increase during the same year of but eighteen per cent. in the male laborers over that age.

Of the different industries, tobacco manufacture gives employment to a proportion almost equal to that of the cotton mill. In Covington, Ky., the ratio of children of fifteen years and under, to all other employés, in 1885 was 3 : 7. In Louisville, 1 : 5; in Richmond, 1 : 4; and so in all the tobacco-growing regions of both the North and South.

In the American coal fields the labor of children has been found in one of its worst forms. The industrial statistics of Pennsylvania for the year 1882-3, reported 87,000 employés in that industry, of whom 24,000 were boys, and four-fifteenths fifteen years of age or under.

In the iron and steel industry, the census of 1880 shows an increase of boys from 2,400 in 1870; to 7,700 in 1880, an increase of 216 per cent. as com-

¹These results are for various years between 1880 and 1885.

pared with an increase of seventy-eight per cent. of employés over sixteen years of age.

There is thus every reason to believe, from the returns of the census of 1880, and from later investigations made by the State Bureaus of Labor, that the increase in the employment of children has continued as rapidly as ever, except in the few States where laws prohibiting their employment have been enacted and enforced. Never before have the conditions of society, in the absence of legal restrictions, been so favorable to it. From all quarters, from those who have in any way come in contact with the factory system, comes an expression of warning against the unrestricted employment of children; of its degenerating influence on society; and its danger to the healthful development of our institutions.

The legislation regulating the employment of children has been exceedingly various in the different States. Most of it is of comparatively recent date. Some few States have early seen the importance of regulating the employment of this class of labor, but the great majority of them have allowed it to go on uncontrolled. Connecticut and Massachusetts, the first in all measures of economic reform, were here again the earliest to pass laws upon the subject. Connecticut enacted her first law dealing with Child-labor in 1842, and Massachusetts her first effective law in 1866.¹ They were afterwards repeatedly amended, and made more stringent in many respects. Other Eastern States slowly followed suit,

¹Laws had been made previous to this, as early as 1836, by a slight educational qualification. It is almost needless to say it was not generally observed by the laboring population.

though in no case have they gone as far as in either Massachusetts or Connecticut, New York and Pennsylvania possibly excepted. I have collected in a note below those laws which have been passed in all the States regarding Child-labor, and which are in force at the present time.¹ I have indicated there

States.	Ages under which children cannot be employed.	Not to be employ'd unless have attended school during previous y'r	Hours of labor.
Connecticut.....	-13	-14, 12 weeks.....	8 (unless otherwise agreed) for all ages.
Colorado..	-12..... } not in All women. } mines.	-16 (not in mines unless can read and write.	
Illinois.....	-12..... } not in All women. } mines.	-14, 12 weeks. -16, can read and write.	
Indiana.....	12(certain industries) 14 (not in mines).	.....	-18, 10 hours.
Iowa.....	-12 (not in mines).	.....
Kansas.....	-12 (not in mines)...	-16 (not in mines unless can read and write	Males, -16 } 10 hrs. Females, -18 }
Maine.....	-12	-15, 16 weeks.....	
Maryland.....	.....	.....	-16, 10 hours in a mine.
Massachusetts...	-13	-14, 20 weeks....	-18 } 10 hrs. All women }
Michigan.....	.....	-14, 16 weeks.	
Minnesota.....	.....	.....	-18 } 10 hrs. All women }
Missouri.....	-12..... } not in All women. } mines.	-14 (not in mines unless can read and write.)	
New Hampshire.	-10	-12, whole school y'r; -14, 6 mos.; -16, 3 mos., and can read & write	
New Jersey.....	-12, boy; -14, girl..	-15, 12 weeks.....	-16, 10 hours.
New York.....	-13.....	.....	-18 } 10 hrs. -21 (women) }
Ohio.....	-12.....	-14, 12 weeks.....	8 (unless otherwise agreed) for all ages.
Pennsylvania....	-13.	.....
Rhode Island....	-10.....	-14, 14 weeks.	
Tennessee.....	-12 (in mines).	.....
Vermont.....	-10.....	-14, 12 weeks.....	-18, 10 hours.
Wisconsin.....	-13.....	.....	-18 } 8 hrs. All women }

¹ This table does not include any laws which may have been passed in 1889.

only those parts of the law specially applicable to the employment of children, and but the main features of each law. In nearly all of these States embraced in the note, other provisions are made, as for instance, requiring certain rules of sanitation to be complied with, fire-escapes to be provided, preventives against accidents, seats for female operatives, etc. In all those acts requiring a certain amount of schooling as a condition of employment, the children, before they can be employed, must furnish a certificate from their teacher that they have complied with the requirements of the act. In most cases the employers are also required to keep a record of all the ages of the children in their employ, their hours of labor, and a certificate from their parents showing the ages of the children. These provisions are scattered through almost as many acts as there are provisions. It would be a great improvement if the example of England were followed in this respect by the States, and each State have all its acts relating to labor and factories collected together in one compact act or code for the regulation of labor and factories. They would thus be more intelligible and accessible, and in the case of inspectors being appointed to enforce the acts, their duty would be made easier and more certain. It would also be advisable if the laws could be made more uniform in the different States. Such is undoubtedly their tendency, as constant reference is made in one report to the good features embraced in the laws of a sister State. In some cases the laws of one State have been enacted in another almost without change.¹

¹ Massachusetts' law has for a long time furnished the model for the other States.

But more potent than all for this purpose are the annual conventions of the chiefs of all the labor bureaus of the States, where methods are compared, lines of action agreed upon, and uniformity of work to a certain extent secured.¹ Of almost equal importance are the annual conventions of the chief inspectors of factories and workshops of the different States.²

From this slight sketch it can be seen that the laws regulating the employment of young children are far from complete and satisfactory. What has been done, has been in the right direction, but in no single case have we approached the complete and well-working law of England. The greater number of the States have no laws regulating the employment of children (so far as I have been able to discover), except, possibly, some provision of a compulsory education law, which is practically a dead letter, so far as preventing the employment of children is concerned. Only eleven States forbid the employment of children under a certain age in all industries. Of these, three place the limit at the low age of ten, three at twelve, and five at thirteen years of age. Seven others forbid the employment of those under a certain age in mines. The provisions in regard to schooling and hours of labor vary widely. The really effective portions of these acts are those which unqualifiedly prohibit the employment of children under a certain age. It is evident that the other provisions are difficult of rigid enforcement, and evasions can easily be made, through the false statements of the employers and

¹ Such conventions have been held since 1882.

² Such conventions have been held since 1887.

parents. Indeed, of these States with laws on their statute books, the great many, as admitted by their own labor reports, are largely inoperative. The reason for this is not difficult to discover. Adequate means have not been provided for their enforcement. This arose in some cases through neglect, but too often through the influence of manufacturers, who, though opposed to the law, pretended to favor it, yet carefully arranged that it should pass in such a shape as to be useless. Thus they gained the credit of favoring the law, and the additional opportunity of arguing that such laws are impossible of enforcement. It is not the intention of this paper to suggest any particular law to meet the ends here proposed. Such should be left to the different labor bureaus. A splendid code for reference can be found in the English Factory Act of 1878. Yet I would mention one point that should always be amply provided for, one which in this country has been frequently disregarded. A chief inspector should always be appointed, with a sufficient corps of assistants, and with large powers to enforce the execution of the law. It has been the universal experience of both England and this country that, where this has not been done, the law has proven useless.¹ The importance of these inspectors, as supplemental to that of creating laws forbidding the employment of children, can scarcely be overestimated. The inspector of factories for Ohio says :

“The importance of the regulation for the inspection of factories, and all the places where people are employed at labor, no matter what the character of the work, must be apparent to every person

¹*Report Inspector of Factories for Ohio*, 1886. See also *First Annual Report Massachusetts Labor Bureau*, 1870, page 136; *Second Annual Report Inspector of Factories New Jersey*, 1884, page 5.

who has given the subject the least consideration. On the thoroughness of such inspection depends, in a great measure, the safety of tens of thousands of our population—men, women, and children. And who will claim that there is anything more deserving of the careful attention of the General Assembly than the lives and health of the people on whom the State depends for its wealth and prosperity? This subject transcends in importance all other matters coming before the legislature, with the possible exception of education. These children will in a few years constitute a large portion of the political power of the State, and their future character and worth to society depend largely upon their happiness or unhappiness, their sound or unsound bodies and minds, their healthy or diseased constitutions in their youth.”

Unfortunately but few States have made this provision, and of these many have powers so restricted as to abridge in greater part their usefulness.¹

¹But eight States, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Ohio, Wisconsin, Connecticut, Maine, and Rhode Island, possess inspectors of factories.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF CHILD-LABOR.

The employment or non-employment of children has a bearing of great importance upon many economic questions. From this side of the question comes almost as much interest as from the humanitarian standpoint. It enters as a factor into many of the most wide-reaching and important topics, which determine the welfare of the working classes. The wages question, competition of labor, the profits of the manufacturers, and above all the standard of comfort of the laboring classes are all largely affected by the employment of children. Its effects on such questions as these furnish the strongest argument for the prohibition of child employment.

To understand clearly how and why the employment of children must necessarily have an injurious effect upon these important questions, of so much consideration to the working class, and to all society, it is necessary to thoroughly understand the true nature and significance of what economists term the "standard of comfort." It is the rule of the standard of comfort, which is the cardinal test, by the light of which all reforms should be judged and interpreted. Any attempt to better the condition of the laboring classes, which does not ultimately raise their standard of comfort, will be useless, and any cause, which tends to lower it, should, if possible, be removed. If the abolition of Child-labor will not tend to raise the standard

of comfort of the working classes, it will be of no avail as a means for bettering their condition.

Ricardo, in his famous Iron Law of Wages,¹ first drew attention to and imperfectly expressed the economic law which underlies the standard of comfort. This law, as he conceived it, was this: That wages of labor constantly tend to a minimum, which minimum is that which will barely support the life of the laborer and his family that he may have offspring to take his place. Lower than this, it is evident, the minimum can not be, otherwise population will tend to decrease. Ever since the development of the modern industrial organizations, there has been a large and growing class of unemployed laborers, willing and desirous to work at almost any wages, rather than not work at all. It is the presence of this vast supply of labor constantly on hand that gives force to this law of wages, for the knowledge on the part of the owners of production of the supply of cheap labor, and the knowledge by the workmen that there are always men to take their places, is the most powerful of all levers to sustain the law, and keep the wages of the employés at the minimum. This is why, in the time of increasing wealth, the laborers have not proportionately advanced in prosperity.

I have said that the Iron Law of Wages but imperfectly expresses an economic law. It is true only as modified by the standard of comfort, in the statement of which the economic law finds its

¹This law was first called the "Iron Law of Wages" by Ferdinand Lassalle, and was the foundation of both his and Karl Marx's socialistic reasoning.

true expression. Long experience has shown that Ricardo's law is not the inexorable law, as supposed by its propounder and its advocates, the followers of Lassalle and Marx. By constant repetition and force of habit the laboring classes have become accustomed to a certain standard or grade of living, which is not in every case, that which will barely support life. Thus, the minimum of wages that an American laborer will accept is far above that of the Chinaman, though, possibly, he could live on that of the latter. "Before he will forego those things, which, by habit, have become necessities to him, he will refuse to work, will inaugurate strikes, riots, and other means, which will endanger the peace and prosperity of the community." It is for this reason that the degraded and worst-paid laborers are not the ones who commence strikes and lockouts, but the more intelligent and higher-paid workers, who have become accustomed to a standard of comfort above that of mere existence, and without which they will not work.¹ It is here, then, that political economists differ from Marx and his followers. This law is true only as a tendency. Though the tendency of wages is to a minimum, this minimum is not the bare sustenance of life, but the standard of comfort of each class and nation. This standard is what

¹"As a matter of indisputable fact strikes have not proceeded from the least, but from the most fortunate portion of the working population. It has not been common, but skilled labor that has been concerned. It has not been hopeless misery, but growing ambition, which has prompted nearly all the demands which it has been sought to enforce by the last resort."—*The Manual Laboring Class*," by Prof. F. A. Walker, American Economic Association Publications, Volume III, Number 3, page 14.

each nation and class makes for itself. It is evident that the welfare of the masses is directly dependent upon the standard of comfort, and that it marks their real condition, as above this they can not, as a rule, go, restrained as they are by the tendency laid down in Ricardo's Law of Wages. To benefit the laboring classes their standard of comfort must be raised.

It is in this light that Child-labor has its greatest interest and importance, and by it alone can be finally determined the real effect of their employment on economic progress. If its influence is to lower the standard of comfort, its harm is incalculable; if its abolition will raise it, it will be a true reform and progress. Let us see what the effect of the employment of children is.

The standard of comfort for a class of people is the result of a slow growth, arising from years of habits and surroundings. Children, when employed in factories, are taken at the earliest possible age, and subjected to very degrading conditions. They are often treated as mere brutes or slaves; and, never accustomed to anything but the very lowest condition of living, comfort, or morality, acquire the lowest standard of comfort. This standard they carry throughout life. It is this class of laborers, who, as they grow up, are willing to work at starvation wages, or just what will barely support them in the condition to which they have been accustomed. Thus they tend to force all labor to their condition. This labor is the worst of pauper labor, and to them the standard of comfort coincides with the minimum of Marx, and his law of wages is an iron law, indeed. If, instead of their factory life,

these millions of children had been compelled to attend school, and had acquired some education, and experience of things better than they have had in their factories, can anyone suppose that they would work for what they now do, or submit to the conditions, under which they now live and labor? Their standard of comfort would be much higher, and the lowest class of cheap labor would be removed from our midst. It is the few who are willing to work at low wages that drag the others down to their level. The prohibition of Child-labor could not operate otherwise than to raise the standard of comfort for a large number of our citizens, thus having a beneficial effect throughout all society. England's supremacy to-day rests largely upon her wise labor laws.

Let us next consider the effect of Child-labor upon wages, and, more particularly, its influence on the gross earnings of the family. We have seen that in the theory of the standard of comfort is really contained the true law of wages. In the long run, the wage of a class is just what the standard of comfort fixes. Prof. R. T. Ely, in his *Introduction to Political Economy*, says: "It has been the opinion of many of the ablest political economists, for over a century, that what is technically called the 'standard of comfort,' determines the wages of labor. There is so overwhelming an array of facts, gathered from widely separated countries, and from periods so distant from one another, which confirms this conclusion, that it is difficult to resist it."¹ Thus, that which lowers the standard of comfort, lowers wages; that Child-Labor lowers wages

¹See page 221.

there can be little doubt; it is, essentially, cheap labor. With improved machinery, it enters as a competitor for work in the same employments, and in the same places and shops with adult laborers. Its wages are, in almost all cases, less than those of adults. Not only does it tend to reduce the wages of adults, but, to a large extent, deprives them of employment. A number of States have made careful collections of statistics of those out of employment, and from these it is found that a much larger per cent. of adults than of children are unemployed. While the children are retained at their lower wages, their fathers are forced into idleness. The employment of children is assigned by these reports as one of the chief causes for the idleness of working men and women.¹ If Child-Labor could be abolished to-day, there are probably enough adults, out of employment and willing to work, to fill their places.

With the introduction of newer and improved machinery the sphere of the employment of children is constantly widening, and the number of them employed increasing. The inspectors of factories in our States constantly report instances where the wife and children work to support the family, while the father, unable to obtain work, remains idle, or performs the menial work at home.² This reversal of the order of nature is one of the evils of the factory system. The children become old before their time, and independent of parental control; while the fathers, becoming accustomed to living

¹*Massachusetts Labor Report*, 1870, page 56.

²See, for example, "Fall River, Lowell, and Lawrence" (an extract from *Thirteenth Massachusetts Labor Report*), page 11; also *Ohio Labor Report*, 1887, page 9.

on wages of others, rapidly become pauperized, as under the old poor laws of England. As the children grow up, they, in turn, follow the fate of their fathers. The Associated Charities, in the last few years of their vigorous history, have been in a position to, and have investigated carefully the causes of idleness and pauperism; and it is the expressed opinion of those at the head of this work, that Child-labor, as much as any other single cause, is responsible for this poverty, by its early breaking down the health of the laborers, and the throwing out of employment of the adults. The age at which the greatest amount of labor should be performed is thus unnaturally placed in weak youth, instead of strong middle age. What more uneconomical system of labor could be devised?

More important to the laborers themselves than their individual earnings, is the effect of Child-labor on the gross earnings of the family. The wages of the family is the true gauge of the condition of its members. It is of the utmost importance to clearly understand the exact relation which the employment of children bears to the family income, for it is this point which has prevented a more hearty co-operation of the laborers themselves for its abolition. Though generally admitting that their wages may be lowered somewhat by their children's employment, they have held that they were more than compensated by the earnings of the child. This is a fallacy. The admitted law is, as we have seen at the beginning of this chapter, that the whole family would, on the average, be kept by the wages of its head at the standard of its class, handing on the same lot to an equal

number of offspring. But when women and children are brought in with their labor force, to compete against the labor of the men, the whole family together earns, on an average, no more than the father would earn, if they were not allowed to enter the field against him. "These men can not work for less than that which will furnish them and their family a living, if he alone were allowed to work; but, if his children also can work, in their desperate struggle for existence, they will work for just as much less as their children can earn, as, on the gross earnings, the family can now live at the standard to which they have been accustomed."

Prof. Richard T. Ely, in his *Introduction to Political Economy*, says :

"Among the striking evidences of the truth of the standard of life, as the norm for wages, the fact is especially noteworthy that, as a rule, it seems to fail to benefit the laboring population on the whole, and for any length of time, for the wife and children to earn money, even apart from all other considerations than mere money getting. The world over, when it becomes customary for the wife, or wife and children, to work in factories, it very soon becomes necessary for them to do so to support the family. The wages of the head of the family and the earnings of the entire family, as before, just maintain the standard of comfort among that class of the population. Prof. E. W. Bemis has called attention to the fact that in the textile industries of Rhode Island and Connecticut, where the women and children work, the earnings of the entire family are no larger than in other industries, like those in metal, in western Connecticut, where only the men work."¹

The Inspector of Factories for New Jersey, in his *Second Annual Report*, 1884, page 19, says: "The employment of children has increased with the reduction of wages, and the employment of adults has decreased with the employment of children."

As this is a consideration of the utmost importance, involving the interest of the whole laboring

¹See page 221.

class, and, that we may see that it has the weight of the authority of others besides political economists, I will quote in full the language of our most distinguished statistician, Hon. Carroll D. Wright, as contained in the *Sixth Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor of Massachusetts*, which bears directly upon this point. He says, pages 51, 384, and 385 :

“There seems, within recent times, to have occurred a change in the relation of wages to support, so that, more and more, the labor of the whole family becomes necessary to the support of the family ; that, in the majority of cases, workingmen in the commonwealth do not support their families by their individual earnings alone. The fathers rely, or are forced to depend, upon their children for from one-quarter to one-third of the entire family earnings, and the children, under fifteen years of age, supply, by their labor, from one-eighth to one-sixth of the total family earnings. It is likely that if, by compulsion, the children of the State be taken from work and put into school, there will be individual cases of suffering and hardship, but these will only be temporary. The rate of wages, after a little time, will readjust themselves to the new state of things, and the same amount of money, or a somewhat near approximation to it, will be earned by the head of the family, as is now earned by him in conjunction with his children. To illustrate this a little more fully, we may suppose that, at a certain time, in a certain community, a condition of affairs obtains such as insures that the labor of the husband shall be sufficient for the maintenance of the family, the wife cares for the household, the children are under preparation for the duties of man and womanhood. The manufacturer, all at once, is struck with what we may call a new idea. He discovers that he may lessen the cost of production, and thereby undersell and outsell his rivals in the trade by employing young people—we will say, sixteen years of age. He sees that they will be as efficient auxiliaries to his machines, for three-fourths of his work, as men. He can hire them for a dollar a day, while he is obliged to pay men two dollars. Animated with this idea, he promptly reduces it to practice. But the secret of this low cost of production can not be kept. His competitors learn of it and imitate it. It spreads in all directions. Large numbers of men are thrown out of employment, yet, they must have sustenance ; so, they say to the manufacturer, if you can not give two dollars a day, give me a dollar and a half, there are

some parts of your work for which I am more competent than a young fellow of sixteen. I think I should be worth to you for that work a half dollar more than he is. So a portion of the men are retained, and are comforted for the decrease in their earnings by the reflection that the wages of their children make up the loss. But competition is not content even now. It is discovered by some enterprising manufacturer that children of ten and twelve can do many parts of his work as well as men did them once or as young people of sixteen do now. So a certain number of the latter are displaced, and children, whom he can hire for fifty cents a day, substituted. Indirectly, this operates to displace some adults also, and they and the youth find that those of them who can have employment at all, must be content with less wages, so a dollar and a quarter and seventy-five cents is offered to each, respectively, and by each accepted. This seems to us a fair statement of the manner in which the introduction of Child-labor tends to the decrease of men's wages, and the relegation of large numbers of them for portions of the year to idleness."

The truth of this position has been repeatedly verified. The Massachusetts Bureau of Labor, the best of the State labor bureaus, has examined carefully, and thoroughly, the effect of the employment of women and children upon wages, and the condition of the laboring classes, and has collected reliable statistics bearing specially upon this point. The *Sixth Annual Report, 1875*, furnishes a full individual statement of the average yearly earnings of the father, the wife, and the children; total earnings of the families, number in the family working, etc. The following is a table setting forth these results, which is taken from *Wealth and Progress* by Mr. George Gunton, and by him obtained from the report mentioned:¹

¹See page 171.

TRADES.	Fathers' yearly wages.	Number in family.	Total earnings of wife and children.	Total earnings of family.	Total cost of living.	No. of women and children working.
Shop.....	\$752 36	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	\$69 04	\$821 40	\$772 21	4 $\frac{1}{2}$
Metal-workers.....	739 30	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	90 51	829 81	723 00	4 $\frac{1}{2}$
Building.....	721 32	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	73 00	794 32	740 03	4 $\frac{1}{2}$
Teamsters.....	630 02	5 $\frac{1}{2}$	105 00	735 02	729 00	4 $\frac{1}{2}$
Shoe and boot.....	540 00	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	209 00	749 00	693 13	1
Metal-work laborers..	458 09	5 $\frac{1}{2}$	256 08	714 17	697 92	1 $\frac{1}{2}$
Mill operatives.....	572 10	5	250 35	822 45	755 04	1
Mill laborers.....	386 04	6 $\frac{1}{2}$	284 08	670 12	638 99	1 $\frac{1}{2}$
Shop laborers.....	433 06	5 $\frac{1}{10}$	232 02	665 08	642 08	1 $\frac{1}{10}$
Out-door laborers....	424 12	6 $\frac{1}{2}$	257 93	682 05	650 81	1 $\frac{1}{2}$

From this table it is manifest that it is the total cost of living which fixes the total earnings of the family, and that the wages of the wife and children have not increased the total income of the family, or, quoting the words of Mr. Wright, "Thus it is seen that in neither of the cases where the man is assisted by his wife or children does he earn as much as other laborers. Also, that in the case where he is assisted by both wife and children, he earns the least."

Care must be taken to notice that we are here dealing only with classes. If one class sends its children out into employment more than another, just so much are the average wages of the heads of that class reduced as the child earns, as it is the class that as a whole determines the standard of comfort for that class. Thus, if one family should cease to let its children be employed, the wages of

¹ *Massachusetts Bureau of Labor Report*, 1876, page 71.

the head would not be proportionately increased; but if that whole class to which that family belonged should do this, then the wages of the head must in time rise enough to keep them in the standard of comfort to which they had become accustomed. The result of the successful legislation of Massachusetts, for shorter hours and restriction of Child-labor, has tested and proved this economic law. It can hardly be denied that the laborers are now as well off, and the total earnings of the family as great now without the employment of their children, as formerly they were with such employment. Certainly this is no small gain for the laboring people of that State.

Private philanthropy, through the aiding of a few individuals, can accomplish nothing toward raising the condition of a whole class of labor. This can only be done by action touching the whole class, which, in many cases, can only be done through the instrumentality of the State.¹

¹In leaving this point I wish to say that I am largely indebted to Mr. Gunton, who has in his work, *Wealth and Progress*, elaborated many of the foregoing principles. Prof. Seligman, in reviewing this book in the December, 1887, number of the *Political Science Quarterly*, says: "Mr. Gunton's main point that wages depend on the standard of life has already been frequently advanced by other authorities, beginning with Adam Smith and Ricardo. But no one has hitherto made it the central point of the doctrine, no one has hitherto erected it into the fundamental law of wages, no one has hitherto added the important corollary that production depends on consumption, and that distribution is a necessary part of the process of production. In this consists the importance of Mr. Gunton's contribution to the science of economics. Mr. Gunton's work may be declared, without hesitation, to be the most notable contribution to the subject since "Walker's Wages Question." An article in the *American Anthropologist*, April, 1889, by Prof. Lester F. Ward, entitled 'Economic Paradoxes,' discusses briefly the same points covered by Mr. Gunton."

Leaving the consideration of the standard of comfort and its influence in fixing the rate of wages, we will now examine the effects of the employment of children from the standpoint of the employer, its effect on his profits, his ability to compete with other countries, etc.

The system of modern distribution rests on the fundamental principle of competition, except in the few cases where restricted by the existence of natural monopolies. In machine-made goods this competition is particularly intense. Manufacturers must employ every means for lessening the cost of production of their wares, or they will be distanced by their competitors. Will not, then, the restriction of their ability to employ whatever kind of labor—the most important element in production—they may choose, affect them vitally?

Competition among manufacturers is of two kinds, that between establishments in the same State, and that between those in different States and countries. As regards the former, free competition is in nowise hindered by the prohibition of the employment of children. As Prof. H. C. Adams has demonstrated in his monograph, *The State in its Relation to Industrial Action*, competition would take place as briskly as before, but on a higher plane. As long as one employs children, the other must also; but if all are prohibited from the employment of children, they still remain on the same footing, as regards each other, but now compete for and with adult labor.

Let us now consider interstate and international competition. The rivalry between manufacturers is here hardly less intense. All, moreover, are not on the same footing. Some States and nations forbid

Child-labor, and others do not, yet all must compete in the same markets.

It is this point, taken in connection with international trade, which has afforded manufacturers their chief objection to any prohibition of their right to employ children. Their claim is, that as long as other nations and States continue such employment, they are forced to follow suit, or be driven out of many quarters of trade. It is, they say, just as if they were prohibited from using an improved machine, of which other nations have the advantage. This is the same objection which has been raised against shorter hours. Plausible as it appears it is in great part unfounded, and has been refuted by experience more than once. We will see that the employment of children and the problem of shorter hours is not the same as that of an improved machine; that other elements enter which may modify the result.

“There is one fact too often lost sight of, that the extent of the market is mainly determined by the consumption of the laboring population. It is estimated that they consume about eighty per cent. of the machine-made goods of the world.”¹ The home market is becoming more and more the most important market for each nation; and it is, therefore, to the direct interest of the producers, that the condition of the consumers (the laborers) should be as good as possible. The trade of a civilized colony is of more value than that of a country in barbarism. Now, the non-employment of children means, as we have seen, a higher standard of comfort, and, therefore, greater purchasing power. Very well, the manufacturer will say, but not if this results from higher

¹Gunton's *Wealth of Progress*.

wages which we must pay adults, which comes directly from our pockets. This argument is founded on the mistaken belief in the law, as set forth by Ricardo and Mill, that profits fall as wages rise, or, in other words, that any rise of wages must come out of profits. For an arbitrary rise or advance of wages, we can see but little escape from this reasoning. But it is efficiency of labor in comparison to labor wage, which determines labor cost. An improved standard of comfort and better quality of employés, consequent on a reform of the condition of labor, brings with it, not only higher wages, but greater ability, and honesty. Their work is more conscientiously and skillfully done. Less supervision and watching is required, making their actual labor cost often little more, if any, than before. Compare the wages of labor in various countries, for instance, India, Belgium, Germany, England, and the United States. In all we find a low standard of comfort obtaining where wages are low. Efficiency of labor, less labor cost, and increased power to compete in foreign countries, are found where wages are higher. England was materially crippled at no stage of her progress, as she shortened her hours of labor, and drove the children out of her workshops and mines. Even in the severer test of the competition between different States of our Union, the result has been equally devoid of any injury to the competing power of the State taking such action. It was confidently predicted by many of the manufacturers of Massachusetts that the passage of her ten-hour law would so cripple her that it would be impossible for her industries to compete with those of her sister States. Just the reverse, however,

happened. Establishments multiplied at a greater ratio than in former years, though wages were, at the same time, perceptibly increased.

Up to a certain limit, then, the improvement of the condition of labor, through increased efficiency, will more than balance the higher wages which accompany it. Thus labor of twelve hours would hardly be denied to be more efficient and cheaper in the end than that of fifteen or twenty hours a day. No more would it be contended that the hours of labor might be reduced to an unlimited extent, with a corresponding increase of efficiency. The problem is to find this favorable limit.

Political economists do not contend that high wages, as such, will not lessen profits, but rather that the concomitant results of such rise frequently counteract this result, and may leave the laborers in a better condition with higher wages, without any diminution of profits. It is but an economy in the application of labor, the predominant element in production.

Yet another important element will contribute to this result. The tendency is for an increased cost of labor to cause an increase in the use of cheaper methods (machinery). It is a matter of common observation that inventions are rarely made in manufactures until there is a strong demand for them. Producers are content with the old methods, until increased cost of production or foreign competition compels them to seek better methods. As long as labor is cheap, it will be the chief element in production, but as it becomes dear, a device will be sought to take its place. This, in the long run, is frequently in itself sufficient to leave the cost of

production as low as it formerly was, with lower wages. The laborers thus, as it were, anticipate the benefits of improvements, and appropriate the larger share of them to themselves.

To recapitulate, then, we would see the following successive results should Child-labor be prohibited. After any temporary hardships and abnormal conditions, consequent upon an introduction of new methods and temporary fluctuations of wages, had subsided: There would be, first, a permanent rise of wages, owing to the lessened competition, and in order to enable the head of the family to furnish the entire support for his family, according to the law of the standard of comfort; second, the immediate effect of this rise of wages would be to infringe, somewhat, on profits, but, as time goes on, the improved condition of the laborers, rendering them more valuable as consumers; their increased efficiency, rendering their actual labor cost less; and the tendency for an increased introduction of labor-saving machinery to take the place of any operatives whose labor cost still remains more than formerly, would, more and more, react to increase profits, while the condition of labor would remain permanently improved. The manufacturers would reserve to themselves the advantages of the introduction of cheaper methods, not reducing the price of articles as they are made, until their profits, if they have fallen, rise to the normal rate. It is, of course, impossible to accurately measure the strength of each of these influences; that their influence is, however, as described, is seen in the results of labor legislation wherever tried, either in this or in foreign countries.

SOCIAL ASPECTS OF CHILD-LABOR.

The evils of unrestricted employment of children, its extreme injury to all society, its direct tendency to degenerate the physical power of mankind, are so evident as to almost make superfluous any mention of them. There is no feature of the modern social problem that is fraught with so much that is heartless and cruel, and that is so lacking in every instinct of humanity.

The first of these evils is the great injustice done to the children themselves. Everywhere, in the field, the mine and the workshop, the children are working for ten, twelve, and fifteen hours of the twenty-four, dwarfing their intellects, and wearing out their little lives, that their masters may gain a larger profit for themselves. Combined with the positive hardships and sufferings that everywhere accompany Child-labor, is the utter absence of all those childish pleasures, which should be connected with the childhood of everyone. To me this is the most pitiful feature of the whole system, to know that probably millions of children have never known what youth and its joys mean. As describing the present condition of factory children, I will extract a few sentences from the language of the Inspector of Factories and Workshops for New Jersey. He says: "Large numbers of children have been examined in all our manufacturing districts. Almost all the children examined

were between the ages of twelve and fifteen. The average age at which these children went to work was nine years. All of them had been accustomed to work ten hours a day, and many of them thirteen and more hours a day through overtime. The general appearance of these children is noteworthy. Children, who had been set to work at an early age, were, as a rule, delicate, puny, and ignorant; they knew the least, having forgotten the little they had been taught before going to work. Children of thirteen years, with little old faces, said they did not care for school or play.”¹

The ignorance displayed by these children is, frequently, almost inconceivable. Many have no mental outlook beyond their own factory. Some, as shown by a report of the New York Labor Bureau on this point, thought that the world might be a hundred miles long; that Europe was in New York, and, in fact, displayed an utter ignorance of everything but what they had seen in the factory, and their daily journey between it and their homes. In the same report, quoted above, the Inspector says:²

“At least thirty per cent. could not name the city in which they lived. Sixty per cent. had never heard of the United States or Europe, and ninety-five per cent. had never heard of the Revolutionary war. Many who had heard of the United States could not say where they were.”

No State could allow the children in its reformatories and poor-houses to undergo such treatment as

¹*Second Report New Jersey Inspector of Factories and Workshops*, 1884, page 14.

²*Second Report New Jersey Inspector of Factories and Workshops*, 1884, page 18.

the children frequently endure in factories without a storm of indignation arising. Why should not all children enjoy an equal protection? Every child has a moral right to maintenance and education, and to be allowed an opportunity to obtain a proper physical constitution, and a religious, moral, and intellectual development to enable it to prepare itself for its own future wants and happiness. If the condition of the parents is such that they are not able or willing to provide their children with such opportunities, then the State should see that it is done. It is not infringing the prerogatives of the parent, but only protecting the child in its rights. The intimate connection of this subject with that of education has been shown in the character of the legislation which has been enacted.

Children are now brought into the world without the least preparation being made for their moral or physical welfare, and are made the slaves of their parents, who think to increase the income of the family by the miserable pittance which they can earn. At the age of five the child can sew on buttons, pick threads or strip tobacco. In the tobacco industry thirty-seven per cent. of all employés are children. To add to this injury, their occupation is not alone in the factory, but at home in the tenement house, in their bed-rooms, where they are forced to constantly breathe the deadly fumes of tobacco.¹ This, New York is at last striving to prevent, and children are now forbidden to work in tobacco in tenement houses in any room that is on the same floor with their sleeping-rooms.

The effect of the factory system upon the degeneration of the race is a vital consideration, and in

¹*Second Annual Labor Report, New York, 1884, page 331.*

this light is receiving attention from all nations aspiring to military supremacy. In the many elaborate English reports, and in the reports of the states, is contained the testimony of a large number of physicians of the highest standing, who have been interrogated, and all of whom concur in the opinion that a positive and permanent injury is done to the physical condition of mankind.¹ Military recruiting officers all complain that they are able to accept but a small proportion of those presenting themselves in the manufacturing districts, as they are physically unfitted for the service. A recent report by the French military authorities shows that of every 10,000 conscripts fit for service in ten agricultural districts, there were 4,029 rejected, and in ten manufacturing departments as high as 9,000 were rejected. But it does not need the weight of these authorities to be certain of this. A glance at the conditions under which they work will show that such a result is inevitable. Degraded and depraved as this system makes them, the whole field of labor is lowered. No one thing would do more to raise the dignity of labor than the total abolition of Child-labor.

Crime, immorality, illiteracy and pauperism must always be the result of this system. What health or morality can there be where both sexes work together in an impure atmosphere, often with water-closets common to both?

These evils should not be ignored. It should be the effort of every nation to secure, as far as possi-

¹*Second Annual Labor Report, New York, 1884, page 201; Second Annual Report New Jersey Inspector of Factories, pages 24 and 25; First Annual Labor Report, Massachusetts, 1870, page 127.*

ble, good and contented citizens. And forces which will contribute to this in any way should not be disregarded. The nation feels a direct interest in securing the advancement of the health and education, and the morality and well being of the whole community. The improvement of the condition of the laboring classes has now become a matter of vital importance to every nation, as regards its supremacy as a nation. The struggle for predominance is now more severe than ever before. Nations have now no longer a store of sturdy peasants to draw upon, but its strength must be obtained from the city factories. It will be to the nation which builds up by a wise policy in this direction, an honest, sturdy, self-reliant and intelligent class of laborers that the prize of industrial supremacy will come. The disregard of these facts means discontent with existing conditions, and outbreaks against law and order. Even now, the presence of this contingency has to be constantly borne in mind in all important political moves. In the economy of labor to a nation the question of the employment of children has a bearing. In just so much as each individual laborer creates wealth more than he consumes, has he increased the wealth and prosperity of his country. If each child, instead of being put to work, while yet unskilled, and undeveloped physically and mentally, to be worn out and become a drag upon society, instead of a benefit, just at the age when he should be the greatest producer, should be allowed a few more years in youth for training and development, he could labor to a greater advantage in after years and enrich society just so much by his increased labor. The regulation of the employment of children

is but one of the means by which the masses could be benefited, but it is one which must come sooner or later. In it and similar legislation lies the true policy of protection to American labor.

Civilization and progress to-day rest on the integrity of the family. With the weakening of this tie, comes the weakening of the foundation upon which the whole social structure rests. Of the many influences which have been at work few have operated so powerfully to disintegrate family life as the forced employment of women and young children. In either case home life is impossible. The parents and children, separated during the whole day, can feel none of those ties of parent and child. Home comforts are unknown, and early independence of the child removes all ideas of parental authority, while the parent, in turn, too frequently comes to consider his child but an instrument of production, to increase his income. In many cases while the child works, the parent, unable to obtain work, spends his time in idleness on the street corner or at the gin shop.

The query, why Christianity has failed to take hold among the laboring classes, finds a ready answer in the attitude of the church towards such needed reforms as this. Practical Christianity owes a duty to these little ones and these disrupted families, which can not be performed solely in mission schools and by private charity. A vigorous stand on the part of the church could do much to obtain practical legislation. If the laborers could feel that the church was fighting their battles in a practical way, and attempting to strike the evil at its root, instead of alleviating the suffering from the surface, it would not require a super-sanguine man to predict a differ-

ent feeling on the part of the laborers to the church, whose benefit and friendship to them they can at last feel.¹

It is objected, however, that the throwing of children out of employment would deprive many families of their means of support. At first this might be so. Take the extreme case of a widow and her children. If her children were not allowed to work, her wages could not go below what would support all, while now, where the many seek work and the few get it, she will take in work at such payment that by the work of herself and children combined, they can just maintain life. If now, suddenly, while she is accustomed to depend on her children's wages, her children should be prohibited from labor, in her individual instance great injury would result; but soon wages would begin to feel the result of the lessened competition of pauper labor, and would rise so that the family would return to the same level, condition and standard without the aid of the children as it was before with it. We should not forget that a change of policy and new legislation is apt at first, in many instances, to injure some individuals. What new invention or introduction of improved machinery is there but which seriously injures those laborers employed in the old method, who thus suddenly displaced, find their acquired skill useless? But improved machinery is not forbidden on that account.

The time for Child-labor legislation is now ripe. Never before was there such a prospect that its results would be beneficial. We have the example

¹See Professor R. T. Ely's *Social Aspects of Christianity*, 1889, for an interesting exposition of the great field here offered for Christian activity.

before us of England's century of legislation, every step marked by an improved condition of the laborers, and increase in national welfare. We have nearer us the recent enactments in some of our States, all alike attesting to the good results which have flowed from them. The efforts of the Massachusetts authorities have been most noticeably crowned with success. The factory inspectors in that State have been so efficient as to reduce the employment of children under fourteen years of age in that State fully seventy per cent. in the last eight years. Of the 125,942 employés, in the textile factories in the State, in 1888, only 1,616 were under the age of fourteen, and 7,845 were under sixteen. Thus 9,461 in all, or only 7.5 per cent. of the whole body of textile workers were under sixteen. Maine, after a special investigation of the employment of children in that State reported—"It is gratifying to know that Child-labor in Maine is not the serious feature in the labor question that it has been in the past. Although the law, prohibiting the employment of children under twelve years of age, has been in force in this State not quite a year, the benefits resulting are seen in every manufacturing city and village in our State."¹

The policy of State regulation of the employment of children is now willingly accepted by many manufacturers and all the laborers, and is sustained by the approval of the people the world over. I have not been able to find among all the reports of the twenty-one States having labor bureaus and the

¹*Maine Labor Report*, 1888, page 9; see also *Rhode Island Labor Reports for 1887 and 1888*, page 120; see also opinion of Professor Walker, *Political Economy*, page 383.

eight States having inspectors of factories, one report to do other than commend the total restriction of the labor of children under fourteen years of age, and the regulation of that of minors over that age. The trade unions, and other labor organizations are in favor of its prohibition. The declaration of the Knights of Labor, Article 13, recommends fifteen as a minimum age.

Among the many obstacles, intervening in the early attempts to regulate the employment of children, was the disheartening fact that too often the adult laborers, the parents of the children, resisted, or at least remained neutral and apathetic to all attempts to better the condition of their children and themselves. Even when the laws were enacted they were often the most persistent in efforts to evade them. Accustomed to be away from their offspring the whole day, and with family life unknown to them, it is not strange that they should regard their children's welfare with indifference. To them, the prohibition of their child's labor meant but the diminution of their income. This same feeling is still prevalent among the lowest class of laborers in the United States; but among educated laborers and labor organizations the feeling is far different, and they are urging legislation similar to that of England, as one of the principal measures of reform. These organizations are doing a great work in this and similar directions, and I have the greatest hope in their usefulness in the future in urging and advocating social reforms. They now recognize the fact, well proved by economists, that the wages of the wife or children can not, in the long run, increase the receipts of the family, for, in that just as much

as the child contributes to the support of the family, are the wages of the head of the family decreased.

To many the very existence of Child-labor to any extent is almost unknown, and, in consequence, little attention is paid to it by them. Only those who have investigated for themselves realize the enormity of this evil. It is our duty, however, to recognize that the problem is here with us. The reports of the inspectors of factories and chiefs of labor bureaus show that, in their opinion, this, together with the employment of women, is the great evil of our factory system. In the first convention of the inspectors of factories of the different States, held in 1887, was unanimously passed the following resolution :

“*Resolved*, That it is the sense of this convention, that laws should be enacted, in every State in the Union, prohibiting the employment of minors under fourteen in every workshop, factory, or mercantile establishment, as we consider it a self-evident proposition that such employment pauperizes the parents, and enforces illiteracy upon the child, two conditions of society incompatible with republican institutions, and the freedom and welfare of man.”¹

That all nations are recognizing the importance of this same problem can be seen from the recent invitation, given by the Swiss government to all nations, to send delegates to a labor convention to be held this year, to discuss, among other things, the proper steps to be taken to lessen the employment of young children. The German Kaiser has also issued a similar invitation, for the consideration of the same subjects.

¹*First National Convention of Factory Inspectors*, 1887, page 16; *Second National Convention of Factory Inspectors*, 1888, page 46.

It is useless and criminal, in the face of this, for legislators to remain idle, in hopes that in time it will disappear in some unexplained way and solve itself, as is too often their seeming expectation in regard to other than political complications. For the reasons already stated, a solution can only come from State action, or, at least, State initiative. To hope for a sufficient improvement in business ethics to induce the manufacturers to voluntarily refrain from the employment of children is more than chimerical. In the fierce competition of production, it is folly to suppose that this vast supply of cheap labor will remain undrawn upon. Although the attitude of many manufacturers has undergone a marked change in this respect, and many desire the prohibition of Child-labor, it is of little or no avail. As long as some of the manufacturers employ cheap labor, the others will be forced to do likewise. The claim for State action rests on peculiarly sound reasons. The laborers are here absolutely powerless to help themselves, if, indeed, they ever had an opportunity to cultivate a desire for anything better than their low condition.

What is demanded by the laborers is greater social opportunity. All men are not born free and equal, though this expression represents an ideal to which a true democratic republic should strive. As far as possible let all start equal in the race. It is this lack of opportunity which is the greatest wrong to the children. In all respects they start heavily handicapped. Put to severe labor, and the confining, weakening influence of the poorly ventilated and unsanitary factory, they must inevitably grow up stunted in mind and body, and thus physically and mentally enter unequal combatants with the organ-

ized wealth and power of their fellow-workers. It is this unequal strife that the State alone can remedy. To do this the abolition of Child-labor combined with a broad plan of manual and liberal education, would contribute in a marked degree.

By it, a lever for social elevation would be put down to the very bottom of society where it is the most needed. It is the children of to-day who will determine the character of the next generation. The character of children under fifteen is much more susceptible to social influences than in after life, and it is essential that they should spend that time under the most favorable conditions. Then, more than at any other time, is laid the foundation for the standard of comfort for each individual that will determine its level for all after life.

“In these days of legislative interference, when the shield of the State protects the dumb beast from the merciless blows of his driver, when the overworked horse is remembered and released from his work, when capital expends the time of legislatures, taxes the people for any scheme that promises dividends to the stockholders, when monopolies have charters granted them, then it would seem pitiable if childhood’s wants of leisure for rest of body and education for the best period of their lives should be denied them. She (the State) goes on, regardless of consequences, forgetful of the inevitable logic of events, protecting the strong, forgetting the weak and poor, and all, under the false plea of non-interference with the liberties of the people. The children have rights, which the State is bound to respect; their right is to play and make merry, to be at school, to be players, not workers.”¹

¹*Second Annual Report New York Bureau of Labor*, page 355.