

HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS.

Child Labor and Women.

The condition of child labor in the United States, especially in the South, has of late engaged the anxious attention of many thoughtful men and women. It is stated that in the cotton mills of the South there are twenty thousand children under fourteen years of age at work. Many of these are between the ages of six and twelve. Some effort has been made to secure legislation regulating such labor and raising the minimum age where some sort of regulation exists already. But these well-intended appeals to the legislatures have fallen on deaf ears. The mill-owners have almost invariably prevented the enactment of the desired laws. It appears that a good deal of New England capital is invested in the southern textile industries, and that the representatives of this element have been quite active in resisting anti-child labor legislation of the kind or degree obtaining in the New England states. Men known at home as philanthropic and public spirited citizens have been charged with direct responsibility for defeat of reasonable measures against child slavery in the South.

In the East the situation is not so bad, but it is scarcely satisfactory. Where the age minimum is fourteen or sixteen years the law is constantly violated, parents giving false affidavits and employers carelessly or knowingly encouraging such deception. New Jersey permits the employment of children at the age of twelve, but a recent strike has disclosed in glass factories the presence of hundreds of children of six and seven years of age. The labor laws have been systematically violated, and the factory inspection bureau has done nothing to ameliorate this situation. In other states similar negligence is alleged to have nullified the by no means drastic legislation against child labor.

It is therefore gratifying to know that the

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General Federation of Women's Clubs at its annual convention resolved to devote its energies to the mitigation of the child labor evil. It will seek to secure more radical laws where a beginning has already been made, initiate legislation in backward states, and compel the strict enforcement of existing acts where the officials are lax and remiss. The Federation could hardly have found a better field for its humanitarian activity. The influence of the club women is not a negligible quantity anywhere, and the work determined upon will have a large measure of success.