

PAMPHLET No. 92

## National Child Labor Committee

INCORPORATED  
105 EAST 22D STREET  
NEW YORK CITY

# Child Labor in the Carolinas

ACCOUNT OF INVESTIGATIONS MADE IN THE COTTON MILLS OF NORTH  
AND SOUTH CAROLINA, BY REV. A. E. SEDDON, A. H. ULM AND  
LEWIS W. HINE, UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE SOUTHERN  
OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL CHILD LABOR COMMITTEE.

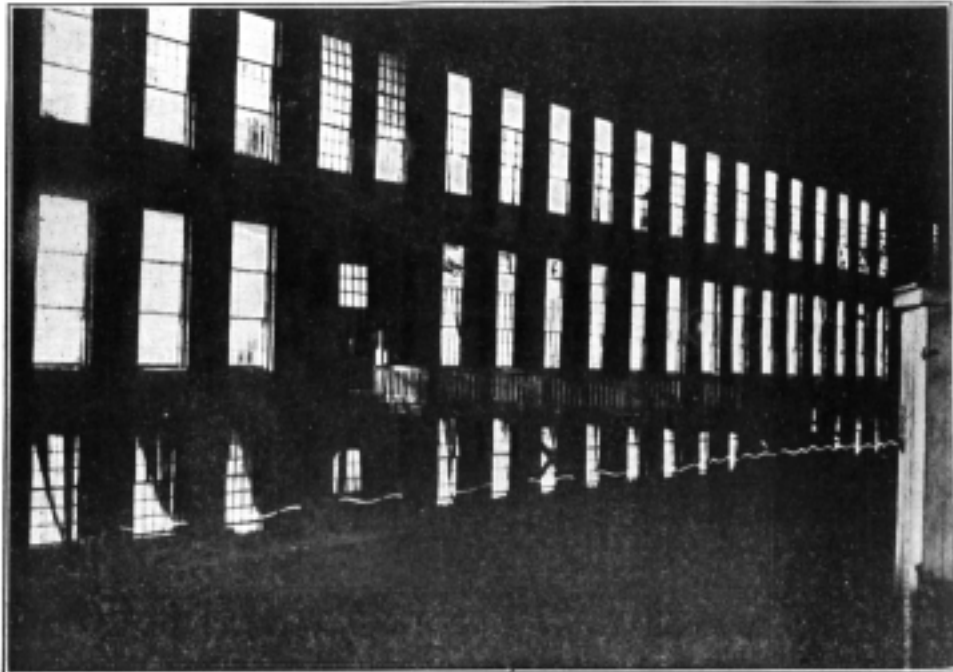


DOFFER OF THE MELLVILLE MANUFACTURING COMPANY, CHERRYVILLE, N. C.  
Says he has worked two years. One of the many below the legal age.

A. J. MCKELWAY  
SECRETARY FOR THE SOUTHERN STATES



No. 1.—NEW YEAR'S DAY AT ATHERTON MILLS, CHARLOTTE, N. C.  
Mr. Hine was refused permission to photograph children in the mill. These doffer boys were photographed at the noon hour.



No. 2.—HIGH SHOALS.  
Mill running at eight p. m. Mr. Hine was forbidden to photograph children. This mill and one at Atherton, where also photographing was forbidden, are under the management of D. A. Tompkins, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the "National Child Labor Commission."

## NORTH CAROLINA

Lewis W. Hine, already well known by his photographs of social conditions in New York City and elsewhere, was employed by the National Child Labor Committee to investigate child labor conditions in North and South Carolina, and to record the results with his camera. Accordingly, in November, 1908, he went to Charlotte, North Carolina, the center of the cotton mill region of the South. Over 50 per cent of the cotton spindles and looms of the South are within a hundred miles of Charlotte. Mr. Hine visited 19 mill villages and investigated 17 mills, taking 230 photographs of the conditions he discovered. In only two mills, the one at High Shoals, North Carolina, and the Atherton mill at Charlotte, was Mr. Hine forbidden by the mill management to take any photographs of the children, but as both of these mills are under the same management, the condition at High Shoals may be illustrated by Plate No. 1 at Atherton,

### *The North Carolina Child Labor Law.*

AGE LIMIT FOR EMPLOYMENT IN FACTORIES, 13 YEARS.

IN APPRENTICESHIP CAPACITY, 12 YEARS.

AGE LIMIT FOR NIGHT WORK, 14 YEARS.

HOURS OF LABOR FOR CHILDREN UNDER 18, 66 PER WEEK.

EMPLOYMENT CERTIFICATES, WRITTEN STATEMENTS OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN.

EMPLOYERS MUST "KNOWINGLY AND WILFULLY" VIOLATE THIS LAW BEFORE THEY CAN BE CONVICTED.

NO FACTORY INSPECTION. COMMISSIONER OF LABOR HAS NO AUTHORITY TO ENTER A FACTORY.

NO PROSECUTIONS UNDER THE LAW.

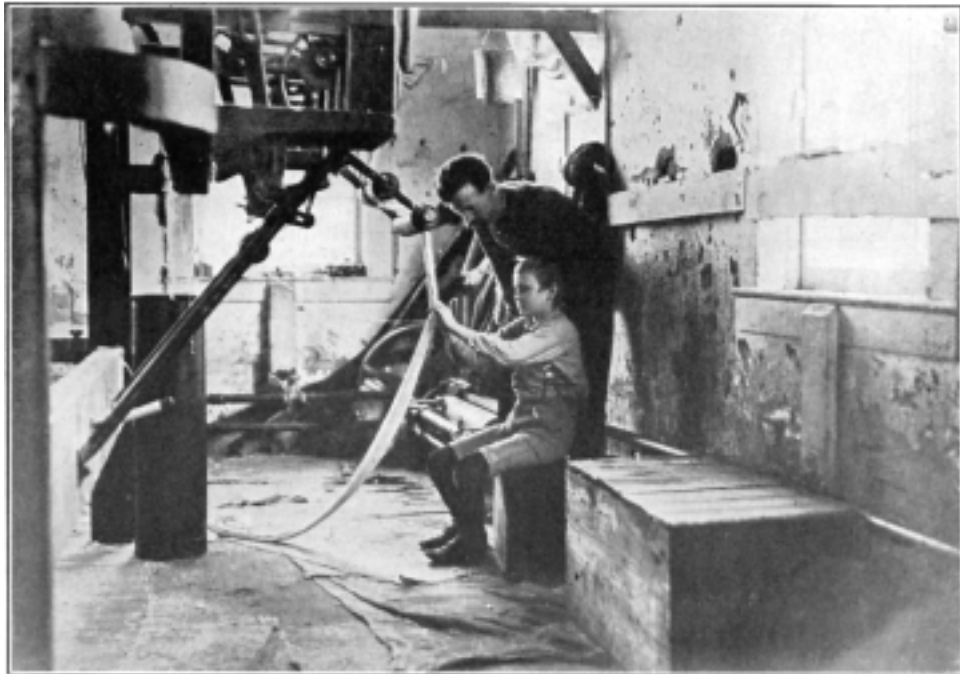
which Mr. Hine succeeded in securing in spite of the prohibition. Mr. D. A. Tompkins, by the way, the president of both these mills, is Chairman of the Executive Committee of the National Child Labor Commission, organized to secure correct information about child labor conditions. This and other photographs from the Atherton mill may help Mr. Tompkins to locate some of the children employed under thirteen years of age. Plate 2 is a picture of the High Shoals mill running at night. Mr. Hine's report on his visit

to High Shoals would make a complete story in itself. The whole village is under the absolute control of the superintendent of the mill, but as to child labor conditions, he says: "At noon I saw boys and girls, dozens of them, from nine to thirteen years old, going and coming. Saw a number of very young doffers playing outside at various times of the day. At the evening change of shift I waited close outside the main door concealed in the darkness of the woods. I did not see many go in, but a few were very small . . . I met one boy during the day at his home who said he is working nights and is ten years old." Mr. Hine thought that the "betterment work" at this mill which has been so widely advertised, had better begin with the abolition of child labor.

In marked contrast to these mills was the indifference of most of the mill officials to the investigation and their apparent unconsciousness of anything either wrong or criminal in the employment of children. At the Kessler Manufacturing Company, Salisbury, North Carolina, the superintendent was willing that photographs should be taken so long as



No. 3.—CATAWBA COTTON MILL, NEWTON, N. C.  
Of forty employees ten were not larger than these. The girl is spinning, the boy is a doffer.



No. 4.—NEWTON COTTON MILL, NEWTON, N. C.  
Boy has worked two years at warping machine. It is usually stated that children work only in spinning rooms. Among 150 employees twenty appeared to be twelve years of age or less.



No. 5.—COTTON MILL, WHITNEL, N. C.

On the night shift, waiting for the whistle. Smallest boy and girl about fifty inches tall. Smallest girl had been in mill two years, six months at night. One medium sized boy had doffed four years; partly at night, and gets sixty cents a night. Work after eight p. m. is illegal for children under fourteen years.



No. 6.—COTTON MILL, WHITNEL, N. C.

Spinner, fifty-one inches tall, runs four sides, earns forty-eight cents a day. Two years in the mill. Ten boys and girls about this size on day shift and ten on night, among fifty

the actual conditions were not misrepresented. Plate 7 is a photograph of a group of the workers including the superintendent. At the Catawba Cotton Mill, Newton, Mr. Hine affirms that out of forty employees ten were as small as the two shown in plate No. 3.

It is frequently asserted that children are employed only in the spinning-room of the cotton mills. Plate No. 4 shows a picture of a boy at the warping machine, where he has been employed for two years, in the Newton Cotton Mill, where, out of 150 employees there were 20 who appeared to be 12 years of age or under. At Whitnel, Plate No. 5, is shown a part of the night shift. The picture was taken by flashlight while the operatives were waiting for the door to open. Plate No. 6 shows a little spinner at work on the day shift. She was 51 inches high, runs 4 sides, earns 48 cents a day and has been in the mill for two years. Mr. Hine states that ten boys and girls about this size are on the day shift, and ten on the night shift, out of a force of 50 hands for each shift. There is more night work in the North Carolina mills than in those of South Carolina or any of the other southern states, some 50 mills now running at night. But the difference of a year in the age limit for North Carolina does not seem to make much difference in the size of the children employed. The children work twelve hours on a night shift and say that they have no special time off for lunch, that they "eat-a-workin'."

Those of us who can still remember with what joy we hailed the closing hour at school after a school period of five or six hours, may perhaps appreciate what the end of work means for the boys shown in Plate No. 8. This is the closing hour at the Loray mill, Gastonia, after a twelve-hour day. One of the smallest boys said that he had been at work in the mill for two years. The lint on the caps and clothes of these boys indicates the character of the atmosphere which they breathe. Plate No. 9 shows a group of workers at the Wampum Manufacturing Company, at Lincolnton, where the investigator was not allowed to take photographs inside the mill; while Plate No. 10 shows a little fellow six years old who stays in another mill all day with his mother and sister. He is just beginning to help a little, but will probably soon be drafted into regular service, though it may be some years before his name appears on the payroll. The presence of these children in the mill indicates that a day nursery is a much-needed charity. No. 3 of Plate 15 shows a group of boys somewhat larger than the doffers and sweepers generally are. The president of this mill said very frankly that the North Carolina child labor law was violated by practically all of the mills, "not over ten per cent of the mills observe it. . . . I now have a family of four girls nearly grown, all number one hands, and they are going to another mill because I will not employ a ten-year-old child. In my opinion the only remedy is to have the law amended so as to have an inspector." (From the report of the North Carolina Bureau of Labor for 1907).

Not only the present ages of the children whose photographs are taken show violations of the law, but the fact that some of tender years have already worked a considerable time in the mill. Plate No. 11 shows two boys from one of the Gastonia mills. The boy on the right is ten years old and has already worked three years in the mill, though in school a part of the time. The boy on the left said that he is 12 years old, has worked in the mill for two years, and at night for nine months. So with the boys in Plate No. 12, who hail from the Scotland Mills at Laurinburg. The boy on the right is 14 years of age, has worked eight years in the mill and six years at night. The boy in the middle has just begun to work,



No. 7.  
**KESSLER MANUFACTURING CO.**  
**SALISBURY, N. C.**

Superintendent **Mason** (only man in the picture consented to taking photograph on condition that "things must be represented as they were." Here they are!



No. 8.  
**LORAY MILL**  
**GASTONIA, N. C.**

Closing after twelve-day. One of smallest boys he had been the mill two three years. is now two years old.

No. 9.  
**WAMPUM MANUFACTURING CO.**  
**LINCOLNTON, N. C.**  
 Photograph taken at noon hour. Investigator not allowed to take pictures inside the mill.





No. 10.—DANIEL MANUFACTURING COMPANY, LINCOLNTON, N. C.  
Six years old. Stays all day in the mill where his mother and sister work. Is beginning to "help" a little and will probably soon be regularly at work, though his name may not appear on the payroll.



No. 11.—GASTONIA, N. C.  
Boy on right of picture is ten years old. Has worked three years in the mill, though in school part of the time. Boy on left said he was twelve years old. Has worked in the mill two years and at night nine months. Work below the age of twelve years in factories, even as apprentices, is illegal. Work at night is illegal before the fourteenth birthday.





No. 12.—SCOTLAND MILLS, LAURINBURG, N. C.  
Tallest lad about fourteen years old, has worked eight years in mill, six years at night.  
The next in height has worked there three years.



No. 13.—DICKSON MILL, LAURINBURG, N. C.  
Children of night superintendent. Bessie runs four sides, has worked two years at night. Frank (smallest) doffer, has worked two years at night. George (largest) doffer, has worked three years at night. Was proud that he could write his name. Night work of all these children is illegal.

while the boy on the left has been three years in the mill. The Dickson mill, at the same town of Laurinburg, furnishes another example of the same abuse of childhood. In Plate No. 13 the children of the night superintendent are shown. The girl runs four sides at a spinning-frame and has worked two years at night. The smaller boy has worked for the same time, and the larger, who looks to be about 12 years old, has been three years in the mill at night.

POSTSCRIPT.—Since the above was written, the North Carolina House of Representatives has passed a bill, which is expected to pass the Senate, raising the age-limit from fourteen to fifteen for girls only, at night work, cutting down the hours from 66 a week to 64, and making this apply to all minors and women, forbidding "helpers" in the mill under thirteen years of age, and providing for some degree of factory inspection. But as this amendment goes into effect January 1, 1910, the conditions depicted in these pages may be expected to prevail during 1909.



No. 14.—ANOTHER NIGHT SHIFT.

Going to work at 6 o'clock on a cold, dark, December night. They came out at 6 o'clock in the morning, drenched by a cold rain. Two of the smaller girls, with three other sisters, support a big, lazy father, who complains that he is not well enough to work, the oldest of the sisters having been in the mill for seven years and the two youngest for two years each. Three smaller children at home will recruit the family purse soon. The two girls at the extreme left of the picture looked to be twelve years old. Both had been in the mill two years and one had worked six months and the other one year at night.

## SOUTH CAROLINA

As to conditions in South Carolina, Mr. Hine states his opinion thus: "In general, I found these were considerably worse than in North Carolina, both as to the age and number of small children employed, though several of the mill towns in North Carolina approached the worst ones in South Carolina. . . . In Chester, South Carolina, an overseer told me frankly that manufacturers all over the South evaded the child labor law by letting youngsters who are under age help older brothers and sisters. The names of the younger ones do not appear on the company books and the pay goes to the older child who is above twelve." No. 5 of Plate 15 shows four boys at work in the Eureka cotton mills at Chester. The tallest has been at work in the mill for ten years. Standing

next to him boys who have worked three years each, while the smallest, ten years old and 52 inches high, has been at work for two years.

There were plenty of children to be seen at the cotton mills in Clinton (Plate 25), where there is an orphanage and a church college. By way of contrast to the most of these photographs we present Plate No. 18, typical hands of a larger growth.

The Saturday half-holiday is a great treat to the children. No. 4 of Plate 15 shows some boys from the Springstein Mills at Chester, who have been playing ball. The boy with the glove is 12 years of age, 52 inches high and is a

weaver who runs his looms and makes \$1.00 a day. He has been two years in the mill. The tallest boy is also a weaver of 12 years. This is interesting testimony in view of the statement of Mr. Ellyson A. Smyth of South Carolina, to the effect that the children were all in the spinning-room and that "No child ever stood at a loom."

At Newberry, Mr. Hine says he found more children and younger children than in any place in the South except Whitnel and Newton in North Carolina. Plate No. 16 shows a group of girl workers at the Newberry mill at Newberry. It is hardly necessary to inquire after their ages.

Dillon is another mill town with an evil reputation for the employment of children. I quote from Mr. Hine: "I heard many complaints among the workers about conditions, especially the low wages, long hours, pressure of work and the use of young children. During the past year some children have been turned off but plenty of them remain, many under

### *The South Carolina Child Labor Law.*

AGE LIMIT FOR EMPLOYMENT IN FACTORIES, 12 YEARS.

EXEMPTIONS: ORPHANS AND CHILDREN OF DEPENDENT PARENTS ALLOWED TO WORK AT ANY AGE.

CHILDREN WHO HAVE ATTENDED SCHOOL FOUR MONTHS OF THE CURRENT YEAR AND CAN READ AND WRITE, ALLOWED TO WORK AT ANY AGE DURING JUNE, JULY AND AUGUST.

CERTIFICATES FOR CHILDREN UNDER 12 FURNISHED BY MAGISTRATE ON AFFIDAVIT OF PARENTS OR GUARDIAN.

AGE LIMIT FOR NIGHT WORK, 12, EXCEPT THAT CHILDREN UNDER 12, AS ABOVE, MAY WORK UNTIL 9 P. M. TO MAKE UP LOST TIME.

HOURS OF LABOR FOR ALL OPERATIVES IN TEXTILE MILLS, 60 PER WEEK.

NO FACTORY INSPECTION. EMPLOYERS MUST "KNOWINGLY" VIOLATE THE LAW BEFORE BEING CONVICTED.

weaver who runs his looms and makes \$1.00 a day. He has been two years in the mill. The tallest boy is also a weaver of 12 years. This is interesting testimony in view of the statement of Mr. Ellyson A. Smyth of South Carolina, to the effect that the children were all in the spinning-room and that "No child ever stood at a loom."

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No. 13.—1. DILLON MILL, DILLON, S. C.—Tallest girl has helped six months in mill; Mamie, holding baby, three years. 2. MAPLE MILL, DILLON, S. C.—Larger sister one year in the mill; the mother said the little sister “helps”, but a bystander said “She works regularly”. 3. IVEY MILL, HICKORY, N. C.—Doffers and sweepers. The president of this mill says: “Not over ten per cent of the mills observe it” (the child labor law). 4. SPRINGSTEIN MILLS, CHESTER, S. C.—Saturday ball game. Boy with ball is twelve years old, fifty-two inches tall, a weaver running six looms. Two years in mill. 5. EUREKA COTTON MILL, CHESTER, S. C.—Tallest, ten years in the mill; second three years; shortest, ten years old fifty-two inches tall, two years in the mill,

the guise of 'helping'. The children themselves overstate their ages, their parents have mis-stated their ages so long. Illiteracy seems to prevail here, many boys and young women even could not spell their own names. The mill school house is a shed-like structure and very small. The mills are not now running at night, though the men expected them to start up soon."

No. 2 of Plate 15 shows the picture of a girl who has been in the mill a year and her little sister who "helps". A bystander said that she worked regularly. Plate No. 19 is a picture of two boys from the same mill, the Maple mill, the youngest being ten years old, having worked for three years in the mill and earning 30 cents a day.

At Lancaster, Mr. Hine also reported that many small children work in the mills, and those in charge do not seem to be afraid of outside opinion. Mr. Hine's report and the photographs he has taken confirm what Rev. A. E. Seddon wrote concerning this mill earlier in the year. Plate No. 20 is the school building for the mill with the school children in attendance. The average attendance of this school is about 100, while the number of employees in the mill is 1,000. Plate 21 represents the school building for the town of Lancaster. At this mill, Mr. Seddon examined 45 children at work, and found that 34 were illiterate. One little girl, aged seven (Plate 24), was found by Mr. Seddon and her photograph taken, who had been working in the mill for 18 months; that is, she went to work at five and a half, though, as the child is an orphan, this is not a violation of the South Carolina law. Plates Nos. 22 and 23 are pictures of two of the spinners in the Lancaster Cotton mills. Plate 17 illustrates the frequent accidents to children who work with mill machinery. Plates 25 and 26 illustrate other conditions of the South Carolina mills. Space requires me merely to summarize the reports of Mr. Ulm and Mr. Seddon.

Mr. Seddon began his work in South Carolina with a visit to two of the "show mills", as they were styled by Commissioner Watson, of that state. Much was written in praise of the "betterment work" at the Monaghan Mills, Greenville, the Victor Mills at Greers, and the Belton and Pelzer mills. Yet in the Monaghan Mills, out of 250 employees in the spinning-room it was estimated that 85 were under the age of 16; out of a few questioned, two said that they were ten and two that they were nine years of age. Out of 41 examined as to their ability to read and write, 28 were found to be illiterate.

At the Victor Mill, one of the children confessed to the age of ten and another to the age of eight, while five children out of six examined were unable to read or write.

Mr. Ulm confirmed the report of Mr. Seddon in an independent investigation made somewhat later, and says of the Victor mills, "I stood at the gate of the mill and watched the children come out of the mill at the noon hour. I saw several children, at least seven or eight, who could not have been 12 years old. I saw several very sad spectacles of little girls from 12 to 14 who had evidently, from their stooped appearance and stupid countenances, been working in the mill for several years." He found the school attendance to be 132 and he comments thus: "Out of a community of about 3,000 population, this means that one child out of every 23 of the population attends school, or about one-fifth as many as is the average for the state as a whole including the negroes. It was noticeable here that fewer than a dozen who appeared to be as old as 12 were attending school."



No. 16.—NEWBERRY MILLS, S. C.

Noon hour. All are employees. The unguarded wheel and belt at the left are sinister neighbors for little girls' arms, skirts and braids. There was no factory inspection in South Carolina.



No. 17  
WYLIE MILL, CHESTER,  
S. C.

The barefoot lad, now thirteen years old, has worked since he was six. He has lost part of a finger in machinery. The other boy, now eleven, has worked a year.



No. 18.  
TYPE OF ADULT OPERA-  
TIVES, S. C.  
CLINTON,

No. 19.  
MAPLE MILLS, DILLON,  
S. C.

Taller boy has doffed four years, gets forty cents a day. Shorter boy, ten year old, three years in the mill, runs three sides; gets thirty cents a day.





No. 20.—WHERE MILL CHILDREN GO TO SCHOOL AT LANCASTER, S. C.  
Enrollment 163, attendance usually about 100. There are more than 1,000 operatives in the mill.  
The mill is geographically part of Lancaster, but on account of the taxes has been kept just out of the corporate limits.



No. 21.—WHERE OTHER CHILDREN GO TO SCHOOL AT LANCASTER, S. C.  
This is a public school.





No. 22.—LANCASTER, S. C.  
Spinner. A type of many in the mill. If they are children of widows or of disabled fathers, they may legally work until nine p. m., while other children must legally quit at eight p. m.



No. 23.—LANCASTER, S. C.  
Has worked six months, is forty-eight inches tall. One of many small children at work in Lancaster Cotton Mills. Children may legally work at any age in June, July and August if they have attended school four months that year and can read and write.

Mr. Seddon reported better conditions as to school attendance at the Pelzer and Belton mills, though his impression of the spinning-rooms at Pelzer was that there were almost as many children there as in the other mills in proportion to the adults. Among them he found a boy who was going on ten who could neither read nor write. So much for the "show mills", which are always mentioned as those where the best conditions are to be found. Mr. Seddon also brought out this interesting fact that sometimes other mills under the same management do not show such good conditions as those which investigators are invited to inspect, a striking example of which is the Ninety-Six Cotton Mill at Greenwood, which has been under the same management as the Pelzer and Belton mills. Out of 75 hands in the spinning-room 50 were children, and out of ten interviewed six were illiterate, two were ten years of age and three were nine. Mr. Seddon found in the Granby Mills at Columbia, under the same management as the Victor, that a half-time system had been adopted and in the factory school, for the first four grades only, about half of the children worked half of the day in the factory. Mr. Seddon and Mr. Ulm both visited the Franklin Mill, hard by the Victor Mill, but under a different management. Here no welfare work is done, there is not even a school building, and six children out of a population of 600 attend the public school at Greers. None of the children Mr. Seddon examined was able to read or write. Mr. Ulm says, "I counted no less than eight little girls in the spinning-room, who, I would almost swear, were below twelve years of age. There were at least ten boys equally youthful." He found a widowed mother who had come from the mountains many years ago, whose adult children were all married but one, and had ceased to contribute to her support. Three of her children were at work in the mill. The youngest was twelve years of age, had been at work three years and had never been to school. She regretted that she had ever left the farm, saying that otherwise she would have been able to give her smaller children some education, besides rearing them in a better environment. As to the poor widow problem, Mr. Ulm says, "In no case investigated on my trip or that I know of personally, is mill work for small children absolutely necessary to keep the wolf from the widow's door. On the contrary, with laws to prevent the working of the children, they and their mothers would fare better in 90 per cent of cases." Besides the mills already mentioned, Mr. Seddon visited the Grendel Mills at Greenwood and the Greenwood Mills, the Chiquola Mill at Honea Path, the Pine Creek and Hermitage mills at Camden, the Lexington Mill and Edgefield Mill and the mill at Seneca, South Carolina. Some were better than others, but the same conditions as to the employment of children were found in them all. Mr. Ulm visited beside those mentioned, several mills in Greenville and Spartanburg, and Union, everywhere finding the same conditions as are illustrated in this pamphlet as to the employment of children. The most encouraging thing about his report is the unanimous opinion of the outside public as to the evils of child labor, while the saddest part of his recital is the story of the beginning of moral decadence in the mill villages, of illegitimate children, of deserted wives and of the resulting cases of bigamy. One young woman was reported to have four husbands living, without having been divorced from any, though, of course, this is an extreme case.

The testimony of these witnesses, all of high character, corroborated by the photographic fidelity of the camera is unassailable. The names of the children are all mentioned in the reports. The legislatures of North

and South Carolina are now in session. What are the legislators going to do about it? The fate of thousands of children is in their hands. They can if they will abolish child labor in these two states, compel the children to attend school, raise their standard of legislation to that of the rest of the civilized world, and enforce their laws by providing for adequate factory inspection. There can be no doubt now about the fact that even the present laws are violated openly and shamelessly, and when violation of law means destruction of childhood, it should be enforced regardless of the feelings of the very respectable gentlemen who are creating a demand for child labor in the mills, which ignorant and indifferent parents supply. The children are helpless, and their only appeal for protection must be made to those who make and execute the laws.

It may be said also for the benefit of those who are disposed to doubt the facts here set forth that Mr. Ulm is a competent and trustworthy newspaper man of Atlanta, the correspondent of such papers of character and standing as the Macon Telegraph and the Augusta Chronicle; that Mr. Seddon is a scholar of no mean attainments, a minister of the Christian Church, and that these accounts, including the descriptions of Mr. Hine, are supported by affidavits that these things are true.

P. S.—Since the above was written, the South Carolina Legislature has passed a law providing for factory inspection. The substance of this article, published in "Charities," with the photographs, had something to do with the result in both the Carolinas.



No. 24.—NOT A VIOLATION OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA LAW.

The girl at the machine was seven years old last spring when this photograph was taken by Rev. A. E. Seddon in a South Carolina mill. She had then been at work a year and a half. But as she was an orphan she was allowed to work by the law.



No. 25.—GOING HOME AFTER DARK.

A group of employees at the Clinton, S. C. Mill, going home from work after dark. The photograph was taken by flashlight, as the superintendent would not allow pictures to be taken in the mill. From this it appears that even where there is no night work, the eleven-hour day requires children to go to work while it is yet dark and to work till after nightfall.



No. 26.—“BACK TO THE FARM.”

Wylie Mill, Chester, S. C.—The boy holding the calf, which he is raising for beef, has worked in the mill two years. Next to him is his little brother, a “helper” in the mill. Next stands another worker. The father says: “Just as soon as the boys get big enough to handle a plow, we go straight back to the farm. The factory is no place for boys.” Let us hope that this plan will be realized in time to save the two babies!