

Britanniam nactus es: hanc orna

**YOUNG PEOPLE
IN
INDUSTRY
1750-1945**

MAURICE W. THOMAS



Charter for

Youth Series

One of the most dramatic chapters in the social history of Britain is that which relates the story of the emancipation of youth. The long and bitter struggle of reformers during the past two centuries to achieve decent working conditions in factory and mine, to regulate the whole field of juvenile labour, and to secure proper facilities for education is here described in its grimness and pathos.

In these days when the needs and aspirations of young people insistently claim the attention of the nation, it is well to review the struggle and to realize the considerable progress that has already been made.

CHARTER FOR YOUTH SERIES

YOUNG PEOPLE IN INDUSTRY
1750-1945

No. 7

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YOUNG PEOPLE
IN INDUSTRY
1750—1945

by

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YOUNG PEOPLE IN INDUSTRY

1750-1945

CHAPTER I

NEW MACHINES AND NEW THEORIES

I

TOWARDS the end of the eighteenth century men were looking to the future with high hopes and buoyant hearts, for it seemed to them that the age of miracles was at hand. Strange and wonderful machines had been designed, and the weary, grinding labour of the spinning-wheel and of the hand-loom was to be eased by these engines, which could perform quickly and efficiently the work of many men. "With regard to mechanical knowledge," said a writer in 1797, "it is probable that we are still in our infancy; and when it is considered that fifty years ago many inventions for abridging the operations of industry, which are now in common use, were utterly unknown, it is not absurd to conjecture that fifty years hence some new contrivances may be thought of in comparison with which the steam-engine and spinning-jennies (however wonderful they appear to us at present) will be considered as slight and insignificant discoveries." "The most extensive operations," said Mr. Goodwin, "may hereafter be within the reach of one man, and a plough may be turned into a field and perform its office without the need of superintendence."

What was it that led men to entertain these extravagant fancies, and to look to the future with such rosy optimism ?

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For centuries the great staple trade of the country had been the woollen industry, carried on by the workers in their own homes. The housewife employed her evenings spinning yarn, which was then woven into cloth on looms worked by hand. This industry was regulated and protected by the State, for it was felt that the wealth and prosperity of the country depended on it. But during the seventeenth century the world of fashion began to turn to another material, "made of a sort of down, being a fruit of the earth growing upon little shrubs or bushes, brought into this kingdom by the Turkey merchants from Smyrna, Cyprus and Accra, but commonly called cotton-wool." This new fabric, lighter and more graceful in appearance than wool, was quickly seized on by ladies of gentle birth, not only for their dresses, but for the furnishing of their houses. "We saw our persons of quality," said Defoe in 1708, "dressed in Indian carpets. The chintzes were advanced from lying on their floors to their backs, and even the Queen herself was pleased to appear in China and Japan. I mean China silks and calicoes. Nor was this all, but it crept into our houses, our closets and bedchambers; curtains, cushions, chairs, and, at last, beds themselves were nothing but calicoes or Indian stuffs."

The new industry, violently opposed at first by the woollen workers, who dreaded the competition of this strangely attractive and novel material, survived all the attacks made on it, and gradually established itself in Lancashire, where the humid atmosphere made it possible to spin cotton threads of great fineness. The spinning and weaving was done in the moorland cottages, slowly and laboriously, and the finished product was often sold to merchants who travelled round the countryside, purchasing the woven goods and leaving fresh supplies of raw material.

Upon this scene of rural peace and frugal industry, however, there burst a new and explosive force which was destined to change the face of the country, to bring together in high relief extremes of wealth and poverty; and to affect profoundly and terribly the lives of multitudes of men, women, and children. The ingenuity of inventors applied machinery to the textile industry.

In the year 1716 John Lombe had made the difficult and dangerous journey to Italy to discover, if he could, the secret of a machine known only to the silk manufacturers of that country. This invention was said to manufacture thrown silk by twisting together the tiny threads made by the silkworm in the cocoon. At great personal risk he was able to enter the factory at Leghorn and to make drawings of these remarkable machines. When he returned home the following year he entered into partnership with his brother Thomas, and on a small island in the River Derwent at Derby he erected the first English factory, an enormous building five hundred feet long, five storeys high, and containing over four hundred windows. Here were installed the tall, cylindrical machines that twisted the silken threads and wound them into hanks ready for the weavers. "Here is a curiosity of a very extraordinary nature," wrote a visitor to the factory, "I mean those mills on the Derwent which work the three Italian engines for making thrown silk. This engine contains 22,586 wheels and 97,746 movements, which work 73,726 yards of silk thread every time the wheel goes round, which is three times in one minute. The water wheel gives the motion to all the rest of the wheels and movements."

The silk industry not being of the greatest importance, it was in the growing cotton industry that the introduction of machinery worked the most revolutionary changes.

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In 1733, when he was twenty-nine years of age, John Kay, a clothier, who was born near Bury in Lancashire, invented the flying shuttle. It had not hitherto been possible for a single weaver to manufacture material more than twenty-seven inches wide, for this was the limit of the distance that one hand could transfer the shuttle to the other. Kay devised a machine that made it possible to weave a much broader material, and incidentally to weave it much more quickly. The new shuttle aroused the hostility of the weavers, who feared that its introduction would reduce the demand for their labour, but it speedily came into general use, and by the year 1760 it had already wrought a considerable change in the textile industry.

Its first effect was to cause a serious shortage of thread, for since the weavers could now perform their task much more quickly, the spinners, who provided the thread, could not keep pace with the demand. Inventive minds set to work to remedy this state of affairs, and about the year 1765 James Hargreaves, who had had much experience with textile machinery, produced an instrument, the spinning-jenny, that enabled a workman to spin many threads at the same time. Some two years later, Richard Arkwright, a barber and wig-maker, "a plain, almost gross, bag-cheeked, pot-bellied Lancashire man," as Carlyle describes him, invented the water-frame, a machine that made a thread stronger and finer than even the most skilful hand workers could produce. In 1771 Arkwright and his partners built a mill at Cromford near Derby, where the swiftly flowing Derwent supplied the power necessary to run the machines, and in less than ten years he was employing three hundred workmen, who tended several thousand spindles.

Between 1774 and 1779 Samuel Crompton perfected a machine which combined the advantages of the spinning-jenny with those of the water-frame. This "hybrid"

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machine was known as the mule, and since it produced a thread of great strength and exceptional fineness it quickly revolutionized the cotton industry, the balance of which was once more upset, since the weavers, still working on their hand-looms, could not keep pace with the output of yarn spun on the machines.

It so happened that a number of Lancashire manufacturers were discussing this matter one day in the presence of Edmund Cartwright, an Oxford graduate, who was taking a holiday in the Peak district. His interest was aroused, and though he knew nothing of the technique of weaving he set to work on inventing a loom driven by power instead of by hand. The result of his labours was an awkward and clumsy machine worked by a bull, but he gradually introduced improvements, and in 1789 he harnessed his machine to a steam-engine.

The balance between spinners and weavers was once more restored, and production was enormously increased. As prices fell the demand for cotton goods grew, and there was a wild rush to install the new machinery and snatch the profits so easily to be gained by those who were prepared to put their money into the exciting new venture. "Every lumber room," we are told, "even old barns, cart-houses and out-buildings of any description, were repaired, windows broke through old blank walls, and all fitted up for loom shops. New weavers' cottages with loom shops rose in every direction, all immediately filled." The thrifty cottage worker who could scrape together sufficient money was eager to purchase the new machines, and often, within the course of a few years, he had become an employer of labour on a considerable scale. These men, too often hard, avaricious and thrusting, had usually but one ambition, to amass the greatest possible amount of wealth in the shortest possible time. Nurtured in a stern and grinding school, they had little pity for or sympathy with their less

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fortunate or less able fellows, and they were to prove themselves unfeeling taskmasters.

As their machines were usually worked by water power, they had to establish themselves on the slopes of the Pennines, where the turbulent, fast-flowing streams provided motive power in abundance. The mills were set up in remote villages and hamlets, nestling in the narrow valleys near the foot of the hills, for it was not until the advent of steam power that factories could be located in the rapidly growing Lancashire towns.

Crude forms of the steam-engine had been known for some time, indeed Thomas Savery, an army officer, had sent a model to William III at Hampton Court in 1698, but it was not until Newcomen, a Devonshire blacksmith, devised, early in the eighteenth century, the system of cylinder and piston that the steam-engine (or "fire-engine" as it was often called) proved its worth as a pump, and was employed for drawing water from flooded mines, and for filling the reservoirs that were used in dry seasons to drive the machinery of the cotton mills.

It was in 1769 that James Watt, the delicate son of a Scottish architect and shipbuilder, took out his first patent which involved the use of a separate condenser and cylinder, and caused the steam to act directly on the piston. Twelve years later the steam-engine was adapted to give rotary motion, and for the first time the wheels of the machines could be turned by steam power, instead of by hand or water. The first steam spinning mill was opened in the year 1785, and at the dawn of the new century there were thirty-two steam-engines in Manchester and twenty in Leeds. Thereafter progress was rapid and continuous, for men were not slow to realize the powers of the mighty instrument that had been placed in their hands. No longer was it necessary to rely for motive power on the caprice of a mountain stream, nor need the size of the factory be

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limited by the volume of water which supplied the energy. A single engine of sufficient dimensions could serve a large number of machines, and huge factories were thrown up to house the necessary plant. Workers flocked to the new industrial centres, attracted by the higher wages paid to the factory operatives. From Wales they came, and from Ireland and Scotland. Shoemakers, tailors, colliers, and agricultural workers all hurried to the factories to share in the prosperity of the rapidly developing industry.

Some of them, energetic, shrewd, and ruthless, carved out a fortune, and themselves became mill-owners, but the majority, herded together in the poor, ill-designed houses hastily erected by the speculative jerry builder, their only outlook the narrow, sordid streets and the towering chimneys of the mills, soon came to realize that they were but a short distance removed from slavery. The mill-owners held them shackled to the machines for long, weary hours, and when it was found that women and children were quite capable of undertaking many of the processes, the plight of the men was bitter indeed, for female and child labour was cheap, and the father of the family, competing in vain against wife and child, found his wages steadily reduced.

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It was little short of tragic, as events were to prove, that at the time when the introduction of machinery to the world of industry was raising so many acute human problems, there should have emerged a new conception of the relationship between man and man and between the individual and the State. Since the sixteenth century statesmen had felt it to be their primary duty to safeguard the prosperity and strength of the nation as a whole; it mattered not if individuals suffered in the process, so long as the realm itself was wealthy and secure. Many were the

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expedients and variations of policy designed to promote this desirable end, but it is broadly true to say that under the mercantile system the government endeavoured by means of regulation so to order the state of trade that the country should not be dependent on imported food, that money should be prevented from flowing abroad, and that exports should exceed imports. Men were thus accustomed to the idea that it was proper for the government to interfere with the daily activities of commercial intercourse. Elaborate regulations prescribed the wages appropriate to each class of workman, the Statute of Artificers (1563) provided detailed rules governing the functions of the guilds, and there were many statutes dealing with hours of work and industrial processes and methods.

But in the year 1778 Adam Smith published his great work, the *Wealth of Nations*, which was destined to strike the death-blow of the old mercantile theory on which protection and regulation had been built. He showed by powerful arguments that restrictions and regulations, so far from benefiting trade, had precisely the opposite effect, for industry and commerce if left free and untrammelled would discover the course that it was best for them to take, and having discovered it would hold to it. "Trade, industry and barter," it was said, "will always find their own level, and be impeded by regulations which violate their natural operation and derange their proper effect." The new theory taught that men must be left free to follow their own inclinations and make their own bargains unhindered by government control. This was the doctrine of *laissez-faire*—"let men do as they like"—a doctrine that was embraced by many earnest thinkers.

Ricardo held that the guiding motive in the world of commerce was self-interest, and that each man must act in such a way as best to serve his own ends—he would, for instance, buy in the cheapest markets and sell in the dearest.

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The laws of supply and demand settled prices, including the price of labour. "Labour is dear when it is scarce, and cheap when it is plentiful. However much the market price of labour may deviate from its natural price, it has a tendency to conform to it." It was of no avail for the workman to try to secure a higher price for his services, since he was at the mercy of forces that were quite beyond his control. If his fellow-craftsman would undertake to do his work for less money he must either give up his employment or accept lower wages, for the employer would obviously pay as little as he could. "All legislative interference," it was considered, "must be pernicious. Men must be left to themselves to make their own bargains; the law must compel the fulfilment of contracts. So long as the supply of labour exceeds the demand for labour, the labourer will undersell his fellows."

To this grim view of human relationship Malthus made a further contribution in his *Essay on the Principle of Population* published in 1798. There was a tendency, he maintained, for population to increase faster than the means of subsistence, so that unless deliberate checks were applied to the growth of population, poverty was inevitable. The attempt to relieve poverty was doomed to failure, for if the poor were relieved of their burdens population would increase still further, and this interference with the operation of natural laws would in the long run defeat its own ends. These were indeed comforting reflections to an increasing body of opinion holding that men's efforts to increase their wages were vain, and that the pay of the labourer was destined never to rise beyond the level required to keep body and soul together. "The worker," it was said, "gains no more than his livelihood."

In consequence of this new and complacent philosophy, by the year 1815 the old regulations and restrictions had been largely swept away and the gospel of freedom of

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contract and unlimited competition had become almost universally accepted. It is true that the relatively newly established cotton trade had not been subject to government control, but so tenaciously did men cling to the doctrines of *laissez-faire* that any attempt to introduce régulation would have been regarded as a retrograde step, a reversion to the old, unenlightened days. The result was that reform was denied where it was most needed, and the owners of the cotton mills were left free, in the sacred name of liberty, to strike what bargains they pleased with their unfortunate workers. The owners were, for the greater part, dour, stark men, who trampled their way to fortune unhindered by considerations of human sympathy or kindness. If ugly doubts should ever raise their heads, it was consoling to reflect that no action on their part could alter the remorseless working of the laws of nature. But they were seldom worried by doubts, for the prizes for which they strove were dazzling. The grandfather of Sir Robert Peel, the Prime Minister, descended from a race of peasant farmers, was a humble spinner who manufactured hand-printed cotton goods in his own house. His son, the first Sir Robert Peel, set up as a manufacturing cotton-spinner in Bury, and when he died in 1830 he left a fortune of nearly a million and a half pounds. It was said that almost the entire population of Bury worked for him, and that he had nearly a thousand apprentices in his factories. Small wonder that he and his fellows did not pause to question the workings of a beneficent Providence.

But the enlightened observer might well have questioned these workings, for the harsh abstractions of economic theory had overlooked or ignored the fact that though there might have existed freedom as between master and master, there was certainly no freedom between the master, possessed as he was of all the means of production, machines, factories, and raw material, and the workman, who had

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only his labour to sell. Here was no equality of bargaining power, especially when the law intervened to repress with dire penalties any attempt on the part of the workmen to combine together in common effort to raise their wages and to better their conditions.

In the early days of the machine age the wages of the cotton operatives had reached a satisfactory level, for the enormous expansion of the industry had created a shortage of labour, and the owners were compelled to pay their workers well. But as time went on, and as more and more recruits found their way to the mills, wages fell, and continued to fall, with disastrous results. The manufacturers soon discovered that many mechanical processes could be performed just as efficiently by women and children as by men, and in consequence parents were compelled to eke out their meagre wages by the earnings of their children, who were hurried into the mills at an incredibly tender age. They adapted themselves more readily to the harsh discipline of the factory, for they were more easily cowed into subjection, and since their labour cost only a fifth or a sixth that of an adult, there was usually a ready market for their services. They were entirely at the mercy of their employers, and since they were assumed to be free agents subjected to all the rigours of unfettered competition, their conditions of work were quite unregulated. Some employers, it is true, were kindly and enlightened men who realized the extent of their responsibilities to these defenceless children (Robert Owen, who owned the great mill at New Lanark on the Clyde, was a notable example), but the great majority, concerned only with the acquisition of profits, were quite indifferent to the suffering that provided their wealth. They bitterly opposed legislative reforms, and proved themselves ardent disciples of the new philosophy.

CHAPTER 2

THE UNPROTECTED CHILD

I

BEFORE the introduction of machinery and the rise of the great factories, it had been quite usual to employ even very young children at the spinning-wheel or the weaving-loom. In the scattered homesteads where domestic industry supplied the materials of the cotton and the woollen trades, the selfishness and cupidity, or more often the dire needs of the parents, impelled them to seek the assistance of their children, and it cannot be doubted that grave hardship often resulted. "The creatures were set to work as soon as they could crawl," we are told, "and their parents were the hardest of taskmasters." Defoe, when he visited Halifax, was greatly impressed by these youthful workers. "Hardly anything above four years old," he wrote, "but its hands are sufficient to itself." The hours of labour were long, and the work was often arduous and exacting, but the children were in their own homes, under the eyes of their parents.

The circumstances were very different when a great and increasing demand for child labour was created by the newly invented machines, housed in factories in remote valleys and dales. The only labour available was that of pauper apprentices, to be found in large numbers in the workhouses of the big towns, whose authorities, always striving to keep the poor-rate as low as possible, were only too glad to send them to the mills and rid themselves of the duty of maintaining them. At the age of seven or eight the children were transported, sometimes in batches of seventy or eighty, to their new masters, who undertook to

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lodge, feed, and clothe them until they reached the age of twenty-one. So anxious were the parochial authorities to be relieved of the unwanted children of the paupers for whom they were responsible, that they would sometimes offer £5 to anybody who would take an apprentice, and it is even reported that one parish agreed with a Lancashire millowner that he should take one idiot with every twenty normal children. In theory it was necessary to secure the children's consent before they were transferred to the mills, and glittering prospects were sometimes held before them. "It was gravely stated to them that they were all, when they arrived at the cotton mill, to be transformed into ladies and gentlemen; that they would be fed on roast beef and plum pudding, be allowed to ride their master's horses, and have silver watches, and plenty of cash in their pockets."

The shock of disillusion must have been severe, for when they arrived at their destination they were herded into gaunt, ugly prentice houses, built next door to the mill, where they lived in circumstances of squalor. The food was frequently poor and insufficient, black bread, porridge, and rancid bacon being the usual fare. Their sleeping quarters were dirty and ill-ventilated, and when the factory worked a double shift, as was frequently the case, those who laboured by day slept in the beds just vacated by the night-workers, so that "the beds never got cold." A lurid light was cast on the daily life of the apprentices by Mr. John Moss, who in 1816 was called on to give evidence before the Committee set up under the chairmanship of Sir Robert Peel to inquire into the condition of the children employed in the cotton factories. Moss had formerly been master of the apprentice-house attached to the Backbarrow Mill at an annual salary of £80, but he was so revolted by what he saw that he preferred to take a post as governor of the workhouse at

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Preston at a salary of 50 guineas a year. The apprentices, who, he said, came mostly from London and were between the ages of seven and eleven, worked regularly from five o'clock in the morning to eight o'clock at night. They had breakfast from 7 to 7.30, and the interval for dinner was from 12 to 12.30, so that they were actually working fourteen hours a day. If the machinery of the mill was stopped for repair or through lack of water power, they made up the time lost, and sometimes for three weeks together they worked from five in the morning until nine or ten at night. Summer and winter alike they rose at half-past four in order to be in time for the day's labour, and there was no rest on Saturday. There were no seats in the mill, and in consequence of the excessive standing he found them very much fatigued at the end of the day. He inspected their beds in the apprentice-house every night, "because there were always some of them missing, some sometimes might be run away, others sometimes I have found have been asleep in the mill upon the mill floors, after the time they should have been in bed. Several of them that were straight when they first came to the mill were deformed; there were two or three that were very crooked. Their bedding was very bad, they had only a blanket to lie on, and a thin blanket to lie at the top, and a horse cover, and some of them were very bad. They were not altogether clean."

With the introduction of the steam engine there came a new influx of child labour to the factories, for it was more convenient to build the new mills, now independent of water power, in the rapidly developing industrial towns. The so-called "free children" lived in the neighbourhood, and were the offspring of parents who were compelled to send them to work in order to augment their own miserably inadequate wages. In 1792 a weaver had been paid £4 for weaving a piece of cloth forty yards long, but in 1800 he

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was paid only 36s. for a piece fifty yards long, and it was with difficulty that he could earn 6s. or 6s. 6d. a week. Much as he might dislike the idea of putting his children to work, he realized that the 1s. or 1s. 6d. a week his child could earn would frequently make all the difference to the family between bare subsistence and starvation. "That little girl," said one worker, "has to go a mile and a half very early to her work, and she comes home at half-past eight, and all that I see of her is to call her up in the morning; and send her to bed, and it almost makes my heart break. I know that I am living by the death of that child." Mr. George Gould, a Manchester merchant, said that whereas two years before an adult could earn 16s. a week, in 1816 his wages had dropped to 5s. 6d. "The spinning men or women have the privilege to employ children of their own selecting, and if they can get a child to do their business for one shilling, or one shilling and sixpence, they will take that child before they will give three, four, five, six, or seven shillings to an older person."

The towns in which the little workers lived had sprung up rapidly, and the greed of the jerry builders and the indifference of the mill-owners had combined to make them sordid, dirty, and miserable. They were erected, we are told, "with the utmost disregard of everything except the immediate advantage of the speculating builder. A carpenter and builder unite to buy a series of building sites and cover them with so-called houses. In one place we found a whole street following the course of a ditch, because in this way deeper cellars could be secured without the cost of digging, cellars not for storing wares or rubbish, but for dwellings of human beings. Not one house of this street escaped the cholera. The houses are built back to back, without ventilation or drainage, and whole families are limited to a corner of a cellar or a garret." "It is impossible," said Dr. Hawkins, "not to notice the total absence

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of public gardens, parks, and walks at Manchester ; it is scarcely within the power of the factory workman to taste the breath of nature or to look upon its verdure."

And towering over all this squalor were the factories, their tall chimneys belching the smoke from the new fire engines, and their discordant bells summoning men, women, and children to work even before sunrise. The factories were of four, five, or six stories, and housed the machines in rooms 120 feet long and 30 feet wide. They were built as quickly and as cheaply as possible, and without regard to the health conditions of the workpeople. Frequently the rooms were only eight feet high, and since the machines were not provided with fences or guards, fatal accidents were of regular occurrence.

"In these low rooms," said Mr. Kinder Wood, a surgeon of Oldham, "the accidents are more common. The shafts and cylinders (driving the machines) are lower, and the children are more likely to be caught up by them ; sufficient room is not left for them to be carried round the shaft or cylinder. This arises from the shape of the room, and therefore the workpeople involved are crushed to death. Where there is sufficient space between the top of the room and the cylinder, children will be carried once or twice round, and be very little injured."

It was necessary, in spinning the finest threads, to maintain in the workrooms a high temperature—often up to 75 or 80 degrees. The dust and the fluff, or flue as it was called, of the cotton was thick in the air, so that sometimes "you could not see half-way across the room for dust." This, together with lack of adequate ventilation, was a potent cause of ill-health ; the workers were usually extremely pale, and many of them suffered from diseases of the lungs and chest.

Even the youngest children could be found employment in tending the machines. They began at the age of five or

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six to work as scavengers, creeping under the machinery to clear away the dust and rubbish. This was regarded as a very suitable occupation for the tiniest, because the bigger children could not crawl underneath. The majority, however, were employed as piecers, and it was their duty to tie the threads when they broke. They had charge of a number of machines (eighty or ninety spindles, it was thought, could be comfortably worked by one child), walking from one to another on the look-out for broken threads; and since the output of the adult spinners depended largely on the speed and skill of the piecers, extreme cruelty was often employed to make them work harder, or simply to keep them awake.

For the free children worked just as long hours as did the apprentices. A day of thirteen or fourteen hours was usual; fifteen or sixteen hours was not uncommon. Sir Gilbert Blane, the physician, thought this was too much, for he had observed "the natural appetency of all young creatures to loco-motive exercise, and the open air," but the typical millowner took a different view, and considered that "nothing is more favourable to morals than habits of early subordination, industry and regularity." The breaks that were allowed for meals were quite inadequate, and in some mills the piecers had to continue work while they were having their breakfast. Some of the owners asserted that the children were just as keen and alert during the last hour as during the first, but Hannah Priestner, who had worked in the mills of Messrs. M'Connel and Kennedy since she was $5\frac{1}{2}$, and who complained to the visiting doctor of her "swelled legs," might have had a different story to tell. For the machinery was inexorable; it never stopped, and broken ends must be pieced so long as the wheels turned and the thread ran through the rollers. "While the engine runs the people must work," said James Kay, "and men, women, and children are yoked together with iron and

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steam. The animal machine is chained fast to the iron machine, which knows no suffering and no weariness."

The evils of the system were perhaps best summarized by Dr. Tomlinson, a Preston surgeon, who stated "that children sometimes work till six o'clock on Sunday morning; that some of them are employed on Sunday cleaning the machinery against Monday morning. At the Pen-worthen factory the children were in a wretched condition from being overworked; a great number of them had crooked legs. They used to work night and day, and he had seen the children sleeping over their suppers who were to go to work in about ten minutes for the whole night. The dust and small cotton were highly prejudicial to the health of those employed in the factories, and the long hours were a great evil, as it was impossible for children to stand so long as twelve hours on their legs without injuring their health, and deforming their limbs."

2

It was not only in the cotton mills that children were exploited, for conditions in the coal mines were, if anything, even harsher and more cruel. Until the year 1775 the adult workers in the Scottish mines had been serfs, pure and simple; they were bound to the mine in which they worked, and even wore a collar engraved with the name of their owner. The pits of the Midlands were less primitive, it is true, but here also the increasing demand for coal made it profitable to employ children to perform work that men and women were unable to do. Most of these children, girls as well as boys, were set to work at the age of five or six as trappers, and upon them depended the safety of the mine, for in those days, when there was no mechanical ventilation, the fresh air was circulated through the galleries by a series of doors which had to be opened and shut every

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time a load of coal was drawn along. For twelve hours a day, often in complete darkness, the trappers sat huddled against the doors, ready to pull them open as soon as the coal appeared.

"I'm a trapper in the Gauber Pit," said a little girl aged eight. "I have to trap without a light, and I'm scared. I go at four, and sometimes half-past three in the morning, and come out at five and half-past. Sometimes I sing when I've light, but not in the dark: I dare not sing then."

A South Wales trapper, nearly eight years old, said, "I have been down the pit about three years. When I first went down I couldn't keep my eyes open. I don't fall asleep now; I smokes my pipe."

John Saville, aged seven, complained chiefly of the dark. "I stand and open and shut the door," he said. "I'm generally in the dark, and sit me down against the door. I stop twelve hours in the pit, and never see daylight now except on Sundays."

Older children became fillers, and it was their task to fill the tubs or corves as the coal was cut from the seam. The loaded trucks were then pushed or pulled to the bottom of the pit shaft by other boys and girls, the pushers or hurriers, who were harnessed to their burden by means of a belt to which a chain from the carriage was hooked and passed between the legs. There were not many children under the age of six employed to draw weights with a girdle round the body, we are told, "and those only where the roof of the pit is so low for short distances as to prevent horses of the smallest size, or asses, from being employed." Children of the very smallest stature must have been put to work in these cases, because in many mines the height of the roof was only twenty-four inches, and in some cases as little as eighteen inches. Patience Kershaw's task was to push the loaded tubs. "I hurry in the clothes I have now got on," she replied when questioned, "trousers and ragged

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jacket. The bald place upon my head is made by thrusting the corves. I hurry the corves a mile or more underground and back ; they weigh 3 cwt. I hurry eleven hours a day. I wear a belt and chain at the workings to get the corves out. The getters that I work for sometimes beat me if I am not quick enough."

In the deeper mines, such as were to be found in the east Scottish coalfields, corves were not used, and the coal was filled into a creel or basket that was strapped to the backs of the women and girls who were usually employed. Having descended the ladders to the coal face the girl "lays down her basket, into which the coal is rolled, and it is frequently more than one man can do to lift the burden on her back. The straps are placed over the forehead, and the body bent in a semicircle form in order to stiffen the arch. She then commences her journey with her burden to the pit bottom, first hanging her lamp to the cloth crossing her head." One particular girl, we read, "has first to travel about 84 feet from the wall face to the first ladder, which is 18 feet high : leaving the first ladder, she proceeds along the main road, probably, 3 feet 6 inches to 4 feet 6 inches high, to the second ladder, 18 feet high, and so on to the third and fourth ladders, till she reaches the pit bottom, where she casts her load, varying from 1 cwt. to 1½ cwt., into a tub. This one journey is called a rake ; the height ascended and the distance along the roads added together, exceed the height of St. Paul's Cathedral."

In some industries the hours of work were not so long, and conditions were not so formidable, but very frequently the health of the children was seriously affected by the dangerous processes employed. Josiah Wedgwood, the potter, whose artistic creations in terra cotta, basalt, and jasper placed him in the front rank of craftsman artists, employed in his factories, in the year 1816, 387 people, of

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whom 13 were under 10 and 103 between the ages of 10 and 17. A number of children were employed in the dipping process, applying to the surface of the ware the glaze that imparted a singular brightness and lustre. One of the ingredients of the glaze was white lead, a poisonous substance which, when absorbed by the body, produces painter's colic and paralysis. "If they are careless in their method of living, and dirty," said Wedgwood, "they are very subject to disease. The hours of work for dippers in my manufactory are from about eight or nine o'clock in the morning, to about five in the afternoon," but sometimes, if there was a rush of orders, children under 10 worked for thirteen hours and a half, exclusive of meal-times.

3

Nor was it only in the factories and mines that children were compelled to work without any regard being paid to their health, happiness, or well-being, for in the great houses of the metropolis were to be found the chimney sweep boys, whose unhappy plight forms one of the saddest chapters of English social history. When coal fires replaced the great wood fires during the eighteenth century, and when the skill of domestic architects was turned to making the living apartments of the wealthy cosier and more splendid, the huge open chimneys were replaced by narrow flues, often no wider than twelve or fourteen inches. From these chimneys the soot was swept by the "climbing boys," who made their slow and tortuous way to the top and then came slowly down, scraping and sweeping the soot before them as they descended.

Many of the children were unwanted parish apprentices, some were kidnapped, and some were sold by their inhuman parents. Eight pounds was considered a good price to pay, but if the boy were sufficiently small the master might

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reckon that he had made a fair bargain. The majority were apprenticed at six or eight years old, but some were taken at four or five. A kindly master would set his boys to work by encouraging them and offering them rewards, but the more cruel would force them to climb by igniting straw beneath them. The physical suffering was extreme. "Some boys' flesh," said one master, "is far worse than others, and it takes more time to harden them. You must keep them a little at it, even during the sores, or they will never learn their business." They seldom washed during the winter months, and cases are recorded where they remained unwashed, coated in their grime, for four or five years. "The knees and ankle-joints mostly become deformed," it was said, "from the position they are obliged to put themselves in, in order to support themselves, not only while climbing up the chimneys, but more particularly so in coming down, when they rest solely on the lower extremities, the arms being used for scraping and sweeping down the soot in the meantime."

How are we to account for the existence of such apathy towards the suffering of the young at a time when philanthropic impulses were at work in the minds of so many men? Much must be ascribed to the greed of the employers, and not a little to the teaching of those who so ardently supported the doctrines of *laissez-faire*. Nor can we overlook the influence of certain aspects of the religious philosophy of the day, which accepted the vast social inequalities as part of the nature of things. "I leave you to judge," said Hannah More, "what would have been the state of the poor of this country in this period of scarcity had it not been for your superiors. We trust the poor in general have received what has been done for them as a matter of favour, not of right."

Before reform could be achieved, two things were necessary. There must be a new conception of the duties

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of the State in relation to those of its members who were too weak to help themselves ; and men's consciences must be stirred to such a degree as to make State intervention a necessity and a reality. The road was hard and long, the opposition bitter and sustained, but once the nation realized the need for action the movement for reform acquired a great and increasing momentum.

CHAPTER 3

STIRRINGS OF CONSCIENCE

I

EVEN before the close of the eighteenth century many thoughtful and kindly men were disturbed at the conditions under which so many of the nation's children lived and worked. "Intense application to any kind of bodily labour," wrote Eden in 1797, "is generally admitted to be peculiarly injurious to children. . . . It may, perhaps, be worthy the attention of the public to consider whether any manufacture, which, in order to be carried on successfully, requires that cottages and workhouses should be ransacked for poor children; that they should be employed, by turns, during the greater part of the night, and robbed of that rest which is most required by the young, will add to the sum of individual, or national felicity."

Dr. Atkin, in his *Description of the Country Round Manchester*, published in 1795, spoke with equal vigour. "Children of very tender age," he wrote, "are employed, many of them collected from the workhouses of London, and are transported in crowds, as apprentices to masters resident many hundreds of miles distant, where they serve unknown, unprotected, and forgotten. These children are usually too long confined to work, in close rooms, often during the whole night; the air they breathe, from the oil, etc., employed in the machinery, is injurious; little regard is paid to their cleanliness; and frequent changes from a warm and dense, to a cold and thin atmosphere, are predisposing causes to sickness and disability, and particularly to the epidemic fever, which is generally to be met with in these factories. It is also much to be questioned if society does

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not receive detriment from the manner in which children are thus employed during their early years. They are not generally strong to labour when the term of their apprenticeship expires. The females are wholly uninstructed in sewing, knitting, and other domestic affairs, requisite to make them notable and frugal wives and mothers." Mr. Gisborne, too, writing in 1795, made a strong plea for State intervention. He held that parish children needed the protecting interference of the legislature, and that the Government could never be better employed than in measures that tend to promote the comfort, the health, and the morals of the people. He considered that provision should be made for magistrates to enter the factories to inspect the treatment of the children, and if possible to check those conditions which tend to "the ready communication of contagion, and the accession of virulence from putrid effluvia."

In 1784 there had been a severe outbreak of the "putrid fever" in the cotton mills at Radcliffe, and so great was public anxiety that Dr. Percival, a Manchester physician, was requested to make an investigation. His findings were clear and forceful. The children who were crowded together in the mills, he averred, were peculiarly liable to be affected by the fever, and once they had contracted it they rapidly infected others. Even when the fever was not rampant, the close confinement in the overheated and badly ventilated mills was most injurious. "The untimely labour of the night," he declared, "and the protracted labour of the day not only tends to diminish future expectations as to the general sum of life and industry, by impairing the strength, and destroying the vital stamina of the rising generation, but it too often gives encouragement to idleness and profligacy in the parents, who, contrary to the order of nature, subsist by the oppression of their offspring."

Here indeed was hope and enlightenment. There was cause for some degree of satisfaction if only a few men had

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been brought to realize that the nation could not afford to live on its capital by wastefully squandering its most precious and enduring asset, the health and vitality of the rising generation. But those in high places are apt to move slowly, and it was not easy to persuade the government that it should interfere between employer and employed. The free children—for a time—were to be left to the bitterness of their freedom; but the government might with some measure of justification abandon its aloofness and make regulations for the benefit of the parish apprentices, for, after all, they were Poor Law children, and Poor Law was the concern of the State.

2

So it was that in the year 1802 Sir Robert Peel, the first baronet, procured the passing of the Health and Morals of Apprentices Act.¹ Peel was himself a wealthy millowner, and strong complaints had been made about the conditions that obtained in his factories. "The house in which I have a concern," he wrote fourteen years later, "gave employment at one time to nearly one thousand children of this description [*i.e.* parish apprentices]. Having other pursuits, it was not often in my power to visit the factories, but whenever such visits were made, I was struck with the uniform appearance of bad health and stunted growth of the children. Finding our own factories under such management, and learning that the like practices prevailed in other parts of the kingdom where similar machinery was in use, the children being much over-worked, and often little or no regard paid to cleanliness and ventilation in the buildings; having the assistance of Dr. Percival and other eminent medical men of Manchester, I brought in a Bill in the forty-second year of the King (1802) for the regulation of factories containing such parish apprentices. The hours of work"

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allowed by that Bill being fewer in number than those formerly practised, a visible improvement in the health and general appearance of the children soon became evident, and since the complete operation of the Act contagious disorders have rarely occurred."

Peel was perhaps a little optimistic of the results of his measure, for it contained nothing startling. Apprentices were not to be employed for more than twelve hours a day, exclusive of meal times, and they must not work between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. During working hours they were to receive instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic, and once a month they were to go to church. They were to have a suit of clothes each year, and they were not to sleep more than two in a bed. Factories were to be white-washed twice a year, and proper ventilation was to be secured. Provision was also to be made for the inspection of factory premises, and the magistrates at Quarter Sessions were to appoint two visitors, a clergyman and a magistrate, to undertake this work. This last clause is of great interest, for experience was to prove that only when the provisions of the law were enforceable by the regular and systematic inspection of factories and of working conditions was any real progress made. It was perhaps from a surmise of the efficiency of inspection that the millowners opposed it, partial and incomplete as it was, with such vehemence. "What effects will be produced," they asked, "by the introduction of visitors (whom the children will regard as invested with a controlling power over their masters) it is easy to foresee. All subordination will be at an end, the mills and factories will become a scene either of idleness and disorder, or of open rebellion. The masters, harassed by the incessant complaints of their apprentices, and the perpetual interference of the visitors, will be obliged to give up their works, and some of them may perhaps become bankrupts."

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The fears of the masters were not, however, realized, for in the vast majority of cases the inspections, even when they were made, were cursory and ineffective. In many parts of the country the Act was ignored altogether, and in this connection the evidence of Mr. W. D. Evans, a Manchester magistrate, who was paid a salary of £1,000 a year to superintend the police, makes illuminating reading.

He appeared before Peel's Committee on 11th June 1816, when the following interchange took place :

Are you aware that the Act of Parliament, generally called Sir Robert Peel's Act, directs the appointment of certain inspectors by the magistrates, one of them to be a magistrate and the other a clergyman ?—Yes.

Has the provision been put in force in Manchester ?—I have only been aware of that provision since reading the Act yesterday.

Are the Committee to understand that you were not aware of the existence of this Act till yesterday ?—I certainly was aware of the existence of an Act for the regulation of cotton mills. I had not the curiosity to read it till I came into this room.

Do you mean to assert that it would be a mere matter of curiosity to read an Act of Parliament which has reference to the management of Manchester, of which you are a magistrate ?—I have certainly found it the impression of our magistrates that the Act was not of any efficient service ; and why should any of us look into it when not called upon to do so from any business coming before us ?

Although the Act of 1802 failed to achieve its purpose, and although it was a piece of Poor Law rather than factory legislation, it was yet of great importance, for Parliament had come to realize that it had a duty to supervise and control factory conditions, and once the initial inertia had been overcome, further reforms followed.

Thanks largely to the efforts of Robert Owen, who had set a shining example of benevolence and philanthropy in his New Lanark mills, public attention was once more focused on the cotton factories, and this time the reformers were determined to deal with the problem of the free children. Sir Robert Peel, with some show of reluctance, again took the initiative, and in 1816 procured the appointment of a committee, under his own chairmanship, to consider the conditions under which these children were employed. Once again the employers exerted their utmost powers to resist any changes. "The first plea of the objectors," said Owen, "was that masters ought not to be interfered with by the legislature in any way in the management of their business. The next attempt was to prove that it was not injurious to employ these young children fourteen or fifteen hours a day in over-heated close rooms." Forty-three witnesses were examined by the Committee, and many divergent views were expressed. Those best qualified to speak, the workers and the children themselves, were not invited to appear, but they contrived to make themselves heard by way of petition. They begged that the hours of work might be reduced, not only for the children but for themselves, to $10\frac{1}{2}$ hours a day exclusive of meal times "so as to allow within the ordinary space of twelve hours, half an hour for breakfast and an hour for dinner."

In 1819 the first Factory Act properly so-called received the royal assent. This Act for the Regulation of Cotton Mills and Factories provided that no child was to be employed under nine years of age, and that between the ages of nine and sixteen children were not to work more than $13\frac{1}{2}$ hours a day, including one and a half hours for meals, which were to be taken between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. The old arrangements for inspection by the magistrates were to

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remain, although experience had proved the inadequacy of such methods.

The youngest children were now freed from the serfdom of the cotton mills, and if the hours of work permitted to the older children were still far too long, an attempt had at least been made to regulate them. Much still remained to do, for it must not be forgotten that only cotton mills were affected—children in other branches of industry were still exposed to the full rigours of the old system. The unsatisfactory nature of the controls and the lack of a proper system of inspection combined to render the Act ineffective.

This was slow progress indeed, but it was progress, for the principle of State intervention was now definitely established in the face of the most strenuous opposition of powerful vested interests. The public conscience had been slow in awakening, but it was beginning to stir, and the end was not yet.

4

The forces of reaction, however, soon exerted themselves, and in 1820 an amending Act was passed, providing that longer hours might be worked if time had been lost during the day by failure of water power or other accident. The break for meals might be taken at any time between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m., so that children might legally be compelled to work for a considerably longer continuous period than that permitted by the Act of 1819.

During the next five or six years public opinion moved slowly in favour of further reform. One of the most important provisions of the earlier Act had been the stipulation that magistrates should be empowered to inspect the factories and to receive complaints, but since in the great majority of cases the magistrates were themselves proprietors of mills it is not surprising that they took little effective action. This difficulty was met in the Bill that was intro-

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duced by Sir John Cam Hobhouse in 1825, when magistrates who were millowners, or the fathers or sons of owners, were disqualified from inspecting and receiving complaints. The permitted hours of daily labour were not altered, but the dinner break was to occur between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m., and on Saturday there was to be a shorter working day of nine hours, between 5 a.m. and 4.30 p.m.

Although children under nine years of age were prohibited from working in the cotton mills, in practice it was extremely difficult to enforce this regulation, for the registration of births was not made compulsory until 1837. Baptismal certificates were of doubtful value, and entries in family Bibles were easily altered. Unscrupulous employers could therefore evade the law, and the way was made easier for them by the provision that they were not to be liable to any penalty if the parents of a child declared that it had attained the requisite age.

Many of the larger manufacturers were genuine in their desire to abide by the provisions of the Acts, and to limit the working day for young people to one of twelve hours. But the small millowners were anxious to run their machines as long as possible, and they consistently ignored the provisions of the law. They were thus able to undersell their more enlightened competitors, who in self-defence procured the passing in 1831 of still another amending Act, which provided that a millowner who kept his machinery running at night might be convicted of an offence unless he could prove that he had not employed young people below the minimum age, which was now raised from sixteen to eighteen.

Towards the end of 1831 Michael Sadler, the Tory M.P. for Newark, who had for some years striven nobly on behalf of the factory children, introduced a Bill the purpose of which was to limit their labour to ten hours a

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day. He ridiculed the idea that workers were free agents, and reminded the House that so long as the supply of labour exceeded the demand, so long would the labourer be at the mercy of the employer. The factory owners opposed his Bill with all the power they could command, for they understood only too clearly that adults could not work without the assistance of children, and that to limit the working day of children to ten hours would involve a similar limitation in the case of grown men and women, with a consequent diminution, as they thought, of profits.

In the general election of 1832 Sadler lost his seat in Parliament, but his work was continued by Lord Ashley, afterwards the seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, whose reforming zeal won for him immortality among those who laboured to improve the lot of the working classes. He proposed that no boy or girl under the age of eighteen should work for more than ten hours a day, or for more than eight hours on Saturday, and that nobody under twenty-one should be employed during the night, *i.e.* between 7 p.m. and 6 a.m. The factory owners viewed these proposals with the greatest alarm, and asked that a commission should be appointed to visit the manufacturing districts in order to make inquiries on the spot. Their request was granted, and commissioners were forthwith sent to four typical centres of industry, to the north, the north-east, the west, and to Lancashire. Great preparations were made for their coming, and such elaborate steps were taken by some of the owners to present to them a favourable picture that the workers feared they would fail to discover the true state of affairs. But the Parliament men, as they were called, were not easily hoodwinked, and one of them recorded with amusement the views of Eliza Marshall, aged 18, who with her five younger brothers and sisters lived in a cellar for which she paid a rent of a shilling a week :

“It was one Saturday that a gentleman came to see the

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mill. I saw two in a gig. There were people watching the gig ; they said it was two Parliament men. The girls were dressed in their Sunday clothes ; some had only cleaned themselves, the littlest ones, but there were some young girls dressed up very fine. I never saw girls dressed in that way going up to any mill to work. It was strange to see them so fine. I don't hardly know what the Parliament men were going for, rightly. There was a deal of talk about it."

Detailed inquiries were made about hours and conditions of work. Andrew Pedie, aged 12, had worked for three years in the mill of Mr. Craig, at Prestonholme, near Edinburgh. "He used to be very tired in the evening, when he was younger, and often fell asleep at the work. All are desirous of shorter hours of labour. The children often sleep, especially when gas is used. 'You see,' he said, 'it is awfu' lang nights in the winter.'" Of Janet Neilson, aged 13, it was said, "She whiles gangs to bed without her supper, she is sae tired. She throws herself down when she gangs hame, no caring what she does. She would rather have shorter hours and less wages. She might go to school and learn to read, write, and to sew." Catharine Trons worked in a wet spinning apartment. "She stands on a wet floor. The spray of hot water is splashed on her waist, so as always to keep her wet. She is very subject to colds, and has hacked and swelled feet and hands." Another child told the commissioner, "Am eleven years old ; used to go to the factory a little before six, sometimes at five, and work on till nine at night. Had half an hour at breakfast, an hour at dinner, and half an hour at tea : did not always have full meal-times. They sometimes rang the bell before the time, and we were forced to go."

Foremen and overseers spoke bitterly of the effect of long hours of work. "I found that after children from eight

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to twelve years had worked eight or nine or ten hours they were nearly ready to faint ; some were asleep ; some were only kept to work by being spoken to or by a little chastisement to make them jump up. . . . I have seen children apparently under nine going to the factories at five in the morning, almost asleep in the streets." Another reported, " I have known the children hide themselves in the stove among the wood, so that they should not go home when the work was over, when we have worked till ten or eleven. . . . I do not know why they should hide themselves, unless it was that they were too tired to go home." A spinner said, " I have always found it more difficult to keep my piecers awake the last hours of a winter's evening. I have seen them fall asleep, and they have been performing their work with their hands while they were asleep. I have stopped and looked at them for two minutes, going through the motions of piecing, fast asleep."

If the spinners were to maintain their output the children must be kept constantly at work, and although the commissioners received repeated assurances that no cruelty was practised in the mills, there can be little doubt that heavy punishment was often inflicted. Charlotte Ferguson, who had worked in the factory since she was six, said that Samuel Watts, one of the overseers, " used to lick them with a leathern belt or strap. She used sometimes to cry, when she was a mere child and ' could not put on her ain clothes,' which her sister did for her. He has beat her till she screamed again, but the boys got ' the sairest beatings, they were sae wild.' " Another piecer told her questioner, " The spinners swear very bad at their piecers and lick 'em sometimes ; some licks 'em with a strap, some licks 'em with hand ; some straps is as long as your arm ; some is very thick, and some thin."

The commissioners were not surprised at evidence of this kind, for despite avowals to the contrary, it was well

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known that barbarous punishments were all too common. They cited with approval a speech made by Mr. McGrant, and reported in the *Manchester Courier*. "Much was said of the black slaves and their chains. No doubt they were entitled to freedom, but were there no slaves except those of sable hue? Had slavery no sort of existence among the children of the factories? Yes, and chains were sometimes introduced. At Wigan, a child of ten years of age, having been late at the factory one morning, had as a punishment a rope put round its neck, to which a weight of twenty pounds was attached; and thus burdened like a galley-slave, it was compelled to labour for a length of time in the midst of an impure atmosphere and heated room."

Although the time allowed for meals was strictly regulated by law, some employers did not hesitate to squeeze a little extra work from their hands by resorting to ingenious subterfuges. In one factory the commissioner was told, "We could see the clock in the yard. I have heard it said that the minute hand used to tumble when it got to the top at dinner-time; it very seldom used to tumble at any other time. I've seen it drop myself, happen five minutes; so that when it was really twelve o'clock it would drop to five minutes after twelve. We always considered among ourselves it was to shorten our meal-times."

Despite these and many similar abuses that the legislation of the previous fifteen years had done little to alleviate, it was clear that a real improvement had at least been effected in some of the factory buildings. "It is of the old and small mills," said the commissioners, "that the report pretty uniformly is: 'dirty, low-roofed, ill-ventilated, ill-drained, no conveniences for washing or dressing, no contrivances for carrying off dust and other effluvia, machinery not boxed in, some of the flats so low that it is scarcely possible to stand upright in the centre of the rooms.'" The more recent buildings were much better designed. The Beanston

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Crown Mill in Perthshire, for instance, was beautifully situated and admirably regulated. It was clean and well-ventilated, and the machinery was properly fenced. "Arrangements are obviously made with a view to the substantial comfort of the people, and a more cheerful, happy looking set of industrious men and women, and of young people, is seldom to be found."

Nevertheless the general tenor of the report was sombre and depressing. "From the whole of the evidence laid before us," said the commissioners, "we find :

"1. That the children employed in all the principal branches of manufacture throughout the kingdom work during the same number of hours as the adults.

"2. That the effects of labour during such hours are, in a great number of cases :

"Permanent deterioration of the physical constitution ; The production of disease often wholly irremediable, and the partial or entire exclusion (by reason of excessive fatigue) from the means of obtaining adequate education and acquiring useful habits, or of profiting by those means when afforded.

"3. That at the age when children suffer these injuries from the labour they undergo, they are not free agents, but are let out to hire, the wages they earn being received and appropriated by their parents and guardians."

They were driven to the conclusion that the existing law was seldom enforced, and often openly disregarded. "It appears in evidence that in some rare instances children begin to work in factories at five years old ; it is not uncommon to find them there at six ; many are under seven ; still more under eight ; but the greater number are nine ; while some, but comparatively few, branches of manufacture do not admit of the employment of children under ten years of age."

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5

After carefully weighing the evidence, the commissioners recommended that until the commencement of their fourteenth year children should not be allowed to work for more than eight hours in any one day, and that they should be prohibited from working at night, *i.e.* between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. The law forbidding the employment of children under nine was to be strictly enforced. Here the commissioners addressed themselves to a problem that lay at the root of all factory legislation. Experience had proved that it was easy for Parliament to make regulations, but very difficult, if not impossible, to ensure that those regulations were carried into effect. Local prejudice and private interest made the intervention of the magistrates valueless, and workmen who were so hardy as to register complaints ran the risk of being deprived of their livelihood. Some of the more important millowners, threatened by the competition of the less scrupulous who did not hesitate to flout the law, had recommended the appointment of officers "charged with the powers and duties requisite to enforce the execution of legislative measures," and with this recommendation the commissioners concurred. They suggested that three inspectors be appointed to travel through the manufacturing districts. They were to be empowered to enter all factories employing children, to order machinery to be fenced and sanitary arrangements to be provided, and to inflict fines on those employers who broke the law concerning hours of labour. They were to meet together periodically and to make reports to the Government, who would thus have available first-hand, unbiased information about industrial conditions.

Having carefully considered the recommendations of the commissioners, Lord Althorpe introduced a Government Bill, and in the year 1833 Parliament passed "An Act to

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Regulate the Labour of Children and Young Persons in Mills and Factories." This Act, which applied only to cotton, woollen, worsted, hemp, flax, tow, linen, and silk mills provided as follows :

- 1 No child under nine years of age was to be employed, except in silk mills.
- 2 No child under eleven years of age was to be employed for more than forty-eight hours a week, an average of eight hours a day, and not more than nine hours was to be worked in any one day. The minimum age under this section was to be raised to twelve in 1834, and to thirteen in 1835. In silk mills, however, children under thirteen might work ten hours a day.
- 3 No person under eighteen years of age was to work more than twelve hours a day, or sixty-nine hours a week.
- 4 Night-work (from 8.30 p.m. to 5.30 a.m.) was prohibited for all persons under the age of eighteen.
- 5 Those children whose labour was restricted to forty-eight hours a week were to attend school for at least two hours on each of the six working days, and were to produce each Monday a voucher, signed by the schoolmaster, certifying that they had made the requisite attendance during the previous week.
- 6 An hour and a half was to be allowed each day for meals, and those whose hours of work were regulated were to be allowed holidays on Christmas Day and Good Friday, and they were also to have not less than eight half-days' holidays each year.
- 7 Four inspectors were appointed to enforce the provisions of the Act. They were empowered to enter factories, to make inquiries, and to inflict penalties on those who contravened the regulations. They were also given powers to enforce school attendance. Twice a year they were to submit reports to the Government, and they were to meet in conference at regular intervals in order to secure some uniformity of action.

This measure marks a really important advance. Earlier Acts of Parliament had been ineffective because no machinery

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had been provided to enforce their execution, but Parliament had now come to realize that administrative action was necessary if any real progress was to be made. The idea of appointing inspectors armed with such drastic powers was repugnant to many men, and even Lord Ashley did not view this departure from former practice with any enthusiasm. The workers suspected that the new officials would work hand in glove with the factory owners. "If these inspectors," it was said, "in whose appointment the millowners will have due influence, should take the sides of their patrons and masters, so extensive, so arbitrary are their powers that we shall want nothing but the torture-room to complete their character and office as factory inquisitors." Experience was soon to prove that these suspicions were ill-founded. The inspectors exercised their authority with a notable zeal, but with tact and discretion, and they soon introduced order and respect for the regulations, where formerly chaos and lawlessness had reigned.

It is important, too, to notice that a wider range of factories was included within the scope of the Act of 1833. It is true that only textile factories were as yet subject to legislative regulation, but previous Acts had affected the cotton mills alone. This process of gradually widening the field within which the Factory Acts were operative is quite typical of the British method of tackling the problem.

"We began," it has been said, "with no abstract theory of social justice or the rights of man. We seem always to have been incapable even of taking a general view of the subject we were legislating upon. Each successive statute aimed at remedying a single, ascertained evil. Neither logic nor consistency, neither the over-nice consideration of even-handed justice nor the quixotic appeal of a general humanitarianism was permitted to stand in the way of a practical remedy for a proved wrong. That this purely empirical

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method of dealing with industrial evils made progress slow is scarcely an objection to it. With the nineteenth century House of Commons no other method would have secured any progress at all."

The cotton mills were the first to be regulated because the conditions that obtained in them made such a powerful impact on the national conscience, and because the evils that flourished were not only gross but plain for all to see. The mills had developed with extreme rapidity in the early days of the Industrial Revolution, they were situated amidst great and ever-increasing centres of population, and they housed large numbers of work-people. In such circumstances the plight of the child workers could hardly escape public attention, and that at a time when men's minds, profoundly stirred by the religious movement initiated by John Wesley, and by the evangelical revival within the Established Church, were discovering new objects for compassion and new outlets for that philanthropic zeal that induced Wilberforce to fight his great crusade against the slave trade, John Howard to expose the evils of the prison system, Hannah and Martha More to begin their splendid work in the depressed villages of the Mendips, and Robert Raikes to inaugurate the Sunday School movement in an effort to tackle the problems of poverty and vice in the pin factories of Gloucester. It was natural that the zeal of the reformers should in the first instance be directed against the abuses that were so glaringly apparent, and conditions in the cotton mills, and later in the factories devoted to other branches of the growing textile trade, afforded the opportunity of redress on a generous and heroic scale. If in the early years reform was slow, and, as we are tempted to think, half-hearted, it was natural that it should be so, for the doctrine of State intervention ran counter alike to the economic views and to the prejudices of the times. Many years were to elapse before society came to realize that it owed a duty to its children, and that this

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duty could be discharged, not by dealing piecemeal with individual problems and abuses as public attention became focused upon them, but by considering the entire question of juvenile labour as a unified whole, to be handled in the light of a broadly conceived plan of social justice.

CHAPTER 4

CHIMNEYS AND MINES

I

When my mother died I was very young,
And my father sold me while yet my tongue
Could scarcely cry, "Weep ! Weep ! Weep ! Weep !"
So your chimneys I sweep, and in soot I sleep.

So wrote Blake in his *Songs of Innocence*, published in 1787. He was not the first to call public attention to the sufferings of the little chimney sweeps, since Jonas Hanway had already championed their cause and embarked on a campaign to improve their lot.

The architects who had planned the palaces and mansions of the wealthy had been apt to ignore the fact that chimneys must be swept if accumulations of soot were not to be left to cause fires, and in many instances they built flues that were not only extremely narrow (some were as little as seven inches square), but that were complicated and tortuous to a degree, with long horizontal shafts and acute bends. It was the task of the climbing boy to ascend these dark and dangerous passages, levering himself up by knees and elbows as best he might, and having reached the top, to descend again, scraping, sweeping, and carrying the soot down as he came. The master chimney sweeps, rough and heartless men for the most part, often treated their apprentices with the greatest cruelty and inhumanity. Girls as well as boys were set to climb at the tender age of five or six. "The best age for teaching boys is about six," said one of the masters, "that is thought a nice trainable age, but I have known two of my neighbour's children begin at five. I once saw a child

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only 4½ years old with his scraper in his hand." "About seven is the common age for beginning," another master sweep explained, "as at eight a boy is getting too large."

The training was rigorous in the extreme, as was apparent from the statement of Mr. Ruff, a Nottingham sweep, made many years later. "No one knows the cruelty which a boy has to undergo in learning. The flesh must be hardened. This is done by rubbing it, chiefly on the elbows and knees, with the strongest brine, close by a hot fire. You must stand over them with a cane, or coax them by the promise of a halfpenny, if they will stand a few more rubs. At first they will come back from their work with their arms and knees streaming with blood: then they must be rubbed with brine again. Some boys are awkward and suffer more, but all are scarred and wounded."

Hanway was convinced that Parliament must intervene if better conditions were to be secured, and he began an agitation that met with some sympathy, for in the year 1788 there was passed an "Act for the Better Regulation of Chimney Sweepers and their Apprentices." It provided that no boy was to be apprenticed under the age of eight, and "that no person or persons using or exercising the trade, business or mystery of a chimney sweeper shall retain, keep or employ any more than six apprentices at one and the same time." The name and address of the master was to be engraved on a brass plate "to be set or affixed to the front of a leathern cap which every master must provide for each such apprentice, and which he shall wear when out upon his duty." Boys were not to be let out to hire, and they were not to be sent to "call the streets" between 7 a.m. and noon in the winter, or between 5 a.m. and noon in the summer.

Like so many other early measures designed to improve the lot of working children this Act remained a dead letter, largely because no machinery was set up to enforce its

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provisions. It was even impossible to prevent the crying of the streets, always regarded as one of the worst features of the system. Six years after the passing of the Act Blake could still write in moving terms of the climbing boys who walked the street with their cries of "Sweep" :

A little black thing among the snow,
Crying "Weep ! Weep !" in notes of woe !

In 1803 there was founded a Society for Superseding the Necessity of Climbing Boys, and in 1817 and 1818 Select Committees were appointed by the House of Commons and the House of Lords to examine the whole question. The reports were disquieting, for it was found "that the clause in the Act of 1788 regulating the age at which apprentices shall be taken is constantly evaded ; and they are decidedly of opinion that the various and complicated miseries to which the unfortunate children are exposed cannot be relieved by regulations. Despite the fact that the minimum age for apprentices under the Act is eight, infants of the early ages of four, five and six years have been employed, it being the practice for parents to sell their children to this trade. It is in evidence that they are stolen from their parents, and inveigled out of workhouses. Even among most respectable masters it is the constant practice to borrow the youngest boys from one another, for the purpose of sweeping what are called the narrow flues. The youngest and most delicate children are in the service of the worst class of masters, and are employed exclusively to clean flues which from their peculiar construction cannot be swept without great personal hazard."

"I have bought lads myself," said Mr. Francis Peacock of Burslem, some time later. "I used to give the parents so much a year for them. Sometimes they got five pounds, sometimes fifty shillings, and sometimes they let you have

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them for nothing at all. In Liverpool you can get any quantity you want."

"I am satisfied," wrote a Leicester magistrate, "that great numbers of these children are regularly bought and sold; and that practically they are as complete slaves as any negro children in South Carolina."

The committee made a careful investigation of living and working conditions. Mr. John Harding told them that when he was an apprentice he was never cleaned from holiday to holiday, that is, from Easter to Whitsuntide, and so on. The boys, he said, slept in different places, sometimes in sheds and sometimes in the cellar. Another witness said that during the summer months boys were taken to the New River to wash on Sunday mornings, but that no attention was paid to washing during the winter. Mr. John Cook, too, was examined:

Where do your apprentices sleep?—In the cellar.

Upon their soot bags?—No, they have blankets and a bed.

Is the soot kept in the cellar too?—Yes.

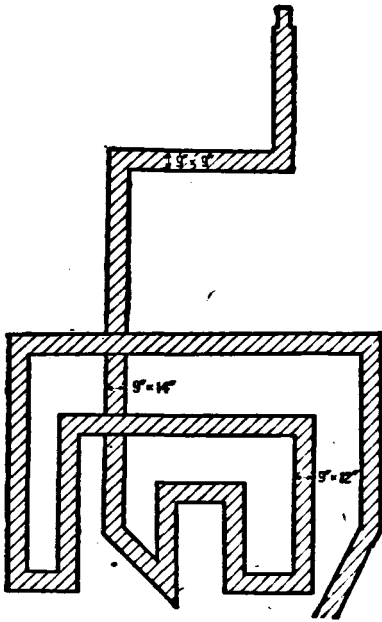
What is the food that they daily have?—They have bread and butter and tea for breakfast, and what we have for dinner, and for supper they generally have bread and butter.

They have the remains of your dinner?—Yes.

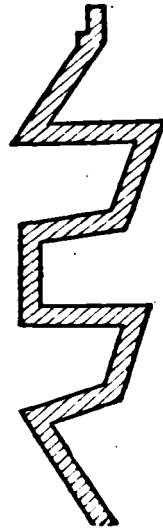
Do you find many boys show great repugnance to go up at first?—Yes, most of them, but if they resist they will be taken back to their parents, who would be unable to maintain them. They go through a deal of hardship before they come to our trade.

Despite the mass of evidence thus collected no action was taken, and the employment of climbing boys was further extended. In 1834 the House of Lords set up still another committee, and the dismal story was once more repeated. "If you want to have a thing repaired in the

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Sectional view of the
Drying Room chimney,
Buckingham Palace



Sectional view of the
Still Room chimney,
Bishop of London's
palace

chimney," Mr. Daniel Bosworth told the new committee, "you want a small boy. A boy mostly works with his elbows; but when he is placed in a narrow chimney he must carry the candle above his head. My forefinger became in climbing, in two years, as hard as a piece of horn; it is that which gives as much assistance in climbing the chimney as any part; a boy keeps hoisting himself up in the chimney by that. I had a fellow-apprentice that met with an accident in doing a chimney at General Moss's in Wimpole Street. The chimney was on fire, and he climbed over the fire. I cut the top of the chimney and took him out. He was very little hurt."

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These revelations convinced Parliament that further action was necessary. The Act of 1834, admitting that previous legislation had not touched the problem, provided that no child under the age of ten was to be apprenticed. All master-sweeps must be householders, and they were not to hire out their apprentices or allow them to call the streets. It was made an offence to compel a boy to climb a flue in order to extinguish a fire, and penalties were provided for those who ill-treated their apprentices. Section 18 of the Act imposed regulations on the building of chimneys. In future the flues were to measure at least fourteen inches by nine inches, or to be of a diameter of twelve inches, and sharp corners were to be rounded off.

This Act was a little more effective, probably because the Society for Superseding Climbing Boys employed inspectors to report violations of the law. But there was still much evasion and finally the redoubtable Lord Ashley (later Shaftesbury) entered the fray. He persuaded Parliament to pass another Act, and in 1840 it was declared illegal to allow anybody under twenty-one to climb, while the minimum age for apprentices was raised to sixteen. Had this latest measure been enforced the evil would quickly have disappeared, and sweeps would have been compelled to employ the new machine that had recently been devised. Many householders, however, refused to allow this to be used in their houses, for they believed that it would leave soot behind, especially in those badly constructed chimneys that could not be reached easily by the flexible canes. And so the old abuses continued despite the law, and it was more than twenty years before Parliament was again moved to intervene. In 1864 a sweep was forbidden to take a boy under 16 into a house where he intended to sweep chimneys, and in 1875 it was provided that a sweep employing assistants must obtain a licence from the police.

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2

If these abuses could exist unchecked in the heart of the metropolis, and indeed in the very homes of the legislators, it is not surprising that similar evils should prevail in other industries in remote parts of the kingdom, especially in the coal mines. Coal was rapidly becoming a factor of prime importance in the national life. The great textile mills needed vast amounts of fuel to raise the steam that turned the wheels of their machines, and since the rapidly developing system of canals and railways made transport ever easier, the coalfields in the Midlands, the North, and Scotland found a ready market for their product. New pits were sunk, existing workings were extended, and there was a feverish rush to bring to the surface as great a quantity of the precious mineral as possible. The older established collieries, whose owners knew from bitter experience the risks and dangers attendant on coal-mining, were in many instances developed on sound lines, though mining engineering was still in its infancy and safety measures were rudimentary in the extreme. But it frequently happened that those who opened new pits had insufficient capital behind them, and the miners, men, women and children alike, were compelled to labour in conditions that not only brought them into grave danger but imposed severe physical hardship, and the mining industry being entirely untrammelled by control or regulation, it was the weakest who suffered most.

Hope of relief came in 1842 when a Royal Commission that had been appointed to conduct a series of inquiries into the employment of children presented its report on the coal mines. It was a terrible document. It exposed simply and fearlessly the tragic evils and the almost unspeakable terrors and indecencies that afflicted the mine-workers. It revealed to a startled and horrified country that boys and girls were taken underground at the age of five or six, that they re-

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mained in low, narrow, and ill-ventilated galleries and cuttings for twelve or fourteen hours a day, that yoked to heavy wagons they dragged loads of coal where beasts of burden could not penetrate, and that they were worked without the least regard to welfare, health, or the ordinary decencies of civilized life.

What impressed the commissioners most was the tender age at which boys and girls were set to labour underground. "I visited the house of a little boy whom I saw keeping a door down Flatworth Pit," said one member of the commission. "He was aged about six years and seven months, and had been down the pit a month or six weeks. He was at school at three years old, and his father wished to make him a better scholar before he went down. He always put him to bed early because he must get up every working morning at 3 o'clock. He goes down the pit at 4 o'clock. He gets his dinner directly he comes home about half-past four in the afternoon, and then he washes himself and goes to bed between six and seven. When his son gets a little more hardened to the pit his father means to send him to night-school, and stop an hour off his sleep. He was a fat boy when he was three years old."

Mary Davis, who worked in South Wales, was "a very pretty little girl near seven years old. She was discovered fast asleep under a piece of rock. Her lamp had gone out for want of oil, and upon waking her she said the rats had ran away with her bread and cheese so she went to sleep."

The dark, low galleries, deep in mud and slush, the bad ventilation, and the terrors of the dark imposed a severe physical and nervous strain on the children, a strain that the heavy task of hurrying the loaded corves or wagons did nothing to lighten. "When a child has to drag a carriage loaded with coals through a passage not more than eighteen inches in height some ingenuity is required to get his body and the carriage through the narrow space. In some pits I

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have had to creep on my hands and knees," wrote one of the commissioners, "the height being barely twenty inches, and then have gone still lower on my breast, and crawled like a turtle."

The harnessing of women and children to the coal-wagons by means of the girdle and chain was disliked and resented even by those who had become inured to this practice by long custom. "About a year and a half ago I took to the girdle and chain," said James Pearce, a boy of twelve. "I do not like it, it hurts me. It rubs my skin off. I often feel pain. I often knock my back against the top of the pit, and it hurts very sore. My legs ache very badly. It is very hard, very hard, sir." An old collier, asked his opinion of the girdle, replied, "Sir, I can only say what the mothers say, it is barbarity ! barbarity !"

The adult colliers, and even the parents themselves, frequently did little to alleviate these conditions. "The collier boy is to all intents and purposes the property of his father until he attains the age of 17 years, or marries ; his father receives his wages whether he be an air-door boy of five years of age or a haulier of fifteen. The men will send the boys where they will not go themselves, and some have their limbs broken and others lose their lives. Some parishes will not let them have their pauper children as apprentices." Harshness and cruelty were by no means uncommon. "The getter I thrutch for is a wicked old fellow," said Robert Tweddle of Oldham. "Once he bit me by the thigh and lifted me up to the roof in his mouth. He bit me because I had not strength to lift the tubs on the rails."

Week in, week out, the children lived in their pit dirt, and even the men did not bath. "None of the drawers ever wash their bodies," said one collier. "I let my shirt rub the dirt off, though I wash my neck, ears and face. When a collier is in full dress he has white stockings and low shoes, and a very tall shirt neck, very stiffly starched, and

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ruffles, but they never wash their bodies underneath—they are as black as your hat.”

Slowly and painfully the long and melancholy procession passed before the members of the commission. Their voices, speaking to us across the century from the sober pages of the report, are now stilled and perhaps a little unreal, but they echoed and reverberated throughout the country. Let one or two more speak. James Taylor of Oldham was nearly eleven. “When I have been working at night I cannot sleep in the day, not more than two hours, and then I run a-playing me. When I sleep I feel as though I am wagoning, and the wagons are all coming on t’butty and me. My butty is a wicked lad, and will not let me eat my dinner. When I get up to run about the lane after t’other lads, I feel queer and keep shutting my ’een and runnin’. I can’t feel well after watching all t’neet.”

Margaret Leveston was six, and she worked in one of the east Scottish pits. “I’ve been down at coal carrying six weeks. I make ten to fourteen rakes a day. I carry full 56 pounds of coal in a wooden backit. The work is nae guid; it is sae very sair. I dinna ken the time we gang—it is gai dark.” Ellison Sack was a small girl of eleven. “I have to bear my burthen up four traps or ladders before I get to the main road. My task is four or five tubs, each tub holds $4\frac{1}{2}$ cwt. I fill five tubs in twenty journeys. Am very glad when my task is wrought, as it sore fatigues.”

Margaret Hipps was engaged in the Stoney Rigg Colliery, in Stirlingshire. “My employment after reaching the wall face is to fill a bagie with $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 cwt. of coal. I then hook it on to my chain and drag it through the seam, which is 26 to 28 inches high, till I get to the main road—probably 200–400 yards. The pavement I drag over is wet, and I am obliged at all times to crawl on hands and feet. It is sad sweating and sore fatiguing work.” Her questioner adds, “It is almost incredible that human beings can submit to

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such employment, crawling on hands and knees over soft slushy floors, more difficult in consequence of the inclination which is frequently one in three." Another child was seven years old. "Is sure he has worked two years. Has to work nearly up to his knees in sludge all day. His legs are cold, but other parts very warm. He had rather get coal than head; it is so wet, and he cannot stand up. He is so tired, dirty and wet when he gets home that he undresses, gets his supper, and is glad when he is in bed."

3

The report of the commissioners produced a profound effect. Their conclusions may be briefly summarized. "Children are often taken to work in the mines when four years old, though eight or nine is the ordinary age for starting. Most children are trappers, and therefore have to be in the pit from the beginning to the end of the day. Although this employment scarcely deserves the name of labour, yet, as the children engaged in it are commonly excluded from light, and are always without companions, it would, were it not for the passing and repassing of the coal carriages, amount to solitary confinement of the worst order. In some districts they remain in solitude and darkness during the whole time they are in the pit, and many of them never see the light of day for weeks together during the greater part of the winter season, except on those days of the week when work is not going on, and on the Sunday. In east Scotland there is a larger proportion of children and young persons, many of them girls. The chief part of their labour consists in carrying the coals on their backs up steep ladders. The regular hours of work are seldom less than eleven a day, and often twelve and more, while night work is common. There are no intervals for rest or refreshment, and food is eaten in the pit. Harsh usage is not uncommon,

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and the owners take little interest in their employees after work is over. At least little is done to afford them the means of enjoying innocent amusement and healthful recreation. In all the coalfields accidents of a fearful nature are extremely frequent. One of the most frequent causes is the want of superintendence by overlookers to see to the security of the machinery for letting down and bringing up the work-people ; the state of the mines as to the quantity of noxious gas in it ; and the efficiency of the ventilation. Another cause is the almost universal practice of entrusting the closing of the air-doors to very young children. We conclude that the seeds of painful and mortal diseases are very often sown in childhood and youth."

In the metalliferous mines, devoted to the raising of tin, copper, lead, and zinc, conditions were very much better. Girls and women were never employed underground, and although there were cases of boys being so employed before they were twelve, it was not unusual to keep them from the pit until they were eighteen. Food and clothing were generally good, but although the mines themselves were not unhealthy, it was considered that young people might suffer in after-life, especially from respiratory diseases, through exerting themselves beyond their strength in partnership with adults.

Parliament could not refuse to act, and guided in this matter, as in so many others, by Lord Ashley, it passed the Mines Act the same year, 1842. This was a short and decisive measure. It erected no complicated structure of regulations, such as was to prove to be necessary in later years, but it struck at the root of the evil disclosed by the recently published report. Girls and women were removed from the mines, never to return, and boys were not to be employed underground until they reached the age of ten. Inspectors were appointed with powers similar to those wielded by the factory inspectors. No "steam-engine, windlass or gin"

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used for raising and lowering the miners in vertical shafts was to be operated by a boy under fifteen, and wages were not to be paid at any tavern, public-house, beer-shop, or other place of entertainment.

No provision was made for attendance at school, hours of work were not restricted, and there was no regulation of labour above-ground. The Act is a well-nigh perfect example of *ad hoc* legislation—the worst abuses were removed, but there was no constructive planning, and no effort was made to work out even the elements of a progressive long-term policy. Eighteen years were to elapse before Parliament moved again.

CHAPTER 5

THE HALF-TIME SYSTEM

I

THE educational provisions of the Act of 1833 (see Chapter 3, section 5) had been of great significance, for this Act was the first in which Parliament required factory children to attend school as a condition of employment. It is true that Peel's Act of 1802 had insisted that apprentices should receive some measure of instruction during working hours, but this affected only a small proportion of the children employed in mills and factories. The new Act went much further, for it applied to all boys and girls between the ages of nine and thirteen if they worked in mills where cotton, wool, worsted, hemp, flax, tow, and linen were manufactured. The requirements were meagre enough—two hours' schooling a day for six days in the week—but the principle established was destined to be one of great importance. It was the first partial recognition of the fact that it is not enough simply to regulate hours of work. The time thus set free must be well employed, and the decision to compel children to attend school was wise and far-seeing. As the years went by a system of universal compulsory education was set up—gradually and hesitantly, it must be admitted—and when this had been accomplished the true functions of Factory Acts and Education Acts respectively became increasingly clear: it was for the former to specify in what surroundings and for what hours young people should work, and for the latter to decide at what age and subject to what conditions they should be employed. So it comes about that in the early years we turn to Factory, Mines, and similar Acts when we seek information about child labour; in

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later times we find that these Acts deal rather with factory conditions, maximum hours of work, the fencing of machinery, ventilation, cleanliness, and sanitation, while minimum ages are the concern rather of the Education Acts.

But in 1833 these developments lay in the dimness of the future. A new system had been inaugurated, and it was the duty of the factory inspectors to see that it worked efficiently. Their task was an impossible one, though the powers with which they were armed were not inconsiderable. Section 22 of the Act authorized them "to establish or procure the establishment of schools," they could disallow the salaries of incompetent teachers, they could enforce school attendance and arrange for tickets "or such other means as they may think fit for vouchers of attendance" to be produced by children when they went to work on Monday morning. But they were faced with two serious difficulties. The hours during which children worked often prevented their attending school at all, and in many cases there were no proper schools for them to attend.

After seven years' experience of the new system one of the inspectors explained the problem that faced him. "The general hours of attendance at schools which would be open to factory children," he wrote, "are in the forenoon from nine to twelve, and from two to four or five in the afternoon, and the pupils at such schools have no other daily occupation; it therefore becomes impossible to consider the effects of the educational provisions of the Factories Acts without considering also the children's hours of daily employment in the mills. . . . The general limit of the labour of children may be taken at eight hours daily throughout the week. When the full term of eight hours' daily labour is exacted it will be seen that it is impossible that the children so employed should be able to attend school daily at the hours, either in the forenoon or afternoon, at which ordinary schools are open."

THE HALF-TIME SYSTEM

This difficulty, real as it was, was aggravated by the fact that there was a total insufficiency both of schools and of teachers. In many districts were to be found common day schools, as they were called, maintained by decayed ladies, or by men who were either incapable of earning their living by any other means, or combined teaching with some other calling. One such individual, it is recorded, was "William Woodcock, more familiarly called Billy Bingo, who united the avocations of schoolmaster and baker. He used to come hot out of his bakehouse, with his shirt sleeves rolled up to his shoulders, sit down at once to cool himself, and hear our lessons; and then having set us our copies, he strutted humming away again to set in his bread." So, too, Mr. George Griffiths, who was the master of St. Katherine's School near the Tower, acted also as parish clerk, did a little business in the undertaking line, and made a trifle as a musician, for he was chorus singer to His Majesty's ancient concert of music in Hanover Square.

2

A vast number of children were dependent for their education on the Sunday Schools, the first of which had been opened in 1780 by Robert Raikes, the proprietor of the *Gloucester Journal*. Raikes, a pious and godly man, had been deeply concerned to see the profligacy and misbehaviour of the children employed in the manufacture of pins when they were freed from their labour on Sunday, and he engaged four ladies who kept schools in the neighbourhood to instruct these children in reading and in the Church Catechism. The success of his scheme was immediate and decisive, and Sunday Schools were opened in many parts of the country, especially in the industrial areas of the Midlands and the North. It was calculated that in the year 1833 no fewer than one and a half million children were in attendance.

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The cost of maintaining these schools was borne by charitable people who were anxious to improve the lot of the children of the poor. Private philanthropy, too, financed the monitorial schools, which were founded at the turn of the century by Joseph Lancaster, the Quaker, and by Dr. Andrew Bell, a clergyman of the Church of England. The secret of this "new and mechanical system of teaching invented under the blessing of Divine Providence" lay in the employment of older boys and girls to instruct their fellows. In this way the school could be conducted very cheaply, since "for the whole school of one thousand boys there is only one master; the rest of the teaching is all done by the boys themselves, for any boy who can read can teach, although he knows nothing about it."

The teaching was, of course, formal and mechanical to a degree, and the well-drilled monitors, whose ages ranged from seven to fourteen, relied on endless, parrot-like repetition. Every detail of the ordered routine was carefully planned. "The first or lower class are taught to read the printed alphabet, and to name the letters when they see them. The same with the figures used in arithmetic. The class go up to the master to read, and while one boy is reading, the word, *e.g.* Ab-so-lu-ti-on, is given out with a loud voice by the monitor, and written down by the other boys, who are provided with slates for the purpose." "In the Royal Free School at the Borough Road," we are told, "a little boy of twelve or thirteen years of age often commands the whole school with equal obedience from the many hundred children as a military officer would experience with a body of well-disciplined troops. In one school the master, who was a shoemaker, would sit at the head of the school with his last and leather, and alternately work and overlook the tuition of the whole school; he had no need to exert himself to prevent confusion."

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The schools of Bell and Lancaster made a deep impression throughout the country, and observers were amazed to see the change they wrought in the rough, undisciplined children who flocked in from courts and alleys to learn habits of obedience and subordination. Subscriptions poured in, many eminent persons lent their patronage, and even the King sent a donation to the funds. "Lancaster," said George III, "I highly approve of your system, and it is my wish that every poor child in my dominions should be taught to read the Bible."

It soon became apparent that some form of permanent and centralized organization would be necessary if the new schools were to extend and prosper, and in 1808 a society, later known as the British and Foreign School Society, was formed to administer the Lancasterian schools. These British schools, as they were called, were to be open to all irrespective of creed, though the Bible was to be the basis of the reading lesson. This undenominational approach aroused the fierce antagonism of the Church of England, who considered the new scheme to be "the most powerful engine that ever was devised against the established church." Consequently in 1811 another society was inaugurated, "The National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church throughout England and Wales." The National schools provided a curriculum based essentially on religious instruction, and the society made building grants on condition that pupils were taught the catechism and doctrines of the Church of England. In 1833, when there were some one and a quarter million children on the books of the British and National schools, the Government, realizing that private charity could not continue to bear unaided the cost of public education, made a grant of £20,000 "in aid of private subscriptions for the erection of school houses for the education of the children of the poorer classes in Great Britain." Even

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this meagre sum was not won without much opposition. "Education has been more and more spread," cried Mr. William Cobbett, "but to what does it all lead? Nothing but to increase the number of schoolmasters and school-mistresses—that new race of idlers!" It was some consolation to those who opposed the grant to know that the schooling they assisted to provide was not as a rule to be free, for each week the children were to pay their "school-pence," varying from twopence to eightpence.

3

These schools frequently worked in conditions of great difficulty. Pupils attended irregularly, and it was a constant source of complaint that many of them moved from school to school, and were thus able to derive little benefit from the education that was provided. In many cases that education was poor enough. The teachers were untrained and ill-paid, and books, writing materials, and other equipment were often sadly deficient. The syllabus too was planned on narrow and unintelligent lines. The monitorial system would have been poor and cheap in any event, but the authorities in their desire to base the whole of the instruction on the principles of Christianity imparted a scriptural bias to the entire field of the teaching, with results that were at times almost ludicrous.

The youngest children learnt the alphabet in terms of religion. Seated at their long wooden forms, or standing grouped round the monitor, they solemnly chanted:

- A is an angel, who praises the Lord ;
- B is for Bible, God's most holy word ;
- C is for Church, where the righteous resort ;
- D is for devil—D is for devil—D is for devil, who wishes our hurt.

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Sometimes the alphabet was employed to illustrate the geography of the Bible :

G is for Goshen, a rich and good land ;
H is for Horeb, where Moses did stand ;
I is for Italy, where Rome stands so fair ;
J is for Joppa, and Peter lived there.

Arithmetic was treated similarly :

There were seven days between the birth of Jesus and his circumcision, and five days from that event to the Epiphany, the time when the star led the Gentiles to worship the holy child. How long was it from the Nativity to the Epiphany ?

Inquiries revealed that only half the children were taught arithmetic, a third learnt to write, a fifth studied geography, and a tenth history. When the members of the Children's Employment Commission asked employers to make a return of the numbers of factory children who could read and write, they were at first surprised that so many laid claim to these accomplishments, but a more exhaustive examination revealed the true state of affairs. "In all the districts," they reported in 1843, "many children who had been returned as able to read, when examined were found to know only the letters of the alphabet ; a very small proportion indeed being able to read well an easy book. Even of those who could read fluently, very few, when questioned, were found to have any conception of the meaning of the words they uttered, or were able to give any intelligible account of what seemed to the examiners to be easy and simple terms and things, so that these children in great numbers of instances were as little benefited, after years of so-called tuition, as if they had never been at any school."

Observations such as this evoked little response in the

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hearts of the factory owners, who were only interested to see that children between the ages of nine and thirteen produced each Monday morning, in accordance with the terms of the Act, the voucher certifying that they had made the requisite attendances at school during the previous week. They were only too glad to avail themselves of the British and National schools where these existed, for otherwise it became necessary for them to provide schools themselves. Robert Owen had indeed opened such a school at New Lanark in the year 1816, not in obedience to any government behest but as a measure of social reform. Here even the youngest children, under the genial and friendly guidance of James Buchanan, their teacher, began their lessons, and learnt habits of self-control as they marched to the music of his flute or walked by the river. "A more pleasing sight to the philanthropist," wrote a visitor to the school, "is not to be found from Johnny Groat's house to the Land's End."

But most factory schools fell far short of this standard, and the millowners, who usually regarded them as an unmitigated nuisance, were content merely to carry out the letter of the law. The result was that when the factory inspectors made their visits they found a sorry state of affairs. Mr. Horner reported that on one occasion he was given an attendance voucher signed with a mark, and when he asked the teacher to read it out to him he was met with a blank silence. The schoolmaster could not read. At another factory the school was held in the stoke-hole, where the grimy and illiterate stoker taught the children in the intervals of stoking the furnaces. "Factory schools," said another inspector, "are of many kinds, from the coal-hole of the engine-house to the highest grade of infant education. The engine man, the slubber, the burler, the book-keeper, the overlooker, the wife of any of these, the small shop-keeper, or the next door neighbour with seven small children

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on the floor and on her lap, are by turns found 'teaching the young idea how to shoot' in and about their several places of occupation, for the two hours required by the law."

4

The experience of the next ten years, however, showed that the experiment had much to recommend it, for even if the standard of education was a low one, children were at least kept out of the factories and under some sort of control for a definite time each day. The inspectors, despite their many disappointments, were strongly in favour of extending the scheme, and some of them suggested that a local rate might be levied to pay for the schools, contending that it was unfair to saddle the millowners with the whole of the responsibility. When it was objected that those ratepayers who derived no benefit from the schools would object to contributing towards their maintenance, they replied that "all the inhabitants of a locality have a clear and direct interest in the moral condition of the working class about them, and would derive benefit from the moral and religious education given in that school."

Accordingly in 1843 Sir James Graham introduced into Parliament a Bill the purpose of which was to provide schools at the public expense for children working in the textile factories. These schools were to be maintained from the local poor rate, and each was to be managed by seven trustees, consisting of the clergyman, the two churchwardens, two persons appointed by the magistrates, and two millowners. The schoolmaster was to be a member of the Church of England, and the Church catechism was to be taught, though children whose parents objected to this teaching could be withdrawn from the scripture lessons. The Nonconformists were violently opposed to this measure, for they objected to such a wide control being given to the

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Established Church, and the Government was compelled to drop the Bill.

In the following year was passed "an Act to amend the Laws relating to Labour in Factories." This Act of 1844 contained many important provisions, but we are here concerned to note only the sections that dealt with education. Children under the age of thirteen were not to work more than $6\frac{1}{2}$ hours (or in certain cases more than 7 hours) in any one day, and they were required to attend school each working day for a period of three hours between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. If they preferred to do so they could work for a period not exceeding 10 hours a day on three alternate days of the week, in which case they were to attend school for five hours on each of the other days.

Thus was set up the famous "half-time" system which required children to spend a substantial part of each working week in school. It was hailed as an important measure of social reform, and its application was to be widely extended in the years to come. "The three hours' compulsory attendance at school," it was said, "even where the teaching is inferior or nominal, has been successful as a preventive of bodily overwork; the effect has been an improved physical growth and an improved quality of labour during the reduced hours." It is interesting at this juncture to consider the relative importance attached to education and to child labour respectively. In the middle of the nineteenth century the work of the child received the prior consideration; the half-time system was regarded as a boon simply because by taking him out of the factory it helped to prevent the child being overworked. Fifty years later the pendulum had swung the other way. It was then realized that education had the first claim, and that the half-time system was a hindrance because it allowed a child to be taken out of school. It was not until 1918 that the system was finally abolished.

CHAPTER 6

TEN HOURS AND THE NORMAL DAY

I

ALTHOUGH during the early years of the nineteenth century Parliament had been concerned to regulate only the working day of the children employed in textile factories, the operatives themselves had consistently demanded that the working hours of adults, too, should be regulated. This demand was quite contrary to the economic theories of the time, and was conceived to entail a measure of interference with private enterprise that neither justice nor good sense could tolerate. "Independently of the objection which there appears to be in principle to any compulsory interference with the hours or terms of adult labour," said the Report of the Children's Employment Commission in 1833, "we find reason to anticipate very serious practical evils from imposing any such arbitrary restriction on the operations of so large a proportion of the manufacturing industry of the country." It was argued that all the profit of the textile industry was earned during the last hours of the day, and if working time were to be reduced to any considerable extent business would be conducted at a loss.

In the face of this opposition the adult operatives realized that it was useless for them to expect any direct reduction of their own hours, but by supporting the cause of the children they hoped to gain an indirect benefit, children and adults working in such co-ordination as to make it seem inevitable that shorter hours for the one class would involve shorter hours for the other. The programme that they set out to achieve was a working day of ten hours for all, and the

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supporters of the Ten Hours Movement fought long and bitterly to gain this end.

The agitation began in earnest in the year 1830 when Richard Oastler contributed to the *Leeds Mercury* a series of violent and challenging letters on "Slavery in Yorkshire."

He vigorously denounced the evils of the factory system, pointed out how in the woollen mills that had not been affected by the Factory Acts of 1819 and 1825 children were working for fourteen and fifteen hours a day without any proper break for meals, and boldly demanded that no one under the age of twenty-one should be allowed to work for more than ten hours a day. Short Time Committees were set up in the great manufacturing towns to assist the campaign, and many public meetings were held. Strong resolutions were forwarded to the Government denouncing the system that allowed young children to work fourteen or sixteen hours a day, and arguing that "ten hours per day is as long a period for the juvenile population to labour as is consistent with the preservation of health, and that it is a stain on the character of Britain that her sons and daughters, in their infant days, should now be worked longer than the adult mechanic, agricultural labourer, or negro slave." If children's hours were restricted, it was contended, many men at present idle would find employment and cease to be a burden on the public.

When Hobhouse's Bill was introduced in 1831 it was warmly welcomed by the Short Time Committees, for it proposed to limit the work of all under eighteen, in woollen, silk, and cotton mills alike, to eleven and a half hours a day, less one hour and a half for meals. The owners of the woollen mills opposed this measure on the ground that their machinery was driven by water power and that the hours of work must of necessity be irregular. They won the day, and the Act of 1831 not only excluded woollen and silk

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mills, but authorized a twelve-hour day for all under eighteen.

In 1833, when the new Bill was being considered, it was freely stated that the adult supporters of the ten-hour day were not all concerned with the sufferings of the children. "I am perfectly satisfied," said a member of the Commission of 1833, "that motives of humanity have not the smallest weight in inducing them to uphold the Ten Hours Bill. The desire for such a Bill exists almost wholly among the working spinners, who are the chief supporters of the cry about the inhumanity of employing young children in factories."

The Factory Act of 1833, as has already been noticed, was a distinct advance on previous legislation, for it extended to a wider range of textile mills, and provided that children under thirteen years of age should not work for more than eight hours a day. It proved to be ineffective because it was difficult to enforce, and the cry was now raised that the moving power should be restricted; in other words, that it should be illegal to run the factory machinery for more than ten hours a day. "All attempts made by the legislature for the protection of those employed in factories," it was said, "will be set at nought, and rendered completely abortive, unless the restriction be put upon the machinery." In order to secure this end the adult workers were even prepared to see the hours of the children raised from eight to ten, if by this means they could secure a universal ten-hour day, but happily this drastic remedy was not applied.

2

In 1844 the Government Bill which had been introduced by Sir James Graham during the previous session proposed that women and young persons (*i.e.* those between thirteen and eighteen years of age) should be forbidden to work

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between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m. The effect of this clause would have been to standardize a twelve-hour day, for two of the permitted fourteen hours were to be set aside for meals. Lord Ashley, however, proposed an amendment, which was carried by a narrow majority, to make the legal working day from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., thus authorising a working day of ten hours. This was a departure from accepted practice that aroused the strongest feelings in the country. "It is a triumph of humanity," said the leader-writer of *The Times*. "We have to sit still before we can comprehend it. When all is hushed, when the inward ear begins to listen, and the inward eye to gaze steadily, then at last it dawns and grows upon us, though we can hardly believe it, that one legislative House of the greatest Empire in this world resolved on the largest national interference in favour of poverty and industry to be found in the history of this or any other country."

But these plaudits were a little previous, for ten days later the House reversed its decision, another Bill was prepared, and the daily labour of women and young persons was fixed at twelve hours a day, between 5.30 a.m. and 8.30 p.m. Although the Factory Act of 1844 failed to satisfy the advocates of a ten-hour day, it was a measure of great importance. In one respect, it is true, it was a retrograde step, for it reduced the minimum age for employment from nine to eight, but on the other hand it inaugurated the half-time system, which in the early years was to prove so great a benefit to the factory children. The twelve-hour working day, which now applied to young persons between the ages of thirteen and eighteen and to all women, was defined as beginning from the time that work was started, and the time was to be taken from a public clock approved by the inspector. The practice of sending children out of the factories for short intervals, and so in effect lengthening the working day, was thus, it was hoped, made illegal, and as

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a further safeguard it was enacted that the protected persons whose hours of labour were regulated were not to remain in the machine rooms during meal-times.

The inspectors having become alarmed at the frequent accidents happening in the factories, the question of safety measures received serious consideration for the first time. No child or young person was to clean the mill gearing while the machinery was in motion, and fly-wheels, steam-engines, water-wheels, and hoists were to be provided with secure guards or fences if they were likely to be a source of danger to children or young persons.

3

Despite the rebuff they had received, the supporters of the ten-hour day continued their efforts. Public opinion was slowly veering in favour of their proposals, for the industrial depression that had overtaken the country had demonstrated the fallacy of the argument that trade would be ruined if the working day was shortened. Many mills could not keep the machines turning even for ten hours a day, and thoughtful people were coming to realize that a man's output was not necessarily directly proportional to his hours of work. The factory operative needed a quick eye and a dexterous hand, and experience was beginning to suggest that the last hour or two of the working day might well show a loss and not a profit, for a tired worker loses his skill, and is apt then to spoil the material on which he is working. "I do not mean to say," said Lord Macaulay, "that a man will not produce more in a week by working seven days than by working six days. But I very much doubt whether at the end of the year he will generally have produced more by working seven days a week than by working six days a week. I deny that a great society in which children work fifteen or even twelve hours a day

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will, in the lifetime of a generation, produce as much as if those children had worked less. Your overworked boys will become a feeble and ignoble race of men, the parents of a more feeble progeny. Never will I believe that what makes a population stronger, and healthier, and wiser, can ultimately make it poorer. If ever we are forced to yield the foremost place among commercial nations we shall yield it to some people pre-eminently vigorous in body and mind."

Reasoning such as this—and there were many who thought as Macaulay did—was not without its effect, and when in the early summer of 1846 Parliament was dissolved, following the repeal of the Corn Laws, the Short Time Committees renewed their efforts, and did everything in their power to secure the return to the new Parliament of candidates favourably inclined towards the Ten-Hour Bill. In the following year (1847) the measure over which such strenuous and embittered contests had been waged was introduced into the Commons by John Fielden, and with a comfortable majority was passed into law. The Act was short, but comprehensive. After the first day of May in the year 1848 no young person under the age of eighteen years, and no female above that age, was to be employed in a textile factory for more than ten hours in any one day nor more than fifty-eight hours in any one week.

Up and down the country rejoicing was general. At a great meeting held in London the workers acknowledged their gratitude "to Almighty God for the success which has attended our efforts," and even the trade depression did not damp the enthusiasm of those who thought that the long struggle was over. But their rejoicings were premature, for unscrupulous millowners soon discovered methods of evading the Act. Trade began to improve, and the temptation to exceed the permitted hours of labour proved irre-

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sistible. Under the Act of 1833 the legal working day extended over fifteen hours, from 5.30 a.m. to 8.30 p.m., and although the Act of 1844 had provided that in the case of protected persons the hours of work should be reckoned from the time when they first began to work in the morning, it was found possible, by means of what came to be known as the "false relay (or shift) system," greatly to exceed the hours allowed by law. "The system which they seek to introduce," said one of the factory inspectors, "under the guise of relays is some one of the many plans for shuffling the hands about in endless variety, and shifting the hours of work and of rest for different individuals throughout the day, so that you may never have one complete set of hands working together in the same room at the same time." The method employed was thus explained. "The young persons and women are sent out of the factory at different times of the day, so as to bring their actual working to ten hours. They are sent out of the mill without any regard to the distance of their homes or the state of the weather. Some of them live two miles off, and then the half-hour, or one hour, or two hours can be turned to no good account. One manager said the factory law has never worked so oppressively to the operatives as it does now."

The inspectors were powerless to stop this abuse, for the law was so vague that many benches of magistrates refused to convict when cases were brought before them. "If there were twenty inspectors," said the manager of a Manchester mill, "we could defy them all if working by relays were allowed." There was only one remedy. The present difficulty had arisen because the legal working day was spread over fifteen hours, from 5.30 a.m. to 8.30 p.m. If a normal working day could be established to coincide with the permitted hours of work it would no longer be possible to employ the system of false relays. The factory inspectors were quite clear on this point. "Nothing but

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one uniform set of hours for all persons employed in the same mill in each of the protected classes can effectually guard such operatives from overwork."

4

The Government acted in the year 1850, when it passed a measure "to amend the Acts relating to Labour in Factories." No young person, and no female above the age of eighteen, was to be employed in a textile factory (except for the purpose of recovering lost time) before 6 a.m. or after 6 p.m. During the winter months, from October to March, the hours might be varied from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., but no other exceptions were allowed. The Act also initiated a weekly half-holiday by providing that no protected person should be employed for any purpose whatever, even for making up lost time, after 2 p.m. on Saturday, but the interval allowed for meals was reduced to an hour and a half, thus increasing the working day to 10 hours. This Act marked a notable advance. Parliament was clearly determined to prevent overwork, and the establishment of a normal working day that coincided with the legal hours of labour made future evasions and subterfuges impossible.

By a strange oversight, however, Parliament had omitted to regulate the working day of children. The Act of 1847 had applied only to women and to young persons between thirteen and eighteen years of age. Children from eight to thirteen could still be employed at any time between 5.30 a.m. and 8.30 p.m., as laid down by the Act of 1844. In 1853 this anomaly was removed, and Lord Palmerston secured the passing of an Act that left the half-time system undisturbed, while providing that the normal working day of twelve hours should apply to children as well as to women and young persons.

CHAPTER 7

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I

ALTHOUGH legislation was piece-meal and fragmentary, being directed against only the more obvious abuses in industries lending themselves readily to regulation, considerable progress had been made by the year 1844. The principle of State intervention had been finally accepted, and although many factory owners still contrived to discover methods of evading the law, there was an increasing number of far-sighted men who realized that shorter hours of labour might well in the long run confer distinct benefits not only on the operatives but on the masters themselves. What was very evident was that the Factory Acts had by no means worked the ruin of the textile trade, as had at one time been feared. The cotton mills especially were flourishing, and there could be no doubt that the workers had benefited enormously. "There is scarcely now to be seen," reported one of the factory inspectors, "in any of the manufacturing districts a crooked leg or a distorted spine. The once pale and haggard faces are now ruddy and joyous; the once angular forms are now full and rounded; there is mirth in the step and happiness in the countenance."

But these benefits were enjoyed by only a limited section of the nation's youth. The conditions of the chimney sweep boys had been improved by the Acts of 1788, 1834, and 1840; the Mines Act of 1842 had done something to alleviate the terrible sufferings of the pit children; while the Factory Acts applied only to children and young people employed in the cotton, woollen, worsted, hemp, flax, tow, and linen mills, and to a lesser extent to those who worked

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in the silk factories. That certain industries, notably those devoted to the printing of fabrics and to dyeing and bleaching, although closely allied to the textile trade, were still outside the operation of the Factory Acts, was a source of deep discontent and was recognized as an anomaly. It is scarcely surprising, then, that under the impetus of the reforms already achieved, Parliament should next turn its attention to these branches of manufacture.

Following the usual practice the Government made detailed inquiries into the conditions obtaining in these industries, and much useful information was gained, largely through the efforts of Mr. Kennedy, the Commissioner appointed for the purpose. He realized that it was impossible to get a true picture of the lives of the children without some knowledge of their home circumstances, for against that background only could their working life be thrown into true perspective. He visited the houses of the print workers, and had a grim and depressing story to tell. The previous fifty years of development had brought little improvement in the great industrial towns, and housing, sanitation, and the general standard of living were still deplorably low. The majority of workers could barely keep body and soul together, and their homes were wretchedly poor. He mentioned the case of one particular man who worked in a print factory in Manchester. "The street is unpaved," he wrote, "and the only sewer is an open gutter along the footpath, in which water and slops are poured. In this house there is a back door, but no privy. The furniture consists of three beds, two tables, three chairs, five stools, one large chest, a fender, a shovel, a clock, one pair of brass candlesticks, and a cupboard containing a few articles of crockery." In these dismal surroundings lived the man, his wife, and eight children, whose combined wages of 29s. 6d. a week compelled them to subsist largely on bread, bacon, buttermilk, and potatoes. The family budget (see appendix)

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makes painful reading, and affords some conception of the magnitude of the task that faced the social reformer. It was becoming increasingly common to say that children must be protected from the avarice of their parents, and that due safeguards must be enforced against exploitation ; but the temptation to add a few shillings to the family income must have been strong, and it was not always the fault of the parents if hardship and suffering were to be found elsewhere than in the factory.

The printing of designs upon linen, cotton, or other material, whether by means of hand blocks or by passing the fabric through rollers, was an important subsidiary of the great textile industry. The cruel conditions that had obtained in the cotton mills, the humid atmosphere, the high temperature, and the whirling machines were, happily, seldom encountered, but the hours during which the children were employed were long and arduous in the extreme, and the atmosphere, particularly when gas was used to light the rooms at night, was singularly oppressive. John William told Mr. Kennedy that he could name many instances when some small job wanted finishing of children having been kept at work for sixteen or eighteen hours successively. "Night work is doubly distressing," he said, "where a great quantity of gas is burning in a room badly ventilated ; the air is hurtful to breathe. Children of delicate constitution are obliged, in a long succession of night work, to desist from coming to the shop, otherwise they die off. When first a child comes to work, from a robust boy he will become pallid and weak, but gradually he gets used to it." Thomas Parkinson, aged 12½, told a similar story. "I work at plaiting pieces of cotton when they pass through the rollers. This is the hardest work, and I have to keep at this from one end of the day to t'other. The regular time to come is six o'clock in the morning in summer, and seven o'clock in the winter. This morning I came at

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four, and I don't know what time I shall go away. Last Saturday I came at four in the morning, and stayed till ten at night. I am never beat or ill-used."

The owners of the print works alleged that it was necessary to employ children during these long and irregular hours because the work came in rushes, and if they could not complete the printing within the requisite time, their business would pass to a competitor. The remedy for this was obviously to subject all the works to the same measure of regulation, and to the objection that such shortening of hours would result in a diminution of profit, Kennedy replied that it was a mistake to imagine that loss would be incurred if the last hours of labour were stopped, for the productiveness of the machine depended on the skill and dexterity of the operatives. "In practice," he said, "it is precisely in the last hours that the production and the profit diminish."

Early in 1845 Lord Ashley introduced a Bill to regulate the hours of the children employed in print works. It was coolly received by Parliament, and his declaration that he intended to bring all the labouring children of the empire within the reach and opportunities of education aroused some misgiving. His opponents urged that though it was possible to impose restrictions in the textile factories, it was difficult to do so in the print works where labour was dispersed and evasion would be easy. Ashley was compelled to compromise on his original proposals, and the Print Works Act 1845 became law.

It provided that no child under the age of eight should be employed at all, and that children between the ages of eight and thirteen, and women, should not be allowed to work between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. Children were required to attend school for five hours a day on at least thirty days in each half-year, and the factory inspectors were empowered to demand the production of attendance vouchers, and to

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cancel the certificate of any schoolmaster who was unfit to instruct children "by reason of his incapacity to teach them to read and write, from his gross ignorance, or from his not having the books and materials necessary to teach them reading and writing."

The Print Works Act is important because it represents the first stage in the extension of control to industries other than textile, but apart from this it can arouse little enthusiasm. The hours of labour were not restricted, and the educational provisions conferred little benefit because it became the practice in many cases to send children to school for the prescribed period of thirty days when trade was slack, thus depriving them of any continuous course of instruction.

2

Fifteen years were to elapse before Parliament intervened on behalf of the children employed in the allied industries of bleaching and dyeing. It was said that working conditions in these trades were so irregular as to make effective control impossible, but the short-time committees that were set up were constantly pressing for the ten-hour day. "The long hours of labour," said the workers of one factory in a petition to the owners, "leave us no time for the cultivation of our intellectual faculties. Man needs periodic seasons of rest. If that be infringed on during the six working days it cannot surprise us if nature demands it back on the Sabbath. We are, therefore, compelled to acknowledge that the present system either forces us to remain at home, or renders us dull, listless and haggard in the House of God. If ten hours a day be the average at which man can work cheerfully, it is clear that twelve hours will make him dull and fatigued. If the spur be applied to him and he master it one day, the next will pay it, and he will be far more than two hours short of his average labour."

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The long and irregular hours were due largely to the fact that the bleaching and dyeing industries were badly organized. During the busy season firms would accept orders that they could not fulfil unless the workers were employed for excessive periods, and it was freely admitted that it would be quite feasible to spread the work more evenly throughout the year. But competition was severe, and most owners were afraid of losing business if they did not take all the work that was sent to them. As was usually the case, adults could not work without the assistance of children, who were frequently driven beyond their strength. They looked with envious eyes on their brothers and sisters in the textile factories, and did not cease to hope that they, too, might one day enjoy an equal measure of protection. "Is there any sign of the ten-hour Bill being gotten?" asked George Hough anxiously. "I should think myself a deal better off. I should not be half as tired at night as I am now." A girl of fourteen gave a striking account of her working hours during the busy season. "We came to work last Friday morning at 6.30. We worked all Friday night till half-past five on Saturday morning. We did not stop to sleep any time in the night except on Saturday morning at half-past five when we lay down to sleep on the hooking-box and slept till a little after 7. Then we went to breakfast for half an hour and then came and worked till 10 minutes past 11." The stories of some children were less dramatic, but full of pathos. Eliza Wolserton not only found the hours very long, but complained that the constant standing made her feet very sore. "I shall be eleven next March. I have been here two Christmas Days. I come at 6 and get home at 9 at night or a little after, sometimes past 10. I am often very tired, and my feet blister at bottom, and are very sore. Mother puts some stuff to it that makes the new skin come."

In the bleaching and dyeing sheds it was often necessary

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to maintain a high temperature, sometimes as much as 130 degrees, for hours at a time, and the health of the children was consequently impaired. The chief sufferers were the girls who worked with the splendid Turkey red dye which was in such popular demand. Their task was to hang the long pieces of dyed fabric in the Turkey red stoves, high buildings of two, three, or four stories, with slatted floors over which the material was draped for drying. The moist heat was so oppressive that they worked barefoot wearing a minimum of clothing, and the need for them to pass continually from the stove to the open air rendered them peculiarly liable to chills and to chest complaints.

“You are bleaching not linen but the blood of boys and girls,” exclaimed a member when the matter was debated in the House of Commons, and another contrasted the lot of his fellow M.P.s with that of the small child “not able to go away and get a good dinner, not sitting while at work upon these soft cushions, but standing upon her poor, tired little legs for hours and hours together.”

In 1860 after a long, and as it seemed sometimes almost a hopeless struggle, Parliament passed an “Act to place the Employment of Women, Young Persons, and Children in Bleaching Works and Dyeing Works under the Regulations of the Factories Acts.” The Acts that had been passed between 1833 and 1853 were to apply to the bleaching and dyeing industries, with one important exception. It was declared lawful to employ women and young persons between the ages of thirteen and eighteen under certain conditions until 8 p.m. to make up for time lost “in consequence of fluctuations in trade, the nature of the process, or any other cause.” Just as the Print Works Act of 1845 had proved to be of little real value because hours of work were left unrestricted, so the present Act was rendered ineffective because of the loopholes it left for the working of overtime.

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3

The lace industry was the next to receive attention, and in the year 1860 Mr. H. S. Tremenheere, a former inspector of schools and an acknowledged expert on industrial problems, was called upon to investigate conditions in the lace factories and to present a report. The Children's Employment Commission had already made some inquiries between 1840 and 1843, but they had come to the conclusion that it was impossible to regulate the lace trade by law because half the machines employed in the industry were worked by hand in private houses, and this process of domestic manufacture did not lend itself to regulation. Tremenheere noted, however, that in 1860 these hand machines had almost disappeared, and that not more than ninety of the four thousand machines engaged in the trade were to be found in the houses of the operatives. He concluded, therefore, that regulation was now possible, and urged that it was badly needed, for great numbers of women, children, and young persons were still employed at all hours of the day and night. The labour was not continuous, but it involved long hours of attendance, and during times of brisk trade women and children were frequently employed until 10, 11, and 12 at night, and youths from fifteen to eighteen were compelled to work shifts with the men, in some factories from 4 a.m. to midnight.

Mr. Simkins, a lace agent of Nottingham, told Tremenheere: "I was very desirous, all the time I was a manager of factories, to prevent the evils arising from the long hours of work of women, boys, and girls, and from their being so mixed up together at all hours from 4 in the morning to midnight. I perceived that it had a very injurious effect on their morals, and on their health, and they had no time to obtain any education. The children began work at eight or nine years of age. This system, as a rule, still continues."

ALLIED INDUSTRIES

Perhaps the chief reason for the prolonged and irregular hours of labour in the lace factories was the fact that women and girls were usually employed in winding the thread on the brass bobbins, which were then placed on the machines by boys. These processes could be carried out only when the machinery was at rest, and since the finished goods came off the machines at different times and at irregular intervals, the women and children had to be kept on the factory premises so as to start their work as soon as the machines became idle. It was suggested that the factory owners should provide a double set of bobbins, so that while one set was running in the machines, the others could be wound within normal working hours. This scheme was opposed on the ground that it would be easy of evasion: people could take the bobbins home and wind them there, and this would not solve the problem of overwork. "What," it was asked, "is to prevent a man taking his bobbins across the road into his own house, or into any house, and when they were wound and threaded, bringing them back again? You could not meddle with what was done in a private house."

Mr. Tremenheere's conclusion was that the Factory Acts should be extended to lace works, but that there should be certain exceptions to allow for the peculiar difficulties of the industry. The sequel was that in 1861 the Lace Works Act was passed. The restrictions imposed by the Factory Acts from 1833 to 1853 were applied to lace factories; the half-holiday on Saturday was to begin at 2 p.m., and youths between the ages of sixteen and eighteen were to be allowed to work between 4 a.m. and 10 p.m., so long as they were not employed for more than nine hours in any one day. It was not considered necessary to order the fencing of machinery, since accidents rarely occurred.

CHAPTER 8

THE DANGEROUS SIX

I

THE position in 1861, then, was that a measure of regulation had been applied to textile factories, and to those factories in which were carried on the allied industries of fabric-printing, bleaching, and dyeing. In none of these places could children be employed under eight years of age ; those between eight and thirteen combined work and instruction under the half-time system ; while women and young persons between thirteen and eighteen might only be engaged for a stipulated number of hours.

In 1860 Parliament had taken further steps to improve conditions in the mining industry, which had remained undisturbed since 1842. The new Act was much more comprehensive than the previous measure, and reflected the growing concern felt in the country as a whole for the welfare of the weak and the young. The half-time system had worked so well that it was adopted, with certain modifications, for the pit children too. The minimum age at which boys could be employed underground was raised from ten to twelve, but at the same time it was provided that boys of ten and eleven might be so employed if they produced a voucher from a schoolmaster certifying that they could read and write, or if they were attending school for at least three hours a day twice a week. These requirements, it will be noticed, were considerably less stringent than those imposed on the factory children. The mere production of a certificate of ability to read and write was of little significance, for no standards of attainment were laid down ; and on the other hand the period of compulsory school

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attendance was no more than six hours a week. It was not until 1872 that a really comprehensive and detailed measure was enacted.

The success that had attended the regulation of working hours and conditions in the textile factories, modest and incomplete as it was, led Parliament in 1861 to institute an inquiry into industries that were as yet unregulated. Once again, as on so many previous occasions, the initiative lay with Lord Shaftesbury, who was instrumental in securing the appointment of yet another Children's Employment Commission to make detailed investigations into a wide range of manufactures as yet uncontrolled by law. The decision to set up this Commission, which continued its work over a period of some five years, was a step of the first importance. Hitherto it had seemed inadvisable and even impracticable to interfere with any but the great textile mills, and with those works that were closely associated with them. It was commonly held that other industries were so widely scattered and presented so many peculiar problems, that it was impossible to impose legislative restrictions upon them. But men were coming to see that there was no inherent reason why control should not be still further extended. The earlier Factory Acts had been ineffective because no proper administrative machinery had been set up to give effect to their provisions, but the inspectors, first appointed in 1833, had now been at work for almost thirty years, and they had clearly demonstrated that if they were armed with adequate powers they could raise the standard of industrial conditions to the minimum required by the law. Once this had been established, it only remained to increase their numbers to extend almost indefinitely the area over which legislative regulation could prove effective.

The experience of the last two generations had made one fact abundantly clear. No improvements could be looked

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for in any industry that was not controlled. Unfettered competition reacted ultimately on the workers ; and those least able to bear the burden, the women and children, were the first to suffer. The reports of the new Commission were as grimly pathetic in their revelation of human suffering and neglect as those that had sent a thrill of horror through the country in 1842, 1833, and even 1819, and it was clear that however long it might take to achieve such a desirable goal nothing short of an extension of control over the whole field of juvenile employment would satisfy the conscience of the nation, which was already beginning to realize how the rapid industrialization of the country was endangering the life and well-being of future generations.

“ The vast development of our manufacturing industry within this century,” said the commissioners, “ has brought with it, except in a few branches of manufacture, no corresponding measure of protection to the young, although it has exposed them to ten-fold greater sources of injury to their health, their minds, and their morals. The severity of competition in some trades and employments, and the fluctuations of demand for labour, cause the earnings of the children to be often of much importance to their parents, and consequently expose the latter to a temptation of over-working their children, to their great injury. The children and young persons, therefore, in all such cases may justifiably claim from the Legislature as a natural right, that an exemption should be secured to them from what destroys prematurely their physical strength. And the Legislature in granting them that security and protection would greatly add to the national power by giving full and free development in all such cases to the great sources of that power, the vigour and intelligence, the religion and morality, of the labouring classes of the community.”

The commissioners first turned their attention to six

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individual industries that from the dangerous nature of the processes employed exposed child workers to perils and hazards against which they were powerless to defend themselves. The industries in question were pottery, paper staining, fustian cutting, and the manufacture of lucifer matches and of percussion caps and cartridges.

2

In the potteries children were still commonly employed as young as six, seven, or eight, and their usual working hours were from 6.30 in the morning to 6.30 at night. In Staffordshire young boys were usually found operating the "jigger," a machine for turning the wheel on which the pot was "thrown." This arduous and mechanical labour, pursued with little intermission for long periods, imposed a very heavy physical strain, so much so that in some districts, especially in Scotland and Northern England, steam power had been substituted for manual effort. Other boys were employed as "mould-runners," and it was their task to take the pottery into the stoves or drying rooms, small ovens about thirteen feet square and eight or ten feet high, with a stove in the middle and shelves round the walls. In three of these rooms the temperature was found to be 120, 130, and 140 degrees, though the inspector was told that the practice of using great heat was discouraged by many masters, not because it was injurious to health, but because too much coal was used and the moulds wore out. One of these mould runners, a boy named Peter M'Guire, employed at the Glasgow Pottery, gave a revealing account of himself. "I am about fourteen years of age, and I run moulds. I have worked three years. I get 5s. a week. I cannot read. I do not know where England is. I never went to school. I come at 6 a.m.. I sweep the stove and light the fire. I go away at 6.30 p.m."

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Very young boys were employed in the dipping house, too, where the various articles were dipped in glaze, which contained a large quantity of lead. In this poisonous atmosphere they frequently contracted painter's colic and various forms of paralysis. Proper facilities for washing were seldom provided, and many of the dippers became cripples at an early age.

In the painting rooms young boys and girls were put to work to paint designs on the china. This occupation was not in itself dangerous or unhealthy, but the hours of work were long, and the sedentary nature of the employment, often carried on in ill-ventilated rooms, was a frequent cause of ill-health. William Williams, of Hanley, who was 10½ years old, said that he had been working three years altogether. "I never went to school. I get 2s. 3d. a week. I come at 6 in the morning and I generally give over at 6 in the evening. I have worked till 6.30, but never later except when I was making grapes. After 6 I go home. I play till 8, and then I go to bed."

The recommendations of the commissioners who conducted the inquiry into the pottery industry were concerned chiefly with the health and education of the children. They considered that medical inspectors should be appointed, and that they should be given power to enter factories and to insist on a reasonable standard of ventilation and sanitation. They also suggested that education should receive attention, and the half-time system be instituted.

3

Those who were engaged in paper staining were employed in the printing of coloured patterns on sheets of paper by means either of hand-applied blocks or of rollers worked by steam power. This, too, was an unhealthy occupation, partly because some of the colouring materials, especially

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emerald green, contained a proportion of arsenic, and partly because the industry was essentially seasonal, and lengthy periods of overwork alternated with spells of enforced idleness.

Little attention was paid to personal cleanliness, and at busy times the children were often obliged to snatch their meals as best they might while work was still being carried on. The effect of this procedure on those whose work compelled them to handle arsenical substances may well be imagined, though one owner somewhat naïvely asserted that he had known boys to eat the colour with evident relish, and without noticeable ill-effects.

The workers themselves accepted the danger to their health with apparent unconcern, but they protested against the long and irregular hours and at the lack of opportunities for education. During the busy months from October to April, they told the commissioners, children were frequently compelled to work from six in the morning until ten o'clock at night or even later, without any regular pause for meals and relaxation. "That boy of mine," said a father, "when he was seven years old, I used to carry him on my back to and fro through the snow, and he used to have sixteen hours a day. I have often knelt down to feed him as he stood by the machine, for he could not leave it or stop." A jobber gave similar evidence. "When my boy began to work here he was seven, and he worked at nine years old the whole winter from six in the morning to nine or ten at night, plaiting down in the hot machine-room without stopping for meals. We should all be glad of the Act to regulate them like the factory children, for their health, and education too." He was not alone in wishing that the Factory Acts might be applied to the industry. "We want the Factory Acts in our trade," exclaimed a machine driver. "If the children could but be taught at school up to thirteen, they would afterwards teach themselves at home. The

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parents marry when they are children themselves, and send their children to work as soon as ever they can."

The commissioners reported that in their opinion the Factory Acts should be applied to the paper-staining industry, if only because of the lack of educational facilities enjoyed by the children, the majority of whom could not read at ten years of age. Of those who could read, they said, few were able to do so with any ease, and many spelt the words out letter by letter. If a child was discovered able to read with any degree of fluency, it was usually found that he had been taught at home, or that he had previously been engaged half-time in a factory to which the Acts applied.

4

Fustian cutting was a scattered industry carried on in many small towns and villages, sometimes in the work-room of a master and sometimes in the homes of the operatives. The work was particularly dangerous for growing children from the nature of the operations involved. The material was stretched on a frame, and wielding a long tapering knife of scimitar-like sharpness, the cutter would pass it over the fabric, throwing his body rapidly forward with a swinging motion to the right. The effect of this was to transfer the weight of the body suddenly from the right to the left leg, and in time this caused distortion of the knee, ankle, shoulder, and spine. It was necessary to treat the cloth that was being cut with a fine powder, and this flew up in clouds, causing irritation of the lungs and respiratory disease.

The normal hours of work were fourteen a day, with an interval of one and a half or two hours for meals. But adult workers often preferred to make "play-days" of Monday and Tuesday, and they had then to work, with the children too, of course, for eighteen or twenty hours a day at the end

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of the week in order to make up arrears. One child was reported as having worked continuously from six o'clock on Friday morning to six o'clock on Saturday morning, and another from five o'clock on Friday morning to ten o'clock the following morning. "Children seldom work at a stretch more than fourteen hours in the day," explained a master cutter. "Some will come at 5 a.m. and some at 6. You might find at my place young ones working till 2 a.m. sometimes. Only last Saturday they did, 'aye, and till 3 and 4 a.m. now and then. It's all laziness; they won't work when they might." Another master, Nathan Meanock, of Oldham, bore witness to the lack of education that these conditions imposed. "You will find scarce any of mine can read; many of the parents can't tell a letter: as soon as they find their children can cut they put them to it."

5

In the works devoted to the manufacture of lucifer matches the commissioners complained not so much of the long hours of labour as of the terrible physical conditions that obtained. The heads of the matches were made of phosphorus, and those who handled this dangerous substance for any length of time under any but the most carefully controlled conditions suffered sooner or later from the dread phosphorus disease, or "phossy jaw" as it was popularly called. This disease, known to doctors as necrosis of the jaw, was first noted on the Continent in 1845. "It seems at first," the commissioners reported, "merely a local disease affecting the jaw-bone, but it causes in all cases, when fully established, great and almost unbearable pain, lasting with little or no relief even of sleep for months or often years, ending only with the loss of part or the whole of one or both jaw-bones."

The symptoms were often observed in quite young

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children. The investigators mentioned the case of Alfred Serle, who was thirteen years old. "Has toothache quite bad two or three times a week. Has lost several teeth; this was quite lately. They did not trouble him before. They have been so loose he pulled them out himself. Broke one or two in trying. Does not wash his teeth often. Washes at home after work."

Only the most scrupulous attention to personal cleanliness, and the maintenance of a high standard of working conditions in the factories could avail to render those engaged in the manufacture of matches immune from the ravages of phossy jaw. Many of the works, notably those belonging to the firm of Bryant and May at Bow, were airy, well-ventilated and suitably situated, but only too frequently the industry was carried on in dirty, ramshackle sheds, where there was no proper ventilation and where facilities for washing did not exist. In a Manchester factory, for instance, a boy aged eleven, who had been in the trade for three years, told how he was accustomed to wash his hands in the glue-pot. If that was too hot he went outside and washed in the pit, which was nothing but a stagnant puddle.

Many parents were unwilling to allow their children to work in the match factories, and some of the owners feared that if the Factory Acts were applied there would be even greater difficulty in securing the requisite supply of juvenile labour. "A frequent source of apprehension is that they will not be able to obtain a sufficient supply of children for a system of relays (or shifts); that either there will be a scarcity of children for that purpose, or that parents will prefer sending them to other employments rather than allow them to work on the half-time system, accompanied with a proportionate diminution of wages."

It was not surprising that the children were drawn from the lowest, poorest, and most ignorant class, and the com-

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missioners had no hesitation at all in recommending that they should be brought within the scope of the half-time system. "The mental state of the great mass of the children in this business," they said, "is one which cannot be contemplated without calling for an effort to remove a dark blot from that portion of society. The ragged, half-starved, untaught children, or taught, if at all, a bit now and a bit then, often in several successive schools, chiefly the ragged or 'free,' who are willing to take whatever is given to them, are of a class that no-one else will employ."

6

The manufacture of percussion caps and cartridges was not an extensive industry, for it was confined to six factories, two in London and four in Birmingham, and employed at the time of the investigation only 665 workpeople, the majority of whom were women and children. It was similar to the lucifer match industry because it too employed explosive and dangerous substances, and serious accidents were of frequent occurrence. The commissioners listened once more to the old, dismal story. Children were employed during long hours in unhealthy and perilous conditions, and they were deprived of all opportunities of education. The case of Mary Lock, a thirteen-year-old girl, was typical. "Works in a priming shop. The priming machine went off not long ago. It was as loud as a gun. Works from seven to six. Has four shillings a week. Mother gives her sixpence. Saves that to buy her clothes. Can do 'subtraction' and addition. Three times 11 is 32. Used to count those things by tables, but forgets how she did them. Geography is about Africa and such as that, and the Austrean and the Red Sea. Knows the names in the New Testament, as Lazarus and Judah, but does not know who they were."

The Children's Employment Commission had not completed its investigations into all the industries that were still outside the scope of the Factory Acts, but their revelations of conditions in these six dangerous trades called for immediate action. This time there was little parliamentary opposition, and in the summer of 1864 the Factory Acts Extension Act was placed on the statute book. The provisions of the Factory Acts were to apply to the manufacture of earthenware (excluding bricks and non-ornamental tiles), lucifer matches, percussion caps and cartridges, paper-staining and fustian cutting. It was further required that factories should be kept clean and well-ventilated, so as to render harmless as far as possible the gases, dust, etc., that were inseparable from the individual industry.

Many more thousands of working children thus benefited from the protection of the law; their hours of labour were reduced, and they were given opportunities for education under the half-time system. But the Act of 1864 is important for another reason. Parliament had at last abandoned the notion that only the great textile industries could be controlled. As the Children's Employment Commission continued its inquiries it became increasingly apparent that it was not only in the large factories that abuses flourished, and that children were over-worked and ill-treated. Many of the smaller manufacturers countenanced conditions that were every bit as bad, and some of the most heartrending stories were told of children who were actually employed in domestic industry in private houses. Twenty years earlier the problem of these children had seemed well-nigh insoluble, but the Act of 1864 was an indication that Parliament was beginning to break away from the narrow conceptions of its powers and duties that had hitherto been such a bar to progress, and was prepared to widen the field of its operations as experience proved necessary.

CHAPTER 9

WORKSHOPS

I

IN the meantime the members of the Children's Employment Commission were continuing their investigations into those industries that were not already regulated by law, and they turned their attention next to the manufacture of hand lace. The factories in which mechanical power was used had already been regulated, as we have seen, by the Lace Works Act of 1861, but large numbers of people, estimated at some 150,000, including a large proportion of women, children and young persons, were engaged in dressing rooms, warehouses and private houses that were not subject to the provisions of the Act.

In the dressing rooms, which were huge structures often 350 feet in length, the lace, stiffened with a liquid mixture or dressing, was spread out on frames to dry. A high temperature, often as much as 80 or 100 degrees, had to be maintained in these rooms, and the hot, moist atmosphere was oppressive in the extreme. The hours of work were long and irregular. In normal times children were employed from eight in the morning until seven o'clock at night, but during the busy season it was often ten o'clock or midnight before they were able to go home. The result was that ill-health was rife, and visitors were struck with the pallid, waxen faces of the operatives. "From the great heat and continual perspiration," said the commissioners, "they become pale, languid and emaciated. Fainting and fits are of usual occurrence and consumption is common." Catherine Levers, who was eleven years of age, told them: "I find it very hot, but I am never badly. Some of the

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'big uns' are, they faint and tumble down. I don't have headaches, but it makes me sweat awful."

There was of course no proper education for these children, apart from the odd scraps of ill-digested knowledge they picked up in the Sunday School. Sarah Ency must have been typical of many. She worked twelve hours a day in the dressing room, and earned three shillings a week. She was never able to get out into the countryside, and her one joy in life was the annual visit of the circus. The Commissioner recorded the outcome of his conversation with her. "Goes to a Sunday School. The priest tells them about the Son of God dying. Was at a day school two years, but left two years ago. Used to sew, and copy short words on a slate. (Spells slowly.) 'Larks in a nest.' Larks are 'games in the street.' Has not heard of their singing, and has never been out in the country. A wolf is an 'ass.' A tiger is a striped animal behind the bars. The sea is full of water and ships."

The investigators found that conditions in the warehouses were even more injurious to the health of the workers. Their hours too were long and irregular, and it was not unusual for young children to be kept at work for fourteen or sixteen hours a day. Many of the warehouses were small and ill-designed, and even the new ones were badly ventilated. The work, mostly mending, joining, carding, and clipping, was close and fine, and the use of gas as an illuminant not only fouled the atmosphere, but imposed considerable strain on the eyesight.

Worse still, however, were the conditions prevailing in private dwellings—in the so-called "mistresses' houses" where work was taken in from warehouses and manufacturers, and in the homes of the children. "In private houses," said Mr. White, one of the commissioners, "the workrooms are small and close, all strongly lighted by gas placed very low, the room being sometimes one in use also

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as a bedroom. The windows cannot be opened for fear of the damp spoiling the lace. The space allowed for each person is very small, the practice being to put as many in a room as will just leave room for the children on their little low stools. I have noticed one where the space was 67 cubic feet for each person, but Mr. John Moore, the Medical Officer of Leicester, mentions two cases of rooms allowing $26\frac{1}{2}$ cubic feet, two allowing from 28 to 29 cubic feet, and seven from 34 to 58 cubic feet. The worn and early aged faces of the children, and frequently their failing sight, show unmistakable marks of the labour. They work with a closeness of attention and a quickness which is astonishing, scarcely ever allowing their fingers to rest, or taking their eyes off from their work for fear of losing a moment."

Twenty years earlier it had been no uncommon thing to find children employed in these mistresses' houses at the age of three, and some were even set to earn their few pence a week when they were only two and a half, but in 1863 conditions had improved somewhat, and few were engaged under the age of five. Two typical instances of the work-rooms in which these babies passed their days may be cited. Mrs. Jenkins of Nottingham kept a workroom for ten young persons—"a basement, dark, choked-up and stifling hot; in appearance much like a scullery with a large washing sink standing out in the room." Mrs. Jacklin had a workroom at New Bradford. "A boy and twenty-one girls work here at three clipping frames in a room so crowded that there is barely space to pass between them, and part of it scarcely seven feet high. A girl of twelve had been here five years. There were four gas lights at the height of about four feet from the ground." In the homes of those parents who were engaged in the manufacture of hand lace, the labour was no less rigorous and exacting. "Considerable numbers of children work with and for their parents, kept, at the earliest age at which they can draw a thread or use

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the scissors, at this sedentary work for as many hours, at busy times, as their strength will hold out, to the ultimate injury of their health." In many country districts the chief home industry was the making of pillow lace. This was work "requiring great manual dexterity and experience," the commissioner reported, "but very little muscular strength or size. Children are put to learn it at a very early age, six being thought the best by some teachers, though many begin at five and even younger. They usually go to work at a school kept by a woman in her cottage. These rooms are generally the living-rooms with a fireplace stopped up to prevent draught, the animal heat of the inmates being thought sufficient, even in winter. In other cases they are small pantry-like rooms without any fireplaces. The crowding in these rooms, and the foulness of the air produced by it are sometimes extreme. I have noticed in one place as small an amount of space as under 25 cubic feet for each person. Mrs. Smith's school at Wilhampstead is 10 feet long, 10 feet wide and 6 feet 6 inches in height. Usually twenty-three children are employed here. Only the lower part of the window opens, and with twenty persons present the room is very close, and the crevices round the window are stopped up with cloth."

2

Those engaged in the manufacture of hosiery made not only stockings, but gloves, shirts and fancy articles as well. Of the 120,000 persons employed, only about 4,000 worked in factories; the conditions of the others, who worked either in warehouses or in private houses, were of course quite unregulated. The irresponsible habits of the men compelled the children in the warehouses to work long hours in order to make up for lost time. The men made "play-days" of Monday and Tuesday, and worked all

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through Friday night, often keeping the children till long after midnight. One young woman said that she was only six years old when she was kept working until ten o'clock at night, and before she was twelve she frequently remained right through the night. Mary Thorpe, of Bulwell, gave a vivid picture of the lives of these children. "Little children here begin to work at stitching gloves when very young. My little sister, now five and a half, can stitch a good many little fingers, and is very clever, having been at it for two years. She used to stand on a stool so as to be able to see up at the candle on the table. It makes them cleverer if they begin young. Little children are kept up shamefully late, if there is work, particularly on Thursday and Friday nights, when it is often eleven and twelve. They have to make two days out of Friday. Mothers will pin them to their knee to keep them to their work, and give them a slap to keep them awake. If the children are pinned up so, they cannot fall when they are slapped or go to sleep. The child has so many fingers set for it to stitch before it goes to bed, and must do them. Many women and girls too will sit up at work all through the night till seven in the morning. What makes the work come so heavy at the end of the week is that the men are 'shacking' at the beginning. On 'Saint Monday' they will go pigeoning, or on some other amusement, and most do not begin regularly till Wednesday."

In private houses, it was said, "many of the rooms are squalid far beyond what is usual in the country dwellings of the poor, and of necessity in these, crowded as they are with frames, furniture and inmates, and noisy with the rattle of frames, meals such as can be had are cooked and eaten, infants nursed or put to sleep and other housework done. The scanty light by which poverty often obliges the seamers to work must add much to the strain upon the eyes in night work. Weak sight is common among seamers. The parents, particularly the mothers, look oppressed and

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haggard with want, and worn with hard work and care. The children are heavy, stunted and without animation."

Very young children were employed too in equally wretched surroundings in the straw-plait schools, where they were engaged in plaiting the straw for hats and bonnets. In some instances conditions were even worse than in the hand lace industry, and cases are actually recorded where each child was allowed only $12\frac{2}{3}$ cubic feet. The usual age to begin was three and a half or four. In one school the mistress pointed with evident pride to two of her young charges. "Lizzie Ibbins there, who is between two and three years old, is clipping some plait made by her sister, and Lizzie Cook, who was three last month, can clip her ten yards in a day."

3

The prolonged and searching inquiries of the commissioners revealed a similar state of affairs in many other industries. They investigated conditions in copper and indiarubber works, in the printing, bookbinding, and stationery trades, in the manufacture of artificial flowers, silk, rope, glass, and paper, and in the brick-fields and ship-yards. Their reports were always the same. In the factories and workshops that were outside the scope of the Factory Acts, crushing burdens were laid on young people, while in the homes of the workers conditions were even worse. The folly and wastefulness of this system of unregulated competition was generally recognized. "Nothing can be gained," it was agreed, "by anticipating our resources, and to employ women and children unduly is simply to run in debt with Nature." Few, if any, now upheld the old doctrine of *laissez-faire*, and there were no longer any objections to State interference with working conditions on the grounds of an arid and sterile doctrine of economic theory. Control of the cotton mills had not brought with

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it that ruin and loss that the opponents of the Factory Acts had so gloomily anticipated ; on the contrary, the industry had flourished and expanded. But it had been relatively easy to legislate for the cotton mills, and for those industries that were closely allied to the textile trade. The factories were large units ; they were not scattered up and down the country, but were located in the large centres of population, so that a modest staff of inspectors could exercise adequate control and supervision. The new problem, however, was vastly greater and more complex. It was now a question of providing for a wide range of industries, many of which were carried on in remote townships and villages. Even in the great cities small workshops and private houses—and it was in these places that the worst conditions flourished—might engage in some branch of manufacture with complete impunity, for even if the authorities had been aware of their existence it would have needed an army of inspectors to control them. Experience had proved that it was not enough merely to enact laws regulating conditions in industry, machinery must be provided to see that the provisions of the law were carried out.

A serious effort was made to overcome this difficulty, and it was decided that the wisest plan was to draw a distinction between large premises and small. The former were to be subject to the provisions of a new Factory Acts Extension Act (1867), the latter were to be controlled by the Workshops Regulation Act (1867).

The Factory Acts Extension Act broke much new ground. It did not affect manufactures already subject to legislation, but it embraced within its scope many new industries such as copper mills, iron foundries, paper, glass, and tobacco works and many others, including all premises where more than fifty persons were engaged in any process of manufacture. To all these factories the laws passed between 1833 and 1853 were to apply. Hours of work were

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thus regulated, the half-time system of education was introduced, a normal working day was established, and many thousands of children enjoyed a measure of protection hitherto denied them. This was indeed a great achievement. The State was slowly but surely enlarging the area of control, the old inhibitions that had previously led the Government to confine itself to the textile industry were now fast disappearing, and the way was being prepared for even more drastic measures of reform. It is true that the new Act included many modifications, particularly in some industries such as printing and bookbinding, and in certain blast furnaces and iron mills, but the principle of increased intervention had been established, and further progress was only a matter of time.

The Workshops Regulation Act of 1867 set up a parallel system of control over those manufacturing establishments in which fewer than fifty persons were engaged. The Act of 1864, when it regulated the fustian cutting trade, had prepared the way for this extension of protection to those employed in the workshops that were carried on in private houses, but the present measure went much further, for it was not limited to any particular industries. A workshop was defined as "any room or place whatever, whether in the open air or under cover, in which any handicraft is carried on by any child, young person, or woman, and to which and over which the person by whom such child, young person, or woman is employed has the right of access or control." Handicraft was to be interpreted as "any manual labour exercised by way of trade or for purposes of gain in or incidental to the altering, repairing, ornamenting, finishing, or otherwise adapting for sale any article."

This was a wide and sweeping departure from previously accepted practice, which had been content to legislate along the narrowest lines. Scarcely any corner of the industrial field was now left untouched, and the way was opened for

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the removal of some of the worst abuses which had hitherto flourished unchecked.

No child was to be employed under the age of eight in any premises to which the Workshops Regulation Act applied, and from eight to thirteen he was required to attend school half-time, as provided in the Factory Acts. Young persons between the ages of thirteen and eighteen and women were not to be employed for more than twelve hours a day, including an hour and a half for meals, and there was to be a half-holiday on Saturday afternoon.

At first sight this might seem to be a remarkable advance, but there were two defects inherent in the Act that combined to make it of little practical value. In order to temper the rigours of control to a range of manufactures that had hitherto suffered no interference, Parliament allowed a measure of elasticity in the working day, and children were permitted to work their hours at any time between 6 a.m. and 8 p.m., while young persons and women could be employed from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. Experience of the Factory Act of 1844 had already shown how illusory was any curtailment of hours unless a normal working was established, but this lesson went apparently unheeded in 1867.

A more serious defect was that the administration of the Act was not entrusted to the factory inspectors, but to the local authorities, who were left free to adopt it or not, as they pleased. This meant that there was no uniformity of practice as between one district and another. Those progressive authorities who were sensible of their obligations to the young workers adopted the Act and appointed inspectors to enforce its provisions. The result of such action was usually encouraging. "The system works admirably," reported the Vicar of Houghton Regis, a small village near Dunstable. "The children under eight years of age are excluded from the plaiting schools, and are almost all in the elementary schools. The plaiting school mistress closes

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the plaiting school in the afternoon from 2 to 5, and requires from children between the ages of 8 to 13 certificates of attendance during the previous week at the elementary schools, so that the great bulk of the children are receiving education."

In many districts, however, the inspectors of factories found the utmost difficulty in persuading the local authorities to adopt the Act. It often happened that individual members were themselves the proprietors of workshops, and as such they resented interference. Sometimes it was alleged that the expense of the local inspectors who would have to be appointed would be too heavy a charge on the rates, and frequently the members of the council "did not care for making themselves obnoxious by interfering with their fellow-townsmen. If they did so it would probably be remembered against them at the next election of town councillors, and it would end in their rejection." Indeed one local council told its officers that if they reported any workshops in the district they would be dismissed.

Strange as it may seem, the occupiers of workshops were as a rule prepared to accept the provisions of the Act if their competitors were placed under a like compulsion. Mr. Redgrave, one of the Chief Inspectors, said: "We had, as a primary duty, to explain and to simplify the regulations of the Act of 1867, and in the course of our duties we found, side by side with factories in which we had to insist on the cessation of work at 6 p.m. and the attendance of children at school, workshops in which such regulations were not only disregarded, but not even known. We could not silently pass by such a palpable anomaly. From the passing of the Workshops Regulation Act in 1867, the members of my staff have been assiduous in offering their services in explaining the Act, and in smoothing the way for its introduction. I have expressed the sanguine opinion that the Act could be administered by the local authorities. I have

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referred to the passing of the Factory Act of 1833, which was infringed and set at naught for years, notwithstanding the vigilance of the factory inspectors ; and I have contrasted the opposition which the Factory Acts met then with the almost unanimous good feeling which has been exhibited by the occupiers of workshops. If the success of the Workshops Act is measured by the readiness of the occupiers of workshops to accept its provisions, when fully explained to them, nothing can be more satisfactory than the progress made in the observance of the Act. But the explaining bodies, the local authorities, have not shown the same readiness to accept the Act and their responsibilities under it. There are too many who have neither studied to understand the Act themselves, nor sought to make it clear to others."

4

Mr. Redgrave's opinion that the local authorities could be entrusted with the administration of the Workshops Act proved in fact to be too sanguine, for the system broke down almost completely. There was only one remedy, and that was to transfer responsibility from the local to the central authority, and to allow the factory inspectors, now a numerous and highly skilled body of men, working under the direction of the Home Office, to take over the task of enforcing the law. Accordingly, in the year 1871 a new Factory Act was passed. It provided that "it shall cease to be the duty of local authorities to enforce the provisions of the Workshops Act, and it shall be the duty of the inspectors and sub-inspectors of factories to enforce the provisions of the Act." Although there was now reason to anticipate that the Workshops Regulation Act would be administered with a degree of efficiency hitherto unattainable, the new responsibilities thus thrust upon the inspectors revealed clearly the magnitude of the problem. They were

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required to visit workshops and premises where home industries were carried on in all parts of the kingdom, and the task was frankly beyond their capacity. It was impossible for them to discover many of the smaller places, and their visits were of necessity so infrequent that no adequate and sustained supervision was possible.

It would be easy to criticise the efforts of those who were responsible for the passing of the Workshops Regulation Act, to ask why they should have omitted to provide for a normal working day, which the experience of the Factory Acts had proved was so necessary, and why they should have entrusted local authorities with the duty of enforcement when such bodies were clearly incapable of discharging their obligations. But such criticism ignores one fundamental consideration. The State was entering upon what was virtually uncharted territory, where the signposts were few and the dangers considerable and largely unknown. It was necessary to make experiments in order to discover how particular abuses might best be remedied, and mistakes and disappointments were therefore inevitable. So too if the law is to be revered and obeyed it must command the support of the majority of the people, and some degree of compromise was necessary if this was to be achieved, especially when the intimate daily lives of so many were so closely affected. In the early seventies all former doubts about the desirability of protecting children from the sharp impacts of unregulated working conditions had disappeared. The only questions now to be considered were how far the process of reform was to be carried, and by what means it was to be secured.

CHAPTER 10

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I

FOR nearly thirty years those who had been concerned to improve the lot of the factory children had realized that it was futile to enact laws regulating hours and conditions of labour unless due provision was also made for education. The half-time system, inaugurated in 1844, had worked extremely well, and its benefits were universally recognized. Even the children themselves, who might have been expected to resent their enforced attendance at school after the arduous work in the mill, realized the advantages they enjoyed, as witness the anecdote related by Mr. Baker, a factory inspector.

"A number of 'full' and 'half-time' boys were disputing in the street as I passed by. A full-time boy addressing the half-timers observed, 'I say, Luke, that's the man as licks yer three and threepence lads' (alluding to the deduction of school wages). After a slight skirmish up steps a half-timer and said, 'Now, as you 6s. 6d. lads can't understand arguments, I'll just show you what it is that licks *you*.' He then wrote his name in a good bold hand, and turned the paper to his adversaries, saying, 'Look you, that's what it is that licks [beats] you.'"

The schools conducted by the British and National Societies under the voluntary system had extended their operations enormously, and they now received substantial grants from the Exchequer, but they were still too few and too badly organized. "Notwithstanding the large sums of money we have voted," said Mr. W. E. Forster, "we find a vast number of children badly taught or utterly untaught,

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because there are too few schools and too many bad schools, and because there are large numbers of parents in this country who cannot or will not send their children to school." In 1867 the second Reform Act had given the Parliamentary vote to the urban working classes, and there was a wide-spread feeling that the State could not afford to admit to a share in the government of the country people who were incapable, through lack of education, of using the newly acquired vote intelligently. "We must educate our masters" was the somewhat cynical remark of Mr. Robert Lowe, and in the February of 1870 the Elementary Education Bill was introduced into Parliament.

The country was to be divided into school districts, and inquiries were to be made to ascertain whether the existing schools, provided by the voluntary denominational societies, were adequate to the needs of the population. If it was found that there were not sufficient schools in any district, steps were to be taken to supply the deficiency by setting up School Boards, elected by the ratepayers and charged with the duty of providing the necessary accommodation. The Boards were empowered, but not compelled, to make by-laws requiring all children between the ages of five and thirteen to attend school.

The Act of 1870 was a timid and hesitant measure that provided only "a slight dose of compulsory education," as one M.P. observed, but it was of far-reaching importance, because it marked the inception of a new chapter in the long struggle for the emancipation of children from the premature shackles of the world of labour. The school had come to the aid of the legislator, and Factory Acts were henceforth to be extended and reinforced by Education Acts. If a child was compelled by law to attend school, he was forbidden, at least by implication, to go to work during school hours, and it was only when this policy was followed to its logical

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conclusion that factory and educational legislation combined to secure for the child a full measure of freedom and opportunity.

But this happy culmination was as yet far distant, since the Act of 1870, rich as it was in promise, proved of little immediate effect. Many districts did not avail themselves of the powers conferred on them to pass by-laws making school attendance compulsory, and even when such by-laws were adopted they were often evaded by parents, who pleaded that their children were already receiving education in the "private adventure" schools.

Mr. Mundella, an M.P., painted a striking picture of the conditions that obtained in Bristol, and illustrated the difficulties that had to be faced even when a School Board was willing and anxious to utilize its powers to the fullest extent. "There are frequent cases," he said, "in which parents send their children to these schools to escape the surveillance of Board officers. In one, for instance, the school is kept in a kitchen fifteen feet by twelve. Forty children are said to be attending (that is $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet for each child), and there are no proper appliances. Close to St. Philip's Board School is a school kept by Mrs. N., a 'pre-eminently illiterate' woman. Children who are *supposed* to be attending the school, but are suspected of irregularity, are protected from the officer by the refusal of this woman to give information. The mistress is utterly incapable of keeping any register. The school-room is twelve feet by nine, very dirty, and with no conveniences for teaching. The children sit as best they can, and 'writing in books' (from a very evident cause) is not taught.

"In one case an officer came upon several children employed in picking up cinders from a heap of refuse in the street during school hours. Following one of them home, he was informed by the mother that the child was attending school next door. He went straight to the school 'next

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door,' where the schoolmistress came to him straight from the wash-tub. She told him she was a laundress herself, but that while engaged in her trade the school was under the care of her daughter, a girl of nine years of age. This very girl turned out to be one of the children whom the officer had just routed from the cinder heap.

"Miss L., a person in receipt of parochial relief, keeps school in a room ten feet by twelve, which is used for all purposes. A. L. is ostensibly attending this school; in reality she is continually hired to nurse babies, and as Miss L. will not keep a register, no evidence can be given against the parents."

Mr. Mundella was not alone in demanding on behalf of the working children something better than this. The factory inspectors, intimately acquainted as they were with the problems of childhood, realized fully that the control of working conditions and the provision of adequate education must go hand in hand if any real and lasting benefits were to be afforded. One of their number spoke, a little sardonically perhaps, of those engaged in the manufacture of the beautiful and intricate Honiton lace. "Compare the cottage schools of Devon with some of the older lace factories of the Midlands. The mere look of the latter, with their gaunt, grimy exteriors, their numberless stories, their ever-clanking machines, their swarms of worn-looking and restless operatives, seems to show the necessity for supervision, and to justify the existence of the inspector. It is different with the former. Here, hard by ruddy cliffs and a blue sea in a land of luxuriant foliage and under a roof which, even if dilapidated, is probably picturesque, a party of little maids, demure and cleanly, employ their tiny fingers after a fashion, which, however irksome in reality, looks more like a pastime than serious work. It cannot be denied that to economize space the little stools on which the children sit are usually placed very close together, so that the position

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of their bodies is necessarily rather cramped, and that the ventilation is far from perfect.

“ Such being the case, the question naturally arises as to what are the evils that render the effective administration of the Workshop Act so desirable. The answer is: premature commencement of work and deficiency of education. There are still parents who think that they have brought children into the world to no purpose if they do not become contributors to the family purse as soon as they can hold a lace pillow or shuffle a lace stick. But it is the want of education which calls most loudly for the enforcement of the law. A few may receive some very slight instruction from the mistress (possibly herself no great scholar) in the intervals of lace work, and a good many attend night schools, but the amount of learning they derive is not likely to be very great. Ignorant they have entered the lace schools, and ignorant they have at present remained.”

2

Some attempt had been made to encourage the education of boys engaged in the mining industry, and the Mines Act of 1860 had provided that boys aged ten or eleven might be employed if they could produce an educational certificate or if they were attending school six hours a week, but the inspectors drew attention to the fact that no provision was made for girls, who were extensively employed above ground. Even for boys the existing arrangements were far from satisfactory, and the opinion was gaining headway that some measure of compulsion was needed. “ With regard to the education of the miners and their children,” said one of the inspectors, “ I do not find any appreciable improvement among them, and I have long ago come to the conclusion that unless some compulsory measure be enacted, the day is very remote when, if ever, the colliers

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as a class will be found able either to read or write." Despite these considerations, some of the inspectors still felt that it would be unwise to prohibit children from work in the pits until they reached the age of twelve. "To keep young persons from work till they are twelve years of age," said Mr. Higson, "will, I fear, create an objection to labour which through life they may never be able to overcome. It would drive them from mining to seek other occupations."

Happily such views, which savoured rather of the early days of the century, were not allowed to prevail, and the Coal Mines Regulation Act of 1872 raised the minimum age for employment below ground to twelve, "except in a mine in which a Secretary of State by reason of the thinness of the seams considers such employment necessary." In the thin-seam mines boys could still begin to work at the age of ten, but they were now required to attend school, until they attained the age of twelve, for a period of twenty hours every fortnight. The employer was entitled to deduct the school fees from their wages at a rate not exceeding twopence a week, or one-twelfth of the total wages paid. Limitations, too, were imposed for the first time on the hours of labour. Boys under sixteen were not to work underground for more than fifty-four hours a week or ten hours in any one day, and a period of twelve hours was to elapse between any two periods of employment. Those under the age of twelve who worked part-time in the thin-seam mines were restricted to six hours a day if they worked more than three days a week, or ten hours a day if they were employed for three days or less.

Girls were not permitted to work underground, but they were frequently employed above ground. The Mines Act of 1860 had made no provision for them; it had left their hours of labour unregulated, and had omitted to require any attendance at a school. The inspectors had frequently

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complained that although much had been done for the education of boys of tender years, that of the girls was still unsatisfactory. "The Act for them makes no provisions. This may be an oversight, but as girls are extensively employed above ground, it should and may be easily satisfied." The necessary action was taken in 1872, and the position of both boys and girls under the age of twelve working above ground was assimilated to that of boys employed underground in the thin seams, with the added proviso that they were not to work between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m.

Conditions in the metalliferous mines were also reviewed by another Act passed in the same year. No boy under twelve was to work below ground, and those between twelve and sixteen were not to be employed for more than fifty-four hours a week or ten hours a day. There were no regulations for boys and girls employed above ground.

3

An interesting example of the way in which particular abuses were remedied by piece-meal legislation appears in the laws that were passed about this time to regulate the labour of children who worked in the so-called agricultural gangs. The greatly increased demand for corn during the time of the Napoleonic War, and the improvements latterly made in drainage, had brought about a considerable increase in the acreage of cultivated land, particularly in the Fens and in parts of Lincolnshire, Suffolk, and Norfolk. Much of this land was remote from even small centres of population, and many farmers arranged with "gang-masters" to bring parties of women and children, sometimes from great distances, to work on their farms. As a rule about half the members of the gang were children and young persons aged from six to eighteen, and since the masters were often men

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of indifferent character, there were many complaints from those who realized the extent to which the children were being exploited, and the moral evils to which they were exposed.

The hours of work were often from 5 a.m. to 7 p.m., and in addition the children were frequently required to travel five or seven miles to the farm, thus increasing their working day by as much as three or four hours. Conveyances were rarely available, and although the youngest boys and girls were sometimes allowed to ride on a donkey, they were usually tired before they reached the scene of their labours. In the fields they were kept working at full stretch, with only inadequate pauses for rest and refreshment, and the girls especially suffered from over-fatigue. One mother told how her two daughters, aged eleven and thirteen, "were engaged by a ganger to work near Stilton. When they got there he took them to near Peterborough; there they worked for six weeks, going and returning each day. The distance each way is eight miles. They worked from 8 to 5.30, and earned 7d. a day, out of which they found their own meals and tools. Even the little ones, down to 4d. a day, have to go."

The Agricultural Gangs Act, which was passed in 1867, attempted to deal with some of the evils of this system. Children were not to be employed under the age of eight, boys and girls were not to be allowed to work in the same gang, and gang-masters were to obtain a licence from the magistrates before they were allowed to employ children. Six years later the Agricultural Children Act raised the minimum age to ten, and made some provision for education, but since the difficulties in the way of enforcement were great, neither Act was of much avail. There was a good deal of apathy in the country districts, and not a little direct opposition, but the principle of controlling employment by the issue of licences was of great importance, and

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was to be widely extended in future years when the need to regulate many miscellaneous forms of employment had been realized.

4

The Acts passed in the year 1867 had accomplished much in improving conditions in a number of factories and workshops that had hitherto been free from legislative interference, but since 1853 nothing had been done for those employed in the textile factories. The government felt that the time had now come when a further investigation would be helpful, and in 1873 Dr. J. H. Bridges and Mr. T. Holmes were asked to prepare a report for the Local Government Board on the desirability of imposing further restrictions on labour. They found that the operatives were united in demanding further legislative intervention on the grounds that :

(1) Ten and a half hours' monotonous unceasing labour, even under the most healthy conditions, are said to be a longer time than is consistent with the health of young persons between the ages of thirteen and eighteen.

(2) Since the Factory Act of 1847 was passed greater pressure has, it is said, been put upon the workpeople. This increased strain is stated to occur in three ways :

each operative has a larger quantity of machinery to attend to, the machinery is driven at a greater speed, and the practice of giving overlookers and foremen a premium on the amount of work done has led them to exact steadier and harder work than formerly.

The investigators reported that particular evils existed in the cotton and flax mills, where the rooms were either cold and draughty, or "stifling hot and saturated with steam." In many factories a low quality cotton was spun,

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and the long fibres floated in the atmosphere in the form of a fine dust or flue that was very harmful to the lungs. "The air on first inspection might seem tolerably clear, but the first sunbeam revealed the dense and universal dissemination of dusty particles, and the clothes and hair of the workpeople were in a state that showed how rapid was their accumulation."

They remarked particularly the unfortunate effects of the monotony of the occupation. "The exquisite ingenuity which has invented a separate machine for each minute step in the manufacture entails upon the person in charge of such machine a constant repetition during the working day of the same action, unrelieved by any interest in the thing itself, any difficulty calling for the exercise of the mind, any change of place or scenery or surroundings, in fact any relief whatever from the day's monotony. Work at a machine has inevitably a tread-mill character about it: each step may be easy, but it must be performed at the exact moment under pain of consequences."

It was abundantly clear that the increased mechanisation of the textile industry was exacting a cruel toll, especially from the very young, and the Factory Act of 1874 was designed to alleviate some of the grosser hardships. The minimum age for employment was raised to ten, and the half-time system was extended to children aged fourteen, with the provision that they might enter upon full-time employment at the age of thirteen if they could secure an educational certificate testifying that they had attained a reasonable standard of proficiency at school. The normal working day remained at twelve hours, but the time allowed for meals was increased from one and a half to two hours, so that the actual working day was reduced to ten hours. No provision was made for the working of overtime, and no child was to work for more than four and a half hours without a break.

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5

The effect of this new Act, which applied only to textile factories, was to add still further to the complications of the law that now governed the employment of children and young persons. Those who were engaged in occupations to which the Factory Act of 1874 applied could not enter the mills until they were ten years old, and their working day was restricted to ten hours. If they were employed in non-textile factories under the Factory Acts Extension Act of 1867 they could begin work at the age of eight, and might labour for ten and a half hours a day; while under the Workshops Regulation Act, which, as we have seen, was only partially enforced, the normal working day had not been established, and conditions left much to be desired. The distinction between a non-textile factory and a workshop was purely arbitrary. Premises where fewer than fifty persons were employed were subject to the lax regulations governing workshops, and it frequently happened that the engagement of one additional worker brought the premises under the much stricter code applicable to factories.

This anomalous state of affairs was well illustrated in respect of bakehouses, which were governed by the Bakehouses Regulation Act of 1863. This measure had prohibited the employment of young persons between the hours of 9 p.m. and 5 a.m., when bread was usually baked, but the fact that night-baking was not usual in the biscuit trade was apparently overlooked. The result was that in biscuit factories the rooms containing the ovens were regulated by the Bakehouses Act, which imposed no restrictions on the labour of children during the day, whereas the other parts of the factory were subject to the provisions of the Factory or Workshops Act. "In my district," said one inspector, "there are two large biscuit factories and several small ones. In these the extraordinary system prevails of

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children, refused by the certifying surgeons to work in the lighter processes of the manufacture for 10 or 10½ hours a day, being sent down into the bakehouse where they can be employed apparently for 16 hours at a stretch. This arrangement is described as 'putting them into the hot-house to mature.' "

So difficult did it become to enforce the law under these confused and chaotic conditions, that in the year 1876 a Commission was set up to examine the whole position, and to report whether, in their opinion, it would be desirable to consolidate the existing laws in one clear and comprehensive measure. The Consolidation Commission, as it was called, made a detailed examination of the problem. They were unanimous in their view that the Factory Acts had brought about a very great improvement, and that sanitary arrangements and ventilation in factories were infinitely more satisfactory. "In striking contrast to the state of things revealed in previous reports," they said, "is the present condition of those on whose behalf the various Factory and Workshop Acts have been passed. Cases in which young children are employed in labour unfitted for their years are now as uncommon as formerly they were common. Much of this great improvement is undoubtedly due to factory legislation. We have no reason to believe that the legislation which has been productive of such marked benefit to the operatives employed has caused any serious loss to the industries to which it has been applied. On the contrary, the progress of manufacture has apparently been entirely unimpeded by the Factory Acts, and there are but few, even among employers, who would now wish to repeal the main provisions of the Acts or would deny the benefit which has resulted from them." The factory inspectors as a body wholeheartedly endorsed this view, but it was their task to interpret and to enforce the welter of legislation. Mr. Redgrave told the Commissioners: "The

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grievances which exist generally under the present state of the law are those which affect the hours of labour, the ages of children, and the school attendance of children, and they are principally caused by the different definitions of factory and workshop, and the regulations which affect the different classes of factories and workshops."

This view was accepted by the commissioners. They recommended that the laws applicable to factories and workshops should be assimilated, but only within limits, since, as they truly observed, the legislative principle that had always been followed had been "only to meet proved abuses and to rectify particular evils. It has never been sought to prescribe one invariable rule of hours for the sake of elegance in the statute book." This cautious attitude was, to say the least, unfortunate, especially so far as domestic employment was concerned, for it was here that some of the worst abuses had flourished. "We recommend," they said, "that all domestic employment should be left under the system at present in force in workshops, as we think it desirable to interfere as little as possible with the habits and arrangements of families."

Just as previous Commissions had, step by step, investigated conditions in an ever-widening range of industries, so the members of the Consolidation Commission extended their inquiries to fields of employment that were still unregulated by law. They were urged to make recommendations concerning boys and girls employed in retail shops, where the long hours and the unhealthy conditions were notorious, and they were also pressed to consider the plight of that vast army of children engaged, not in any industry or manufacture properly so-called, but in miscellaneous callings where they were exposed to the evils and temptations of the street and the gutter. The Commissioners were not unwilling to respond to these appeals, but they felt unable to take any effective action. They admitted, and

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deplored, the long hours of those who worked in shops, but came to the conclusion that it was beyond the powers of the factory inspectors to afford any protection, and that to interfere with such employment was outside the principles of the Factory Acts. "Still less," they said, "are we able to recommend interference with the hours of employment in what may be called 'wandering occupations,' in which the condition at all events of children has been strongly pressed upon us as requiring protection, such as errand boys, street performers, newsboys, juvenile match-sellers and hawkers of goods. In so far as they fall within the school age the provisions we shall have to recommend for securing their education will tend to withdraw children from these employments." On the whole this was a wise decision, for future developments were to show that the problem of those engaged in the "wandering occupations" was an extremely difficult one. Society has not even yet found a satisfactory solution, but such measure of reform as has been achieved has been the result of educational legislation rather than of the Factory Acts.

6

In the year 1878 the recommendations of the Commissioners were incorporated in the Factory and Workshop Act, a lengthy and comprehensive measure that was designed to remove many of the anomalies that had made it so difficult to administer the law effectively. The old distinction between factories and workshops as places employing more or less than fifty operatives disappeared, and factories were now defined as premises where mechanical power was employed in the process of manufacture. The normal working day was applied to workshops as well as to factories, and henceforth children and young persons could work only during a definite period of twelve hours, either from 6 a.m.

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to 6 p.m., or from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., with an interval of two hours for meals. This assimilation of conditions in factories and workshops was generally welcomed, not only by employers, upon many of whom the old system had worked great hardships, but also by the inspectors, who now found it possible, for the first time, to detect cases where excessive hours were being worked.

The Act of 1874, which had applied only to textile factories, had raised the minimum age for employment in such factories from eight to ten, and had provided that a child should not enter upon full-time employment until he reached the age of fourteen unless he had gained an educational certificate, in which case he might cease to be a half-timer at the age of thirteen. These provisions were now extended to non-textile factories and workshops, and so in this important matter, too, uniformity was achieved. The standard of attainment requisite for the grant of an educational certificate was announced in the *London Gazette* of 25th February 1879 to be "the standard of reading, writing, and elementary arithmetic fixed by Standard 4 of the Code of 1876, or any higher standard which may be attained by the child." The requirements of Standard 4, which were by no means high, were as follows :

Reading : To read with intelligence a few lines of prose or poetry selected by the inspector.

Writing : Eight lines, slowly dictated once from a reading book. Copybooks to be shown (improved small hand).

Arithmetic : Compound rules (money) and reduction (common weights and measures).

It was felt, however, that many children, in spite of their having attended school regularly, would be unable to attain even this somewhat meagre standard, and an alternative means of exemption was therefore permitted.

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Following the example initiated in the Education Act of 1876 the "Dunce's Pass" made it possible for a child to be withdrawn from school if he had made at least 250 attendances during each of four previous years.

More stringent regulations were imposed concerning cleanliness and sanitation, and steps were to be taken in factories and workshops alike to secure proper working conditions. "A factory and a workshop shall be kept in a cleanly state and free from effluvia arising from any drain, privy or other nuisance. A factory or workshop shall not be so overcrowded while work is carried on therein as to be injurious to the health of the persons employed therein, and shall be ventilated in such a manner as to render harmless, so far as is practicable, all the gases, vapours, dust, or other impurities generated in the course of the manufacturing process." Walls and ceilings were to be lime-washed at least once in every fourteen months, and all dangerous machinery was to be fenced.

The commissioners had recommended that domestic workshops should be left free from control, and Parliament accepted this view. The carefully planned provisions that had been designed to secure satisfactory conditions in factories and workshops were not to apply "where persons are employed at home, that is to say, to a private house, room or place which, though used as a dwelling, is, by reason of the work carried on there, a factory or workshop within the meaning of this Act." True, it would have been extremely difficult for the inspectors to enforce regulations in private houses, and there was a natural reluctance to interfere with the daily circumstances of domestic life, but it would have been possible to take some more effective steps to combat the menace of excessive hours of work, for Parliament did not hesitate to forbid the employment of young persons between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. The inadequacy of such a measure of control had already been fully demon-

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strated, and the spread of fifteen hours made it easy for unscrupulous parents to employ children for much longer periods than were permitted in factories and non-domestic workshops.

Nevertheless the Factory and Workshop Act of 1878 was a measure of great importance. It tackled the problem in a scientific and business-like manner, and went far to remedy many long-standing abuses.

CHAPTER II

THE NEW CENTURY

I.

IF the achievements of the previous fifty years had not been startling or dramatic, they had at least been based on solid foundations. In appraising the efforts of those who had made it their business to shield young people from the rigours of unregulated working life we must not forget to take into account the persistent and often formidable opposition they had to encounter. The inventive genius of the race had enabled Great Britain to exploit to the full her vast resources of power and material, and had made it possible for her to take the leading place among the great manufacturing nations of the world. Such pre-eminence was not easily won, nor once achieved was it to be retained except at the cost of much human misery and suffering. The leaders of industry were men who were not easily moved to compassion, and the humanitarianism that was to be so powerful a motive in moulding the society of later days found no place in their philosophy. In their eyes life was a grim, unrelenting struggle in which the weakest went to the wall and only the fittest survived, and the sufferings of the children of the poor made little impression upon them. Their gaze was directed, not to the alleys and slums that fed their machines, but to foreign markets and to the factories of their continental competitors. It was their constant dread that regulation of home industry would cause an increase in working costs, and so in prices, thus conferring an advantage on their overseas rivals, whose consciences were not troubled with nice scruples, and whose governments left

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them free, in a highly competitive world, to produce their goods at the lowest possible cost.

The revelations of the early Commissions, however, could not lightly be ignored, and when it became apparent that industry was not going to be brought to ruin and bankruptcy because of the regulations imposed by the Factory Acts, a changed attitude became discernible, and the opposition against which the earlier reformers had been compelled to wage so long and sustained a struggle gradually disappeared. But the protagonists of the children's cause had by no means completed their labours, for a still greater task lay before them. In the long run legislation can only be successful if it is backed by public opinion, and public opinion was tragically slow to realize the needs of childhood, and the heavy responsibilities lying on those in whose hands rests the power of prescribing the conditions under which the rising generation shall prepare itself for the duties and responsibilities of citizenship. Human life was still held all too cheap, and human suffering was still all too common to call for more than a comparatively slight amelioration of the most flagrant abuses in industrial life. Many years were to pass before society came to realize the full extent of its obligations to the young, and to understand what only a few enlightened men had hitherto perceived, that the strength and well-being of the country depend, in the last resort, upon the care and nurture that are bestowed on its future citizens.

2

The closing years of the nineteenth century were years of hope. New ideas found their way to the surface of the national consciousness, new conceptions of social duty began to crystallize in men's minds, and new methods of approach and attack began to be employed, timidly and with hesitation at first, but with increasing vigour and impetus as time went

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on. The great Act of 1878 had provided firm and well-tried foundations upon which to build, but the results of over half a century of legislation were singularly unimpressive. Consider for a moment what had been accomplished by the year 1878. In factories and workshops boys and girls could start as half-timers at the age of ten. If they worked on the system of morning or afternoon sets they attended school in the morning and the factory in the afternoon for one week, and during the following week they reversed the order, going to the factory in the morning and to school in the afternoon. Their maximum working day was one of $6\frac{1}{2}$ hours, so that they worked $32\frac{1}{2}$ or 34 hours in alternate weeks, according to whether they were in the afternoon or the morning set. School usually occupied them for 13 or 14 hours each week, so that school and factory together claimed them in all for some 45 hours a week. If they worked on the alternate day system they went to the factory on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday during one week, and on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday the next. On non-working days they were required to attend school both morning and afternoon, except on Saturday. The maximum working day was ten hours, and this gave a working week of 30 hours or $26\frac{1}{2}$ hours alternately.

At the age of fourteen, or thirteen if they had obtained an educational certificate or had qualified for the "Dunce's Pass," they became young persons, and leaving school behind them they could be employed for the full working day of 10 hours— $55\frac{1}{2}$ hours a week. At eighteen years of age the law afforded them no further protection. These were the regulations in textile factories. In non-textile factories and workshops conditions were a little more onerous for young persons, whose working day was $10\frac{1}{2}$ hours.

In the mines, as we have already seen, the standards were on the whole considerably lower. It is true that girls were not allowed to share the hazards of work underground, and

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that boys were not allowed to descend the pit except in the thin seam mines until they reached the age of twelve, but they were then allowed to work full time, without the advantages of the extended half-time system of education enjoyed by their brothers in the factories.

During the period under review Parliament had slowly but surely extended the area within which legislative control operated. In 1819 cotton mills only were regulated. In 1833 all textile factories were included, and during the next thirty years legislation was applied in turn to print works, to bleaching and dyeing works, to lace factories, to the manufacture of earthenware, matches, percussion caps and cartridges, and to the industries of paper-staining and fustian cutting. Non-textile factories and workshops were controlled in 1867, and there were further extensions in 1874 and 1878.

3

In this way practically the whole of the industrial field had been covered, however inadequately, but two major tasks still remained. Non-industrial occupations had only been affected by the legislation concerning the chimney-sweep boys and the children working in agricultural gangs, but there were still many children engaged in occupations widely diverse in character for whom the law made no provision. This problem, intricate and difficult as it was, had to be faced, but many years elapsed before a satisfactory solution was achieved.

The urgency of the need to establish some system of protection for boys and girls who were not affected by the Factory and Workshop Acts, or by the Mines Acts, became increasingly apparent as progress came to be made in setting up a national scheme of universal compulsory education. It had long been recognized that the provision of educational

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facilities and the regulation of working hours and conditions must go hand in hand, and the Factory Acts, as we have seen, had from the first insisted on the need for children engaged in industry to receive at least a modicum of education. It was for this reason that the inauguration of the half-time system had been welcomed as a far-reaching measure of reform, even though it affected only a minority of children. Then as the century drew to a close it came to be realized that all children must be brought within reach of education ; and once this need had been appreciated the working life of boys and girls began to be controlled by the Education Acts rather than by the Factory Acts. As the minimum age for attendance at school was gradually raised step by step, and as a system of universal compulsion was slowly enforced, so, automatically, was the age at which children could be employed postponed, for a child in full-time attendance at school cannot, at the same time, work in a factory or mine. The fact that there was nothing to prevent his working outside school hours in the many occupations that were still free from legislative restriction remained, however, a source of continued anxiety and embarrassment, and it was not until the twentieth century had dawned that any effective action was taken.

After 1878, therefore, Factory and Workshop Acts tend to be of diminishing importance, except in so far as they regulated, and steadily raised, standards of cleanliness, sanitation, ventilation and health. It is to the Education Acts that we must now turn our attention if we are to understand aright the progress that was made during the next quarter of a century.

4

The Education Act of 1870 had empowered the School Boards charged with setting up schools in districts where the accommodation provided by the voluntary religious

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societies was inadequate, to make by-laws requiring children between the ages of five and thirteen to attend school. In many areas nothing was done, and children who were not engaged in premises to which the Factory Acts applied were still denied the opportunities of education. "At Coventry they are employed in making ribbons, at Broms-grove making nails. At Malvern they drive the donkeys and at Newport they go to the forges." An effort to improve attendance was made in 1876 when a new Education Act for the first time in our history made the parent responsible for seeing that his child received some form of efficient education. "It shall be the duty of the parent of every child to cause such child to receive efficient elementary instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic, and if such parent fail to perform such duty, he shall be liable to such orders and penalties as are provided by this Act." For the first time, too, it was declared illegal to take into employment *any* child under ten years of age (a restriction hitherto imposed by the Act of 1874 only on children working in textile factories) or between the ages of ten and fourteen unless (a) he possessed a "labour" certificate testifying that he had passed the Standard 4 examination in reading, writing, and arithmetic, or (b) he had made 250 attendances during five previous years, or (c) he was a half-timer under the Factory Acts.

In those districts in which a School Board had not been established School Attendance Committees were set up, and they too were given power to make by-laws requiring attendance between the ages of five and thirteen.

The experiment by which such onerous duties were placed on local authorities proved once more what had been so fully demonstrated in the past, that as yet effective action was only possible if the full force of the central government was invoked. In rural districts particularly the local authorities had not yet developed a full sense of responsibility, and

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in many areas the Education Acts remained a dead letter because by-laws were not made, or if they were made they were not rigidly enforced. "A school authority in every locality is, of course, most desirable," wrote one of H.M. Inspectors of Schools in the year 1876. "This the new Act will, I hope, give us. And I hope that one of the first acts of such a school authority will everywhere be, if possible, to impose a penalty on parents withholding their children from school without good cause."

It was quite clear that any system of education must be administered on a local basis if it were to prove satisfactory and efficient, and despite the fact that in many parts of the country so little had been accomplished by the Acts of 1870 and 1876, Parliament was resolved to maintain the principle of local control. If the responsible authorities would not discharge their duties voluntarily, they must be coerced, and in the year 1880 Mr. Mundella was responsible for the passing of a further Education Act which made it obligatory for School Boards and Attendance Committees to frame by-laws, and to take steps to see that they were obeyed. Under the terms of this latest Act no child was to be withdrawn from school below the age of thirteen unless he had gained a certificate to say that he had attained the standard of education prescribed by the local by-laws. No child under thirteen years of age could be exempted from school on the ground of having made the requisite number of attendances over a period of years. In other words, the "dunce's certificate" was now only available for boys and girls of thirteen, and even so they were required to attend school half-time for a further period of twelve months.

The Act of 1876 marks an important stage in the development of the educational system of this country, for it ushered in a new age of growth and development. The Workshops Regulation Act of 1867 had proved ineffective largely because the local authorities had been incompetent

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to administer it, and in 1871 it had been necessary to transfer their powers to the Home Office. "In this country," it was said, "where little importance is attached to the science of public administration, a public department is apt first to attempt to exercise a critical function with insufficient means, and then, when the result appears unsatisfactory, hastily to retreat altogether from exercising it. The better way, perhaps, would be to exercise it properly." This is what Parliament determined to do in 1876. It was not content to allow important educational reforms to be hampered by apathy and indifference, and in insisting that local authorities should shoulder their responsibilities it set the shape and pattern of all future development, and placed the educational system of this country on a local rather than on a national basis. This was to be of fundamental importance, for no central administrative body could possibly possess the intimate knowledge of local requirements that is essential if a live and healthy system of education is to be built, and once responsibility had been accepted the advantages of local control became so apparent that it was comparatively easy to develop and extend the principle as the need arose.

5

In the early days of their power, the new local education authorities had a difficult task, since the problems met with by Mr. Mundella in Bristol were by no means confined to that town. The public elementary schools, as they were now called, still left much to be desired, yet they were at least providing a sound and sensible, if restricted, education for the children of the working classes. But they still had to compete with the private adventure schools, and the carelessness and indifference of many parents led them to send their children to these establishments run by "domestic servants out of place, discharged bar-maids, vendors of toys

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or lollipops, keepers of small eating-houses, of mangles, or of small lodging-houses, persons of doubtful temperance, persons who spell badly, who can scarcely write, and who cannot cipher at all." In the more expensive private schools patronized by parents of the middle class the education provided was often little better, for it was frequently shallow and pretentious, and the efforts made to impress the parents were at times pathetic. Matthew Arnold, one of the most distinguished of the Inspectors of Schools, wrote with some warmth of feeling in this connection. "The stamp of plainness and the freedom from charlatanism given to the instruction of our primary schools," he said, "is perhaps the best thing about them. It is in this respect that our primary schools compare so favourably with the private adventure schools of the middle class. The work in the one is appraised by impartial, educated persons; in the other by the common run of middle-class parents. To show the difference in the result, I will conclude by placing in juxtaposition a letter written in school by a girl of eleven years old in a public elementary school, with one written by a boy in a private middle-class school. The girl's letter I give first :

"DEAR FANNY,

"I shall be glad when the Serpentine is frozen over, for we shall have such fun; I wish you did not live so far away, then you could come and share in the game. I am now sitting by the school fire, so I assure you I am very warm. Father and mother are very well. I hope to see you on Christmas Day. Winter is coming; don't it make you shiver to think of? Shall you ever come to smoky old London again? It is not so bad, after all, with its bustle and business and noise. I must now conclude, as I am soon going to my reading-class; so good-bye."

"And now I give the boy's :

"MY DEAR PARENTS,

"The anticipation of our Christmas vacation abounds in peculiar delight. Not only that its festivities, its social gatherings, and its lively amusements crown the old year

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with happiness and mirth, but that I come a guest commended to your hospitable love by the performance of all you bade me remember when I left you in the glad season of sun and flowers.

“And time has sped fleetly since reluctant my departing step crossed the threshold of that home whose indulgences and endearments their temporary loss has taught me to value more and more. Yet that restraint is salutary, and that self-reliance is as easily learnt as it is laudable, the propriety of my conduct and the readiness of my services shall ere long aptly illustrate. It is with confidence I promise that the close of every year shall find me advancing in your regard by constantly observing the precepts of my excellent tutors and the example of my excellent parents.”

“To those who ask what is the difference between a public and a private school I answer, *It is this.*”

It is only in our own day that this problem of the inefficient private school has been tackled, but so far as the children of poorer parents were concerned, it loomed less prominently after 1891, in which year another Elementary Education Act was passed, virtually abolishing the payment of “school pence.” and giving parents the right to demand free education for their children in the public elementary schools. Thereafter progress was steady if not rapid. In 1893 the minimum age for employment was raised to eleven, and in 1899 to twelve, except in agricultural districts, where boys and girls might begin to work on the land as half-timers on condition of remaining at school during the other half of the working day until reaching the age of thirteen. A year later the education authorities were allowed to raise the age of compulsory attendance to fourteen, and although each authority was still able to prescribe the standard of attainment necessary to secure exemption at an earlier age, and although these standards varied in different areas, the position in the year 1900 was that in more than half the local education districts a child under fourteen was not allowed to leave school until he had reached the seventh standard.

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In 1902 Mr. Balfour was responsible for the great Education Act that reorganized the whole system of State education. The School Boards, of which there were some 2,500, and the School Attendance Committees, numbering nearly 800, were abolished, and a new set of local education authorities, with considerably wider powers, including for the first time responsibility for secondary schools, was brought into existence. Under Part II of the Act county councils and county boroughs were charged with the duty of administering both elementary and secondary education, whilst Part III. of the Act provided that in non-county boroughs with a population of over 10,000, and in urban districts with a population of over 20,000, the local council should be the authority for elementary education only. These important changes brought fresh life and vigour and a greatly increased efficiency to the national system of education, and since the new authorities were armed with ample powers, each was able to develop the education of its area in accordance with local needs and circumstances.

6

While such momentous steps were being taken to improve the opportunities and the working conditions of children through the medium of the Education Acts, further factory legislation was adopted with the same object in view. It will be remembered that the Factory and Workshop Act of 1878 had exempted domestic workshops from those controls which operated in the case of other industrial premises. The permitted hours of work extended from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m., and the duty of supervising sanitary conditions was left with the local authorities, who could only take action under the rather vague regulations of the Public Health Act of 1875. It was precisely in these domestic workshops that the worst abuses flourished, and public attention

came to be focused on the evils of the "sweating system," under which excessive hours of work, low wages, and bad physical conditions sapped the strength of women and children alike. In 1888 the House of Lords set up a Special Committee to inquire into the sweated industries, and a sad story was unfolded. In many branches of industry work was given out to be performed at home, and because the outworkers (as they were called) "clung tenaciously to working in their own houses," they got only the lowest paid work and were compelled to carry it out in appalling conditions. "In small rooms not more than nine or ten feet square," one witness told the Committee, "heated by a coke fire, and at night lighted by flaring gas jets, six, eight, ten, and even a dozen workers may be crowded." A woman garment worker gave a moving account of her occupation. "We receive 5d. per pair for making youths' trousers," she said, "6d. per pair for making cord trousers, and 6½d. per pair for making moleskin trousers. A pair of white moles takes 1½d. for thread, which we have to provide; we are not allowed to use cotton. We have to walk five miles for each lot of work, and lately we have had to go nearly every day, sometimes twice a day, and when we go we often have to wait many hours before we get any." When trade was bad the outworkers would take work at almost any price, underbidding each other to secure orders. The consequence was that the women, and children too, were compelled to work excessive hours in order to gain a bare subsistence, and the inspectors found it almost impossible to check such over-working because the workrooms were not required to be registered, and no record of overtime was kept.

The Factory Act that was passed in 1891 was designed to meet some of these difficulties. It raised the minimum age for employment in controlled premises to eleven (two years, be it noted, before the general prohibition of employment

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below that age was enforced by an Education Act) and tried once more the experiment of giving local authorities control of sanitary conditions in all workshops. Employers were to inform the factory inspector when any premises began to be used as a workshop, and it was the inspector's duty to pass this information on to the local authority. Lists of out-workers were to be made available for examination both by factory inspectors and by the officials of the local authority, and it was hoped in this way to effect a much greater measure of control over conditions in the domestic workshops. Some protection, too, was afforded the workers by the famous "Particulars Clause," which required the employer to furnish in writing full particulars of the rate of wages payable to each worker, who was thus able to ensure that the correct amount was received.

In 1901 a new Factory and Workshop Act was passed. It consolidated the various minor Acts that had been passed since 1878, and raised the minimum age for employment to twelve. The length of the working day on Saturday was reduced, but apart from these relatively slight concessions no important improvement in working conditions was effected. The half-time system was now falling into general disrepute, but it was left in full operation and was the source of much controversy. It had never been definitely decided whether local by-laws made under the Education Acts were to be taken as over-riding the Factory Acts, and some of the more enlightened education authorities, anxious to prohibit children under thirteen from working in any circumstances, framed their by-laws in such a way as to make no allowance for partial exemption. This gave rise to much litigation, and although the better opinion seemed to be that the authorities who made such regulations were acting beyond the scope of their powers, the matter was not finally settled until the part-time system was abolished.

While these important developments were being

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achieved by the Factory Acts and the Education Acts, the position of boys working in the mines was not neglected. In 1887 boys under twelve were unconditionally prohibited from working underground, and boys and girls who were employed above ground were not allowed to begin work, even as half-timers, until they had reached the age of twelve. At thirteen they became young persons, and as such were allowed to work a full ten-hour day, or fifty-four hours a week.

CHAPTER 12

CLOSING THE GAP

I

By the beginning of the twentieth century a notable advance had been made, and the problem of the young worker was being tackled courageously and with some measure of success. Society was now fully aware of the importance of regulating working hours and conditions, and the need to provide adequate educational facilities was everywhere recognized. But there were still many gaps in the protective measures that had been built up so slowly and with such difficulty. In particular it was coming to be realized that despite the limitations imposed on excessive work by Factory and Mines Acts, and despite the steps taken to ensure that no child should be deprived of education, it was still possible for boys and girls to be worked beyond the limits of human endurance, and it was still possible for their work to be carried on in circumstances that invited physical hardship and moral degradation. Parents might obey the letter of the law by sending their children to school for the stipulated number of hours, and employers, under the watchful eye of the inspector, might refrain from exacting overtime, but there were no laws to prevent children from undertaking a multitude of miscellaneous duties once the obligations of school and factory had been discharged.

In the poorer districts of the great towns young boys and girls were turned into the streets to augment the family income by the few pence they could earn, and because this street trading exposed them to special dangers and temptations, public anxiety had long been aroused. As early as 1861 Henry Mayhew had painted an alarming picture of

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the life of these street waifs in his well-known book, *London Labour and the London Poor*. The little girl whose daily lot it was to sell watercress in the streets of the metropolis, for instance, excited his particular sympathy. "Though only eight years of age," he wrote, "she had entirely lost her girlish ways. There was something cruelly pathetic in hearing this infant, so young that her features had scarcely formed themselves, talking of the bitterest struggles of life with the calm earnestness of one who had endured them all. Although the weather was severe she was dressed in a thin cotton gown, with a threadbare shawl wrapped round her shoulders. When she walked she shuffled along for fear that the large carpet slippers that served her for shoes should slip off her feet. 'I go about the streets,' she said, 'with water-cresses, crying "Four bunches a penny, water-cresses." I've been very near a twelvemonth in the streets. I used to go to school, but I wasn't there long. Mother took me away because the master whacked me. I never go home to breakfast till I've sold out, but if it's very late then I buys a penn'orth of pudden which is very nice with gravy. It's very cold getting up of a morning. I gets up in the dark by the light of the lamp in the court. I bears the cold—you must, so I puts my hands under my shawl, though it hurts 'em to take hold of the cresses, especially when we take 'em to the pump to wash 'em. All my money I earn I puts in a club, and draws it out to buy clothes with. It's better than spending it on sweets for them as has a living to earn.'"

Boys and girls engaged in street trading, said Mayhew, were often the children of costermongers, and they were sent out to sell oranges, nuts, onions, salt herrings, and other articles of merchandise. Frequently they were the offspring of people connected with street life, "cabmen deprived of their licence, street performers or Ethiopians, or street musicians." One little girl whom he saw offering boot-

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laces most perseveringly was just nine years old, and she had been selling in the street for two years. Her father was a street musician, who had seen better days, and her mother earned two shillings or half a crown a week mending shoes. "It's in the winter, Sir," she observed, "that things are worst with me, for father can make very little then. I was sent out to sell nuts first. 'If it's only a penny you make,' mother said, 'it's a good piece of bread.' I didn't mind being sent out. I could do better if I went into public-houses, but I'm only let to go to Mr. Smith's—he knows father. I can read a little. I've been to church five or six times in my life."

It was the lack of education and of religious training, no less than the physical hardships and deprivations, that moved Mayhew so deeply. "I came across two small boys one morning," he wrote. "The first, his mother told me, was the best scholar at his school before he had to help her in street sale. He was a pale, and not at all a forward boy of 13 or 14, who had not been to a Ragged School, but to an 'academy' kept by an old man. He did not know what the weekly charge was, but when father was living the schoolmaster used to take it out in vegetables. France, he told me, was a different country to this: he had heard there was no king or queen there, but didn't understand about it. You couldn't go to France by land, no more than you could to Ireland. Didn't know anything of old times in history; hadn't been told. Had heard of the battle of Waterloo; the English licked. Had heard that the earth went round the sun, but from what he'd noticed shouldn't have thought it. He didn't think the sun went round the earth; it seemed to go more sideways. Another boy, a few months older, was a thick-limbed, red-cheeked fellow. Yes, he had heer'd of God, who made the world. Couldn't exactly recollect when he'd heer'd on him, but he had, most sartenly. Didn't know when the world was made or how

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anybody could do it. It must have taken a long time. It was afore his time, 'or yourn either, Sir.' The sun was made of fire, or it wouldn't make you feel so warm. The stars was fire, too, or they wouldn't shine. They didn't make it warm, they was too small. Didn't know any use they was of. Didn't know how far they was off: a jolly lot higher than the gaslights, some of 'em was. Had heer'd of the Duke of Wellington: he was Old Nosey. Didn't think he'd ever see'd him, but had seen his statty. Hadn't heer'd of the battle of Waterloo, nor who it was atween. Thought he had heer'd speak of Buonaparte, but didn't know what he was. Thought he had heer'd of Shakespeare, but didn't know whether he was alive or dead, and didn't care. Was a ignorant chap for he'd never been to school, but he was up to many a move, and didn't do bad. Mother said he would make his fortin yet." The knowledge and the ignorance of these two striplings represented in Mayhew's opinion that of street children generally.

These precocious, nimble-witted street arabs, undisciplined, unschooled, exposed to all the temptations of a vagabond life, and living on the very edge of the criminal underworld, presented a grave problem. During the winter months they frequented the common lodging-houses, and those who could not find the few coppers necessary for a bed passed the night in the street. When the warmer weather came they flocked in shoals to the country, either to earn a little money by helping the farmers, or more often to beg and steal. "Their propensities," it was said, "provide ample field for wonder, disgust, pity, hope, and regret. They have been either untaught, mistaught, maltreated, neglected, regularly trained to vice or fairly turned into the street to shift for themselves. To the gangs of young thieves a new boy who is not known to the police is often a God-send. The censure is attributable to parents, the state, or society."

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It was generally agreed that it would be futile for Parliament to pass laws endeavouring to regulate these "wandering occupations"; the problem was too vast and too scattered. The gradual introduction of a universal system of education and of compulsory attendance at school struck at some of the worst abuses of street trading by taking the children off the streets during school hours, but there was nothing to prevent boys and girls engaging in this unregulated occupation when the school had closed its doors for the day, or even before the doors were opened in the morning.

In Manchester, where the difficulties were acute, an effort was made in 1882 to deal with the situation, when certain clauses were included in the Corporation Act giving the local authority power to prohibit school children under fourteen years of age from trading in the street after 9 p.m. during the summer months, and after 7 p.m. during the winter. Similar clauses were embodied in local Acts that defined the powers of the corporations in Birmingham, Sheffield, Cardiff, and Swansea. Other towns relied on section 23 of the Municipal Corporations Act 1882, which gave them general powers "to make such by-laws as to them seem meet for the good rule and government of the borough," but in 1887 it was held by a court of law that street trading could not be regulated by such by-laws, and the whole system of control, incomplete as it was, threatened to collapse.

Mr. Benjamin Waugh had recently been engaged in founding the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and realizing the dangers inherent in the judgment of 1887 he succeeded in securing provisions in the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Bill, which the Society was promoting in Parliament, that fixed ten as the minimum age at which a child might trade in the street. Boys under fourteen and girls under sixteen years of age were not to

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trade between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m., though these hours might be varied in different districts by the local authorities.

This was a beginning, but the powers given to local authorities, even when they were exercised, touched only the fringe of the problem, and it was clear that great numbers of children who had with some difficulty been brought into the schools, were being denied the benefits of education because of their excessive hours of work outside school. In 1899 it was computed that at least 144,000 children in full-time attendance at school were working early in the morning or during the evening hours. Of these 40,000 were employed for more than twenty hours a week, 3,000 for more than forty hours a week, and some were actually working fifty or sixty hours out of school. "Some of the individual cases were not less striking," it was reported, "than the general figures: as, for example, the case of a boy of twelve, who rose between 3 and 4 a.m. every day to knock up twenty-five working men, was then employed from 6 to 9 a.m. in selling newspapers, and afterwards attended school regularly, but often slept during lessons; of a grocer's errand boy who for 1s. 6d. a week worked from 8 to 9 a.m., from 12 to 1.30 p.m., from 4.30 to 7.30 p.m., and on Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., making $41\frac{1}{2}$ hours a week, in addition to the $27\frac{1}{2}$ of school; of a boy of eight, who was called up for work at 2 or 3 a.m., and was also employed often in the evening; and of boys and girls of six years old employed in lace-making, match-box making, and even in helping to make bricks."

2

These revelations persuaded the Government to appoint a Committee to examine the whole question of the employment of school children, and their report, published in 1902, was profoundly disturbing. "It has come to pass," they said,

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“ that while the employment of children is in most large industries carefully regulated, and in some dangerous cases prohibited, and while children are forbidden to do any work during school hours, their employment in other occupations outside school hours is wholly unregulated. The result has been that, as the door has been closed to their employment in factories and workshops and during school hours, there has been a tendency towards their employment in other occupations before morning school, between school hours, in the evening, and on Saturdays and Sundays. Provided they make eight or ten school attendances every week, they may be employed (with a few exceptions, and these little enforced) in the streets, in the fields, in shops, or at home, for the longest possible hours, and on the hardest and most irksome work, without any limit or regulation. . . . A boy of eleven years of age for 4s. a week was employed for $43\frac{1}{2}$ hours in carrying parcels from a chemist's shop, and except on Sundays was practically every moment of his life at school or at work from 7 in the morning till 9 o'clock at night. Another boy aged thirteen worked 52 hours a week, being employed by a moulding company, and attending a theatre for five evenings a week and for half a day on Wednesday for a matinée ; for the last, however, playing truant from school. We are especially struck by two boys whom we saw at a south London school, one of whom gets up every morning at 4 to clean lamps in a cab yard where his father works, while the other works early and late in cleaning and grooming two ponies which are entirely in his charge, and in assisting generally in a stable yard. Nothing could be worse, however, than the case described by Mrs. Nickless of four sisters aged 12, 10, 9, and 8, who are employed at home from 44 to 50 hours a week in the work of wood-chopping.”

The number of wage-earning children had increased since the inquiry that was made in 1899, and it was calculated

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that some 150,000 were now employed in one capacity or another, in addition to 103,000 half-timers. This number represented approximately 4 per cent. of the children throughout the country in full-time attendance at school, but the figures differed in various parts of the country ; in London it rose to $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and in Warwickshire to 8 per cent., but in the agricultural counties of Cambridge, Dorset, and Hereford it fell to $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

The injury to health and to education inflicted by this system of part-time employment was generally recognized, and the majority of employers would, the Committee thought, be willing to accept some measure of regulation. Street-hawking in itself was not necessarily injurious to health, "but its moral effects are far worse than the physical, and this employment in the centre of many large towns makes the streets hotbeds for the corruption of children, who learn to drink, to gamble, and to use foul language, while girls are exposed to even worse things." Those who were in a position to study the problem at close quarters fully endorsed this view. The Chief Constable of Manchester, for instance, said : "Street trading is productive of a greater amount of evil, morally and physically, than any other occupation followed by children. The boys develop into lazy, shiftless and worthless men." Many of these boys were engaged as newsvendors. "They commence business with the halfpenny morning papers, and continue with the early afternoon editions of the evening papers, and until the last issues of the day are published. Some regularly make from 10s. to 14s. a week. They live mainly in common lodging-houses. They continue in the trade until manhood, when they find it more difficult to make a living in the streets. They then adopt less easy means of livelihood, becoming for the most part racecourse touts, and often travelling thieves and loafers."

Conditions in shops were far from ideal, for the hours

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were usually excessive, working conditions were unhealthy, and when boys and girls were employed in the delivery of goods, as was often the case, they were frequently exposed to grave physical hardships arising from the weight of the articles that they had to lift and carry. "The worst form of shop work, however," it was reported, "is that of the lather boys in barbers' shops. The hours worked by these boys are longer than in any other trade; five hours every evening with fifteen hours on Saturday, and six or eight on Sunday are not uncommon. The sanitary conditions of the shops are sometimes exceedingly bad, and in the lower quarters of the town they are said to be the meeting places of gamblers, and the conversation and surroundings are the worst conceivable for children."

The Committee summed up their findings in memorable words. "On a review of the evidence we consider that it is proved that in England and Wales a substantial number of children, amounting probably to 50,000, are being worked over twenty hours a week in addition to $27\frac{1}{2}$ hours at school, that a considerable proportion of this number are being worked to thirty, or forty, and some even to fifty hours a week, and that the effect of this work is in many cases detrimental to their health, their morals, and their education, besides being often so unremitting as to deprive them of all reasonable opportunity for recreation. For an evil so serious, and existing on so large a scale, we think that some remedy ought to be found. In the interests of their health and education, it seems only reasonable that remedies which have proved so valuable in the case of factory children should in some form be extended to cover the whole field of child labour.

* There are also other considerations. It seems clear that the too early employment of children may, like the premature work of horses, injure their future capacity, and that what is gained at the commencement of life is much more

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than lost at a later stage. The average wage of a schoolboy in regular employment out of school hours is about 2s. a week, and if he works constantly during two years of his childhood, say from eleven to thirteen, his earnings will only amount to what he would afterwards make in two or three months as an artisan or even as a labourer. Even on the lowest ground, therefore, of financial interest, it is not cheap to work a child so as to cause him to be prematurely worn out.

“In moderation and under proper conditions the employment of children need not be harmful. A small amount of regular employment is of itself a useful part of a boy’s education. It would be well if a larger number of children could at an early age be introduced to some of the practical work of the carpenter, the shoemaker, or the blacksmith ; but if this is impossible, even the running of errands or the selling of newspapers helps to make them alert and industrious, and prepares them for the part they have to take in after life.

“What is required, then, is not the total prohibition of juvenile employment, but regulation. We do not believe that the true ideal is more school education up to fourteen, and then a full day’s manual work. We think that the training for manual work should begin before the age of fourteen, just as we hold that school education should continue beyond fourteen ; that in furtherance of this end the employment of children in practical work should be permitted, but permitted only under carefully considered regulations, to be made by local authorities on whom should be conferred the power of making by-laws with regard to the occupations of children.”

3

The recommendations of the Employment of School Children Committee were embodied in the Employment of

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Children Act, 1903. On the 14th November of the same year the Home Office issued a circular to local authorities outlining the provisions of this Act, and explaining in detail the powers they were being called on to exercise. Though the device of delegating powers of control in these matters to local authorities had been employed on previous occasions with little success, if control was to be effective it must ultimately be exercised by those who were in close daily contact with the problem. It was only along such lines that any real progress could be made, and although the Act of 1903 shared the fate of previous efforts to improve the lot of working children, it was at least an important point of departure, for it marks the first stage in the regulation of conditions of employment by local authorities. As the years went by, and as these authorities acquired a greater sense of responsibility, so they gradually came to take a more serious view of their duties, which to-day they discharge with conspicuous success. The event demonstrates that however unfortunate were the early results, Parliament was following a wise policy when it insisted that the administration of regulations such as those now under consideration must be a matter for local and not for central government.

The Employment of Children Act extended very considerably the existing field of control. It prohibited :

- 1 the employment of any boy or girl under the age of 14 between the hours of 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. (though local authorities had the power to vary these hours at their discretion),
- 2 the employment of any child under 11 in street trading,
- 3 the employment of any factory or workshop 'half-timer' in any other occupation,
- 4 the employment of any child to lift, carry, or move heavy weights likely to cause injury to the child,
- 5 the employment of any child in any occupation likely to be injurious to the child's life, health, or education, regard being had to his physical condition.

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The duty of enforcing these restrictions was laid on the council of the local authority concerned, and each council was allowed to supplement the general restrictions by additional provisions for the regulation of the age, the hours of employment, and the conditions of the employment of children in their district, except in those occupations that were already regulated by the Factory and Workshop Act of 1901, or by the Mines Regulation Acts of 1872 and 1887. "It is important to note," said the circular, "that home industries and small laundries not under the Factory Act will fall within the scope of the council's powers, and any employment of factory or mine children outside the factory, workshop, mine, etc., which is not covered by the Factory Acts or Mines Acts."

The councils were empowered to make by-laws prescribing the age below which employment was to be illegal, the hours of the day between which employment was to be illegal, and the daily and weekly maximum number of hours beyond which employment was not to be permitted. The general principles that should guide the council in framing by-laws were fully explained. "The restrictions for each occupation should be carefully considered with reference to the circumstances of the occupation, the hours at which it is carried on, the effects of the occupation on the health and character of the children, and the extent to which it interferes with their education. Employment in badly ventilated or insanitary homes on industrial work of a sedentary character, or in laundry work, is more harmful, and may properly be subject to more stringent restrictions than outdoor employment, which, if the hours are not excessive, is not found to be injurious to health.

"It will be of the greatest importance for the successful administration of the Act that the restrictions imposed by the by-laws made under it should, as far as possible, be of such a character that infringements will be capable of easy de-

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tection and punishment. It would seriously weaken the benefits and influence of the Act if restrictions were imposed which were so difficult to enforce as to render the by-laws practically a dead letter. Experience under other Acts, especially the Factory Act, has shown that it is impossible for inspectors charged with the enforcement of a weekly maximum of hours to count the hours during which the child is at work, and it therefore becomes a matter of great difficulty to produce sufficient evidence to justify a conviction. It will, for this reason, be desirable that, as far as possible, the council in any by-laws for limiting the hours of employment should fix definite hours of employment; a weekly maximum should only be fixed by way of addition.

“Special powers of regulation are given in regard to street trading. The local authority is empowered to make by-laws imposing conditions as to age, sex, etc., on the employment of persons under sixteen, and if they think fit requiring all such persons trading in the streets to be licensed by them. They may also determine the places and times at which street trading may be carried on, e.g. restrict it to certain parts of their areas; and may impose other conditions as to the wearing of badges and general conduct of the children.”

4

Here was a golden opportunity for the community to limit within a very narrow area the evils of those aspects of child labour that were still unregulated by law, but the Government made no effort to maintain a check on the action or inaction of the local councils. The statutory restrictions, it is true, they were obliged to enforce, but there was no compulsion to supplement these provisions by by-laws, since their powers in this respect were purely permissive. Progress was painfully slow, and by the year

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1913 only 98 of the 329 authorities concerned had made by-laws governing the general employment of children, while 131 had regulated the more urgent matter of street trading. Public apathy, the fact that the cost of enforcing by-laws would fall on the local rates, and the opposition of those who employed the children, all combined to render nugatory the efforts of those who were genuinely concerned for the welfare of boys and girls. Another difficulty was that the machinery of local government was not as yet fully developed and efficient : in some areas the police were left to enforce the regulations, and in others the powers were entrusted to the Education Authority, which through its teachers and school attendance officers was in a favourable position to take any action that might prove necessary.

In 1909 the Royal Commission set up to inquire into the Poor Law devoted some time to the examination of the working of the Act of 1903. They found that in London no real effort had been made to regulate street trading, and that although the London County Council had issued by-laws, the Public Control Committee made no attempt to enforce them, with the result that there were between 12,000 and 20,000 children whose working conditions were still unregulated. "Many of them are kept in a ragged and dirty condition," said the report, "and they are a disgrace to the richest city in the world. The Council has, however, within the last few months, decided to place the enforcement of the Act in the hands of the Education Committee, whose attendance officers know these children from their earliest years. It is to be hoped, therefore, that something will be done to render their lot a little easier, and ensure some supervision until public opinion is ripe for the complete suppression of this form of child waste." There was no doubt, it was affirmed, that street trading was the worst possible training for children, leading to the lowest depths of criminality and immorality. There was no justification for its

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continuance, and "there ought to be a complete clearance from the streets of the whole gang of street-selling children. The life of the street trader is a continual gamble, unredeemed by any steady work : it is undisciplined and casual, and exposed to all the temptations of the street at its worst. The great majority drift away into crime or some form of living by their wits."

If it was difficult to impose restrictions on such occupations as street trading, it was well nigh impossible to control the working conditions of children employed by their parents at home, where local authorities, who were invested with considerable powers under the Act of 1903, had to face the problem of investigation in particularly trying circumstances. When a Select Committee was appointed in 1907 to make inquiries into the conditions under which homework was carried on, one of the woman inspectors reported that there was much illegal employment in her district, especially in the lace trade. "If you visit at dinner-time," she said, "you find the children without having removed their hats or jackets busy at the lace work, and then something will be given them to eat as they go to school. They will be at work in the evening on their return, and in the neighbours' houses as well as in their mothers' houses. Children are said to be employed at four years old, and we have found them at six years of age employed on lace several times."

In the Birmingham district children were frequently employed in "carding," fastening buttons or hooks and eyes on cards, ready for the shops. "In the evening," said a witness, "one sees them sitting round the table under the lamp, picking out the hooks and eyes that are entangled ; their little fingers are very clever at it, and they are pressed into the service. They cannot sew, but first of all the row of hooks is sewn on, and then the mother will pass that over to the tiny little child and she hooks on the eyes, and then the mother has to go over the card again and sew on those

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eyes. Some of the children have to be beaten to make them do it."

Most of these home industries were sweated. The payment for carding a hundred gross of buttons was half a crown or three shillings, and it took a week to complete the task. For carding safety pins the rate of payment varied: if there were nine large pins on a card the worker received twopence for every gross of cards completed, but fivepence-halfpenny was paid for small pins, of which there were two dozen on each card. In 1909 when the Trade Boards Act was passed, machinery was devised for securing a fair wage for those engaged in homework, and the temptation to overwork children was thus reduced. But there was still much to be achieved before conditions could be considered satisfactory.

CHAPTER 13

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I

PERHAPS the most striking feature of the legislation that has been enacted during the past forty years has been the growth and development of the social services. The new generation of statesmen and politicians held with Aristotle the view that "a state exists for the sake of a good life, and not for the sake of life only. Nor does a state exist for the sake of alliance and security from injustice, nor yet for the sake of exchange and mutual intercourse. Whence it may be inferred that virtue must be the serious care of a state which truly deserves the name: for without this end the community becomes a mere alliance . . . and law is only a convention and has no real power to make the citizens good and just." If the good and virtuous life is to be made possible for the greatest number of citizens the State must play the part of the wise and beneficent father, extending ever more widely the scope of its functions, and providing such safeguards against poverty, insecurity, and ill-health as shall make it possible for all to live in conditions of sober happiness and dignity.

In pursuance of this policy there has been set up a national scheme of health and unemployment insurance, the whole system of poor law has been overhauled and humanized, pensions have been provided for the aged and for widows and orphans, and the scope of the public health services has been greatly enlarged. In the post-war years this process will be carried further, and at an accelerated pace. It is proposed to inaugurate a national health service available for rich and poor alike, the Beveridge plan promises to

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abolish want and economic insecurity, while vast schemes of housing and town-planning will provide for the material needs of the community.

Against this background of social revolution and progress we must now consider the attempts that have been made to assure for children and young people that fuller measure both of protection and of opportunity that will enable them to support the burdens and responsibilities of citizenship when they finally embark upon the adventure of adult life. Three main lines of approach are discernible : steps were taken to provide for the health and physical welfare of the young ; the content and scope of education were widened and enlarged and the whole scheme of public instruction was revolutionized ; and still further safeguards were erected to protect those who were entering the world of industry.

2

The health and physical well-being of young people are of paramount importance, for "the care of the body ought to precede that of the soul," and it has long been fully recognized that a child stunted in bodily growth and development can derive little benefit from education nor can he play a worthy part as a citizen of his country.

In the year 1904 a committee was set up to investigate the question of physical deterioration among certain classes of the population, and its report cast a lurid light on the conditions under which working children existed at the beginning of the twentieth century. "If the child survives the first year in the city slum," said Mr. Wilson, an inspector of factories, "fed at times by cold tea administered by means of a dirty bottle and tubes, seldom bathed, and rarely carried out and aired, he yet may carry to his grave the effects of parental neglect. The half-time system, too, is very prejudicial to physical development. It is usually only the very

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lowest class of child who is sent to work half-time, because the parents are so poor. The wealthier parents do not send their children to work until they are 14 years of age, so that they do not come under the unhealthy conditions of factory life until they are rather further advanced in growth and development. White bread and tea one finds constantly supplied to growing children and to boys and girls working long factory hours at exhausting duties.

“Immediately on the expiration of the compulsory school attendance period, 14 years of age, the child will commence to labour for his own bread. If he resides in a textile district the hours will be long, 55 per week, and the atmosphere he breathes very confined, perchance also dusty. Employment of this character, especially if carried on in high temperatures, rarely fosters growth and development; the stunted child elongates slightly in time, but remains very thin, loses colour, the muscles remain small, the legs are inclined to become bowed, more particularly if heavy weights have habitually to be carried, the arch of the foot flattens, and the teeth decay rapidly. The girls exhibit the same shortness of stature, and they possess the same sallow cheeks and carious teeth. At an age when girls brought up under wholesome conditions usually possess a luxuriant growth of hair, these factory girls have a scanty crop which when tied back is simply a wisp, a ‘rat’s tail.’”

Other witnesses stressed the need for a further reduction of working hours, especially in the textile industry. “To take a concrete instance of a child in a textile factory, it is the long hours in a high temperature, breathing a somewhat impure air, which tend against its general health more than anything else, and it is difficult to see how you would overcome that unless you shorten the hours of labour. The child starts at 6 o’clock in the morning and works till 6 at night, and the only opportunity he has of getting fresh air comes after that, and in winter time that is not much.”

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Dr. Scott, one of the certifying factory surgeons, referred in scathing terms to the evils of the half-time system, and pointed out how easy it was for boys to be employed in work for which they were not physically fitted. "They can be allowed to work now," he said, "between 13 and 14, if they get a certificate from a schoolmaster, which is a stupid thing. It was a horrible mistake to have half-timers. The children are not fed and cared for with the same regularity. Not only that, but the fact that they go half a day to school and the other half day to their work makes them irregular in their habits. It does not make them punctual, and these boys grow up to be loafers and not at all like the boys who come in at 14 and get their food regularly. There was the case of William Macdonald which to me was intensely interesting. That boy I rejected from working in the factory because he was suffering from imperfect constitution and debility. He was not 14 years of age. I rejected him. What did he do? He had got this certificate from a schoolmaster to say that he was allowed to leave the school. He quietly goes away and gets another boy's certificate of birth, a boy called Todd, and passes down to another works, and presents his certificate as John Todd, and passes, and I hear nothing more about him till within two months. That boy is then brought to my ward in the Royal Infirmary in Glasgow suffering from chronic rheumatoid arthritis, just as if he were an old man. To the day of his death that boy will never be better, and that is owing to his physical development having been arrested by premature employment."

The report of the Physical Deterioration Committee shocked the prosperous, complacent Britain of pre-war days. It seemed that all that had been achieved by the reforms of the past century had been to postpone for a few years the age at which a child was called upon to face the full impact of industrial life. Boys and girls were no longer

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sent into the mines at a tender age, they were not now called upon to labour in the factories when they had scarcely learned to walk, nor were they deprived of even the rudiments of education, but their physical standards were often deplorably low, and it was evident that unless further steps were taken the nation would be in danger of producing a race of weaklings, ill-fitted to face the demands of the new century.

Remedial measures were quickly taken. In 1906 the Education (Provision of Meals) Act empowered local education authorities to provide meals for children attending schools in their area. The cost of the food was to be recovered from the parents, but when it was apparent that children were unable by reason of lack of food to take full advantage of the education provided for them the meal could be provided free of cost at the expense of the rates. In October 1934 the "milk in schools" scheme came into operation, and pupils were enabled to buy a third of a pint of milk for a halfpenny. When the war of 1939 made necessary a system of food rationing great care was taken to ensure that growing children should not suffer unduly. The school meals service was expanded with great rapidity, rationed foods were allocated on a generous scale, and every precaution was taken to secure that no single child need suffer from malnutrition.

In the year 1907 the Education (Administrative Provisions) Act made it compulsory for local education authorities to institute a regular scheme of medical inspection in all schools under their control, and thus was inaugurated the school medical service which has wrought such an impressive improvement in the health and physique of the nation's school children. This service does not profess to replace the family doctor, but by diagnosing complaints at an early stage it is able, in the majority of cases, to arrest the progress of disease, and to lay the foundations of health and vitality

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during the period of adult life. In recent years the scope of the school medical service has developed considerably, and in most areas there is now to be found a highly trained specialized staff capable of administering the latest treatment in orthopaedics, dental surgery, speech therapy, and the correction of optical defects.

In 1918 the Maternity and Child Welfare Act made provision for the care and oversight of expectant and nursing mothers and of children under the age of five, and in the same year the Education Act allowed local education authorities to set up nursery schools and classes, in which children between the ages of two and five might be introduced to the disciplined habits of a happy and well-ordered community. So striking was the success of the nursery schools in the comparatively few areas where they were set up that the Education Act of 1944 made it incumbent on all local education authorities to establish them. The Act of 1944 also gave authorities the power to provide boots and clothing for children who need them.

Thus it is clear that the State now accepts responsibility for the well-being of a child even before it is born, and that a wisely conceived scheme of guidance, control, and help operates at all stages up to and beyond the period of adolescence. This much has been achieved on the physical plane. What contribution has our century made to education in the narrower circle of the school ?

3

By the beginning of the century the public elementary schools of the country had improved out of all recognition. They were staffed by a competent body of trained teachers, and their curriculum was rapidly broadening and adapting itself to the needs of life. But despite the substantial progress that had been made there were certain inherent

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defects, some of them a sad heritage of the past, some due to too narrow a conception of the true role of a school in the life of the nation. The classes were much too large; and in the smaller country schools especially, children of widely differing ages and aptitudes were taught together by the same teachers. The buildings were often unsuitable, and there was a lamentable shortage of books and apparatus.

More serious was the fact that boys and girls were still allowed to leave school at the age of 13, and to work half-time at the age of 12. In 1909 the Committee on Partial Exemption from School Attendance recommended that the half-time system should be abolished; but an attempt to carry out this recommendation failed, and in 1914 there were still 70,000 half-timers in employment. The changed outlook on the half-time system is the measure of the progress that had been made in the national attitude to children and their needs. When first introduced it had been hailed as a reform of the first importance, "the only method of producing fully developed human beings," as Karl Marx called it, but in time it came to be realized that the children employed as half-timers were able to make little progress in their studies, while the effect of the long hours, forty or forty-four a week, spent in factory and school hindered their physical development, and was bad for their health. Doctors and factory inspectors alike bore testimony to their stunted growth and listlessness, and teachers complained that when they came to school they were not only too tired to derive any real benefit, but that factory life made them less obedient and less attentive.

The Education Act of 1918, for which Mr. H. A. L. Fisher was responsible, opened up a new vista of hope and progress. The half-time system was finally abolished by Section 14 of the Act, which provided that no child should be employed:

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(a) in any factory or workshop to which the Factory and Workshop Acts, 1901 to 1911, apply ; or (b) in any mine to which the Coal Mines Act, 1911, applies ; or (c) in any mine or quarry to which the Metalliferous Mines Acts, 1872 and 1875, apply.

At the same time the school-leaving age was raised to 14, and henceforth every child attending a public elementary school was obliged to remain in attendance until the end of the term in which he reached his fourteenth birthday. Local education authorities were empowered to make by-laws raising the age of compulsory attendance to 15, though these powers were used in comparatively few areas. Another lingering vestige of the old system was swept away when the payment of "school pence" was forbidden. In 1918 there were still over 400 elementary schools the pupils of which were required to pay fees ; henceforth education was to be free to all, regardless of income.

In one important respect the Act of 1918 was ahead of its time. There is much to be said for the view that it is unwise to terminate a child's education abruptly at the age of 14, and to plunge him direct from the sheltered atmosphere of home and school into the rough and tumble of industrial life. Accordingly it was proposed to set up a system of continuation schools to provide suitable courses of study, instruction, and physical training, without fee, for those who had left the elementary schools but had not yet reached the age of 18. It was hoped in this way to continue the education of young workers on a part-time basis. But the scheme was never fully operative, and Rugby was the only area in which compulsory attendance at continuation schools was adopted.

During the period between the two wars progress was sure and steady. In 1921 a new Education Act reduced a mass of heterogeneous legislation to an ordered and logical

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whole ; and in 1927, following on the *Report on the Education of the Adolescent*, the famous Hadow Report, steps were taken to reorganize elementary education in such a way that between the age of 11 and 14 "all the children of the country who do not go forward to 'secondary education' in the present and narrow sense of the word, should go forward none the less to what is a form of secondary education, in the truer and broader sense of the word, and after spending the first years of their school life in a primary school, should spend the last three or four years in a well-equipped and well-staffed modern school (or senior department) under the stimulus of practical work and realistic studies, and yet, at the same time, in the free and broad air of a general and humane education."

In 1936 was passed an Education Act the purpose of which was to enable local education authorities to make grants towards the cost of enlarging, improving, and providing new senior schools for children who had hitherto been attending voluntary schools. It was hoped in this way to make it possible for the managers of denominational schools to bring their buildings up to the standards required for the new senior schools ; but only 37 of the 519 plans put forward had been completed when the outbreak of war made further progress impossible.

The Act of 1936 further provided that from 1st September 1939 all children should be required to attend school until they attained the age of 15, unless they had been granted a certificate of employment, which was only to be available if the education authority was satisfied that the employment contemplated would be beneficial to the child. But the opening of hostilities in 1939 caused the postponement of this reform.

It was not until the ferment of the second World War revealed the need for an even more drastic overhaul of the

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existing social system that full effect was given to the tentative movements of reform initiated by the Education Act of 1918. In 1943 the Board of Education issued a pamphlet entitled *Educational Reconstruction*, which envisaged a new conception of the educational system. At about the age of 11 all children, it was suggested, should proceed to some form of secondary education, and the keynote of the new system was to be that each child should receive the type of education for which he was best adapted. In order to achieve this end it was important that conditions in the different types of secondary schools should be broadly equivalent. "Under present conditions," it was said, "the secondary school enjoys a prestige in the eyes of parents and the general public which completely overshadows all other types of school for children over 11. Inheriting as it does a distinguished tradition from the old English grammar school, it offers the advantages of superior premises and staffing, and a longer school life for its pupils. Since 1902, when local education authorities were first empowered to provide or aid secondary education, there has been a rapid expansion. In 1904 there were 86,000 pupils; to-day there are 514,000. . . . Junior Technical Schools came into being in 1905, and their success has been remarkable. Planned to give a general education associated with preparation for entry to one or other of the main branches of industry or commerce, they have grown up in close relation to local needs and opportunities of employment. But their progress in numbers has been comparatively slow, and their chances of attracting the most able children *vis-à-vis* the grammar schools have been adversely affected by the fact that they normally recruit at the age of 13."

In August 1944 the great Education Act was passed, the first important measure of post-war reconstruction, which introduced a new order in English education. From 1st April 1945 it was proposed to raise the school-leaving

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age to 15, without prior exemption for beneficial employment as was provided in the Act of 1936, and as soon as conditions made such a course practicable, compulsory attendance was to continue until the age of 16. The shortage of teachers and the lack of buildings made it impossible, however, to give effect so soon to the reform, and it has been necessary to postpone the raising of the leaving age for the time being. In order to secure for every child equality of opportunity all post-primary education after the age of 11 was to be secondary in character, and pupils were to proceed, without payment of fees, to modern, technical, or grammar schools according to their inclinations and capabilities. The idea of day continuation schools was revived, and part-time attendance at County Colleges was, in due course, to become compulsory for all young workers until they reached the age of 18.

4

The close of school-days is always a decisive point in the life of a child. At this time he needs expert and friendly guidance to enable him to choose the calling for which he is best fitted, and it is important also that he should be afforded opportunities of mixing with his fellows in such a way that he may take his place easily and smoothly in the larger and more complex society of which he is soon to become a full member. Ample provision has been made in this direction during the past thirty years. In 1910 the Education (Choice of Employment) Act empowered local education authorities to set up juvenile employment committees to offer guidance and to afford help and advice to young people leaving school and embarking on a career. It is now usual for boys and girls to be interviewed by an officer of the committee during their last term at school, and much invaluable work has been done in guiding them

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into suitable employment, and in preventing them from entering blind-alley occupations.

In 1919 the Juvenile Organization Committees, which had been set up to co-ordinate and encourage the work of young people's organizations throughout the country, came under the care of the Board of Education. The increasing value of their work has been fully recognized, and the Youth Committees, as they are now called, are performing a task of the first importance. The many clubs whose activities they guide and foster provide for their members abundant opportunities for recreation, instruction, and physical well-being, and have proved admirable training grounds for young people who have left school behind them to develop qualities of leadership, and the ability to accept the responsibilities of corporate and social life within the community.

5

It is clear, then, that the trend of modern development has been towards enlarging and extending the period of preparation for the work of adult life. But the boy or girl who enters the factory, the mine, the office, or the shop is still in need of care and protection, and here, too, the twentieth century has witnessed notable developments.

In the year 1911 the Coal Mines Act raised from 13 to 14 the minimum age at which boys could be employed underground, and provided that they should not work for more than eight hours a day, or for more than forty-eight hours in any one week. Boys and girls engaged above ground must have reached the age of 13, but their hours remained at ten a day, or fifty-four a week. The Coal Mines Act of 1919 fixed a maximum for all workers of seven hours a day underground, and the night work of young persons was restricted by the Coal Mines (Employment of Boys) Act, 1937, which provided that in all coal-

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mines there should be a period of at least seven consecutive hours, between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m., during which no boy should work beneath the surface.

In 1937 was passed the Factories Act, a most important measure, which consolidated previous legislation, and brought it into harmony with modern conditions. The old distinction between factories and workshops, which had caused so much difficulty and controversy in the past, was abolished, and a factory is now defined as a place where for purposes of gain or by way of trade one person employs another in the making, altering, repairing, ornamenting, finishing, cleaning, washing, breaking up or demolition, or the adapting for sale of any article. The Act also applies so far as the employment of young persons is concerned to certain building sites, to docks, wharves, quays, and warehouses, to electrical generating and transforming stations, and to works of engineering construction. Elaborate regulations governing safety, cleanliness, ventilation, and sanitation make ample provision for the health and welfare of all workers, and the working hours of young persons (hours, it is interesting to notice, that must still be regulated by a public clock, a forceful reminder of the old days) are still further restricted. Young persons under 18 years of age must not normally work for more than 48 hours a week (reduced in 1939 to 44 hours a week for those between 14 and 16) or more than 9 hours in any one day. Definite meal times must be fixed, annual holidays must be granted, and overtime is restricted to young persons over 16 years of age, who are not allowed to work beyond the normal period of 48 hours a week for more than 25 weeks in any year. Boys and girls under 16 years of age cannot be employed unless the factory surgeon certifies that they are physically fit for the work that they are to perform.

The conditions under which shop assistants were often

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compelled to work had caused much anxiety, and in 1892 the Shop Hours Act had prescribed a maximum working week of seventy-four hours (including meal-times) for all young persons under the age of 18. In 1912, when the mass of legislation referring to shops was consolidated in the Shops Act, this lengthy period of employment was not reduced, but the Shops Act of 1934 prescribed a maximum working week of forty-eight hours for all young persons, and limited overtime and night work.

Under the Education Act of 1921, as extended and modified by the Children and Young Persons Act, 1933, further restrictions were imposed on the part-time employment of children outside school hours, and important powers were given to local authorities, who were entrusted with the enforcement of these restrictions. No child was to be employed :

- (a) so long as he was under twelve years of age, or
- (b) before the close of school hours on any school day, or
- (c) before 6 a.m. or after 8 p.m. on any day, or
- (d) for more than two hours on any school day or any Sunday, or
- (e) to lift, carry, or move anything so heavy as to be likely to cause injury.

However, local education authorities were given wide powers to supplement and to modify these conditions. They could make by-laws allowing children under 12 to be employed by their parents in light agricultural or horticultural work ; they could authorize children to work for not more than one hour before the commencement of morning school ; and they could prohibit absolutely employment in any specified occupation.

Special rules were made to govern the position of children employed in street trading. The Education Act of 1918 had raised the minimum age to 14, and the Children

YOUNG PEOPLE IN INDUSTRY

and Young Persons Act of 1933 raised it again to 16, with the proviso that local authorities (in this case the County Council or County Borough Council) might make by-laws permitting young persons between the ages of 14 and 16 to be employed by their parents in street trading. The local authorities were also given very wide powers of regulation, extending to young persons under 18 years of age. They could prohibit street trading altogether, or make it conditional upon the possession of a licence, and they could decide the days and hours during which, and the places at which, such persons might be allowed to engage in street trading.

Thus it was that within a comparatively short span of years a fundamental and far-reaching change was wrought, extending over almost the whole field of juvenile employment. But even more revolutionary reforms were contemplated, for the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 contained provisions that were to enable local authorities, under order from the Home Secretary, to make by-laws regulating the employment of certain classes of young persons under the age of 18, mainly van boys, errand boys and girls, messengers and non-resident domestic servants. No order was made by the Home Secretary, but in 1936 a Departmental Committee was appointed to inquire into the hours of employment of young persons under 18 years of age who were engaged in unregulated occupations. The Committee reported that in many instances these young people were working unduly long hours. Van boys were frequently employed for 54 hours a week, and some actually worked 66 hours a week, exclusive of intervals for meals. Errand boys, messengers, porters, pages, lift boys, and cinema ushers were frequently overworked, and the Committee commented adversely on the long spread-over of hours, amounting sometimes to over 15 a day. They urged the need for immediate legislation, and in 1938 the Young

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Persons (Employment) Act closed the last gaps in the unregulated industries. It applied to young people employed in the collection and delivery of goods, to those engaged running messages and errands or working in hotels and places of entertainment, and to the employees of laundries and newspaper publishers. Boys and girls under 16 were not to work for more than 44 hours a week, those between 16 and 18 were restricted to 48 hours, and provision was made for a weekly half-holiday. The duty of enforcing these measures was laid upon local authorities.

This, then, is the story of the emancipation of youth, a long and involved story, sometimes grim and sad, but always full of hope and promise. It was only by slow degrees that society came to realize its responsibilities to young people, and many bitter and sustained struggles had to be waged, sometimes against mere indifference and obscurantism, often against the selfishness not only of employers but of parents as well. But if the onward march has been slow it has yet been steady and sure, and once the haphazard and unscientific method of dealing piecemeal with individual hardships and abuses had given way to an ordered and progressive attack on the twin problems of juvenile employment and education it became possible to achieve real and substantial progress.

It is the characteristic of an advancing civilization that it offers the opportunities of a fully satisfying life to an ever-increasing number of its citizens, and that it makes available for the many the leisure, the security, and the happiness that were formerly the prerogative of the few. For a state to ignore this fundamental principle is to invite disruption and anarchy, for no man can live to himself alone, and the highly complex system of relationships inherent in a modern community serves only to emphasize afresh the truth that was apparent to the ancient Greeks, that "man, when per-

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fect, is the best of animals, but when separated from law and justice, he is the worst of all ; since armed injustice is the more dangerous, and he is equipped at birth with the arms of intelligence and with moral qualities which he may use for the worst ends. Wherefore, if he have not virtue, he is the most unholy and the most savage of animals, and the most full of lust and gluttony."

The rapid industrialization of the country during the early years of the nineteenth century threatened to separate a considerable section of the population from law and justice, for with the passing of the old régime of sturdy independence and domestic self-sufficiency, vast numbers of men, women, and children were brought face to face with the stark reality of unregulated industrial competition and with all the misery and hardship that such a system brought in its train. Society was ill-prepared to bear the stresses thus imposed upon it, and it was compelled to have recourse to improvisation until the problem could be viewed in its proper perspective. Thereafter an orderly and well-directed solution became possible of achievement.

But in the meantime much suffering had to be endured, and it is little consolation to reflect that hardships had to be borne by only a section of the nation's children. The weary piecer in the cotton mill, the ill-used chimney sweep, the little boy who snatched a fugitive hour "a-playing him" in the lane after the long and weary day in the darkness of the coal-mine—these were not typical of English childhood as a whole. The happier circumstances of birth enabled many to enjoy the advantages—earned for them in many instances by their less fortunate brothers and sisters—of good food, adequate clothing, and ample leisure in which to play and learn.

It was in this sharp cleavage that the real tragedy lay, and the task during the past century and a half has been to level out these inequalities. Great things have been accom-

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plished, and we now go forward to a new world of hope and opportunity, where our responsibilities, though different in kind, will be equally heavy and exacting. The rights of youth have been fully recognized and most amply confirmed; but rights are synonymous with duties, and a stern task lies ahead. The youth of this country offered themselves nobly and magnificently to the ruthless demands of war, and it was their selfless sacrifice which made possible the new and happier social order. It will be for a younger generation to show that their ordeal was not suffered in vain, and by accepting eagerly and fully the opportunities now made available, to prepare themselves to discharge the duties and responsibilities of citizenship.

BOOKS FOR FURTHER READING

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- Birchenough, C., *History of Elementary Education* (University Tutorial Press)
- Clarke, J. J., *Social Administration* (Pitman); *Outlines of Local Government* (Pitman)
- Cunningham, W., *Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge University Press)
- Hammond, J. L. and B., *Age of the Chartists* (Longmans); *The Town Labourer* (Longmans); *The Bleak Age* (Longmans)
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- Jones, G. P., *Workers Abroad* (Nelson's Discussion Books)
- Keeling, F., *Child Labour in the United Kingdom* (King)
- Hutchins, B. L., and Harrison, A., *History of Factory Legislation* (King)
- Lindsay, K., *English Education* (Collins)
- Mantoux, P., *Industrial Revolution* (Cape)
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- Rackham, C. D., *Factory Law* (Nelson's Discussion Books)
- Samuels, H., *Industrial Law* (Pitman)
- Warner, G. T., *Landmarks in English Industrial History* (Blackie)
- Wilson, Richard, *Discussing Education* (Nelson's Discussion Books)

APPENDIX I

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

- 1733 John Kay invented the flying shuttle
1765 James Hargreaves invented the spinning-jenny
1767 Richard Arkwright invented the water-frame
1769 James Watt invented the steam-engine
1778 Adam Smith published *The Wealth of Nations*
1779 Samuel Crompton perfected the "mule"
1785 Opening of the first steam spinning mill
1788 Act for the Better Regulation of Chimney Sweepers
1798 Malthus published *An Essay on the Principle of Population*
1802 Health and Morals of Apprentices Act
1808 British and Foreign School Society founded
1811 National Society founded
1816 Peel's Committee on Conditions in Cotton Factories
1817 Commons Committee on Chimney Sweep Boys
1818 Lords Committee on Chimney Sweep Boys
1819 Act for the Regulation of Cotton Mills and Factories
1825 Hobhouse's Factory Act
1830 Oastler begins agitation for Ten Hours Day.
1833 First government grant to schools
Act to Regulate the Labour of Children and Young
Persons in Mills and Factories
1833-4 Children's Employment Commission
1834 Lords Committee on Chimney Sweep Boys
Chimney Sweepers Regulation Act
1837 Compulsory registration of births
1840 Chimney Sweepers and Chimneys Regulation Act
1842 Royal Commission on Mines
Mines Act
1844 Act to amend the Laws relating to Labour in Factories
1845 Print Works Act
1847 Act to limit the Hours of Labour of Young Persons and
Females in Factories
1850 Act to amend the Acts relating to Labour in Factories
1853 Palmerston's Factory Act

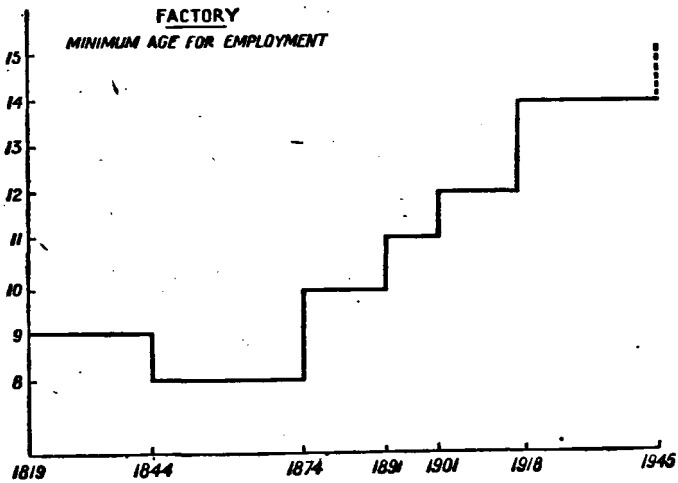
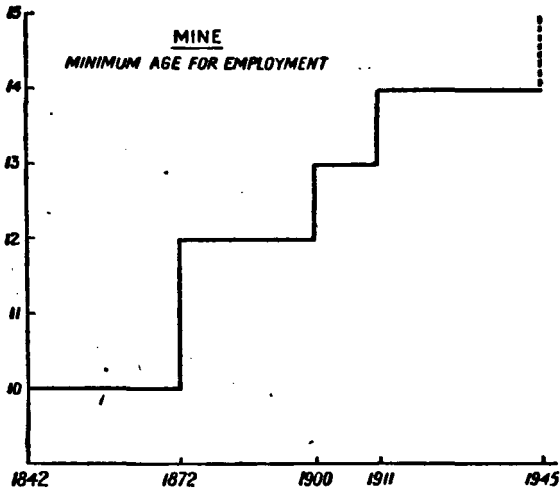
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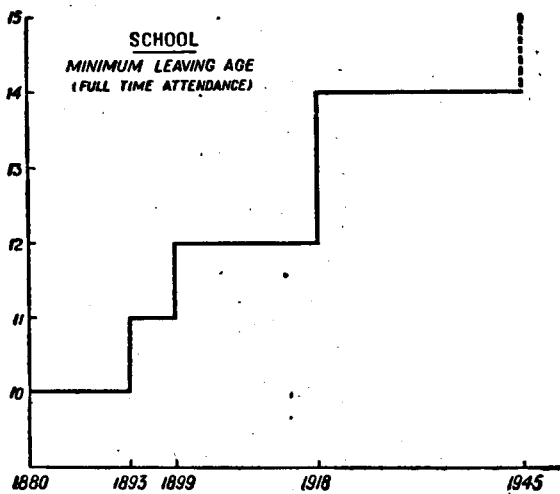
- 1860 Bleach and Dye Works Act
Mines Act
- 1861 Lace Works Act
- 1861-7 Children's Employment Commission
- 1863 Bakehouses Regulation Act
- 1864 Factory Acts Extension Act
- 1867 Factory Acts Extension Act
Workshops Regulation Act
Agricultural Gangs Act
Second Reform Act
- 1870 Forster's Elementary Education Act
- 1872 Coal Mines Regulation Act
- 1873 Agricultural Children Act
- 1874 Factory Act
- 1876 Consolidation Commission
Sandon's Elementary Education Act
- 1878 Factory and Workshop Act
- 1880 Mundella's Elementary Education Act
- 1882 Shop Hours Act
Municipal Corporations Act
- 1887 Coal Mines Regulation Act
- 1888 Lords Committee on Sweated Industries
- 1889 Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act
- 1891 Elementary Education Act
Factory Act
- 1893 Elementary Education (School Attendance) Act
- 1899 Elementary Education (School Attendance) Act (1893)
Amendment Act
- 1900 Elementary Education Act
- 1901 Factory and Workshop Act
- 1902 Education Act
Committee on Employment of School Children
- 1903 Employment of Children Act
- 1904 Committee on Physical Deterioration
- 1906 Education (Provision of Meals) Act
- 1907 Education (Administrative Provisions) Act
- 1909 Trade Boards Act
Committee on Partial Exemption
Royal Commission on the Poor Law
- 1910 Education (Choice of Employment) Act

APPENDIX I

1911	Coal Mines Act
1912	Shops Act
1918	Education Act
	Maternity and Child Welfare Act
1919	Coal Mines Act
1921	Education Act
1927	Hadow Report
1933	Children and Young Persons Act
1934	Shops Act
1936	Education Act
	Committee on Hours of Employment of Young Persons
1937	Factories Act
	Coal Mines (Employment of Boys) Act
1938	Young Persons (Employment) Act
1944	Education Act

APPENDIX II
THREE TIME CHARTS





APPENDIX III

WEEKLY BUDGET OF A MANCHESTER PRINT WORKER

Family of mother, father, and eight children

Total weekly earnings £1, 9s. 6d.

Rent	3 6
1½ cwt. Coal	10½
Flour	4 10
Yeast and Baking	6
3 lb. Bacon	2 0
2 lb. Butter	2 0
14 quarts Buttermilk	1 9
Sweet Milk	7
1½ pecks Oatmeal	2 0
2 oz. Tea	8
3 oz. Coffee	4½
2 lb. Sugar	1 4
1 lb. Soap	6
¾ lb. Candles	4½
Water	1
Potatoes	4 0
Clothing	1 6
Sick Club	1 5
School Fees	3
Miscellaneous	1 0
	£1 9 6

APPENDIX IV

BY-LAWS MADE UNDER THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS ACT, 1933

(a) *By a Local Education Authority*

- 1 No child under the age of thirteen years shall be employed.
- 2 No child shall be employed on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday, except between the hours of 5 p.m. and 7 p.m.
- 3 No child shall be employed on Saturday, except between the hours of 8 a.m. and 1 p.m., or between the hours of 5 p.m. and 7 p.m.
- 4 Sunday is prescribed as a whole holiday, and no child shall be employed on that day.
- 5 No child shall be employed on any School Holiday, except during the period stated in By-laws 2 and 3.
- 6 No child shall be employed in any of the following occupations :
 - (a) As a lather boy, or in a similar occupation, in a barber's or hairdresser's shop.
 - (b) In the kitchen of any hotel, cook shop, fried fish shop, eating house, or refreshment room.
 - (c) As a marker or attendant in any billiard or bagatelle saloon, or other place licensed for games, or in any registered club, or premises licensed for the sale of intoxicating liquors.
 - (d) In or in connection with the sale of intoxicating liquors, except in places where such liquors are sold exclusively in sealed vessels.
 - (e) In selling programmes or refreshments or other articles, or in selling or taking checks or tickets, or in shifting scenery, in any theatre, music hall, picture theatre, or other place of public entertainment.
 - (f) In collecting or sorting rags or refuse.
 - (g) As an attendant or assistant in any premises or fair-ground used for the purpose of public amusement by

APPENDIX IV

means of automatic machines, mutoscopes, shooting ranges, games of chance or skill, or similar devices.

(h) In any slaughterhouse.

(i) In or in connection with any racing course or track or other place where any like sport is carried on, or as an assistant in any business conducted therein.

(j) Step cleaning.

(b) *By a County Council*

- 1 No girl under the age of 17 and no boy under the age of 16 shall engage or be employed in street trading.
- 2 No person under the age of 18 shall engage or be employed in street trading unless furnished with a licence from the Local Authority.
- 3 Every licensed person while engaged or employed in street trading shall wear in the appointed way the badge prescribed by the Local Authority.
- 4 No person under the age of 18 shall engage or be employed in street trading on or about any football or sports ground, or on or about any horse racecourse, dog racecourse, or motor vehicle racecourse, to any of which premises the public are admitted with or without payment of money, provided that nothing in this by-law shall apply to any public park or sports ground which is directly maintained by any Local Authority.
- 5 No licensed person shall engage or be employed in street trading before 7 a.m. or after 8 p.m. on any weekday or at any time on a Sunday.
- 6 No licensed person shall in any street or public place tout or importune to the annoyance or obstruction of any passenger.
- 7 No licensed person shall whilst engaged in street trading be assisted by any unlicensed person under the age of 18.

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CHARTER FOR YOUTH SERIES

The object of Government is not to change men from rational beings into beasts or puppets, but to enable them to develop their minds and bodies in security, and to employ their reason unshackled. In fact, the task of Government is liberty.—*Spinoza*

A school can make its contribution to an "Enlightened and Instructed Public Opinion" if in response to the naturally widening interests of its pupils it makes them aware of the problems which will engage their attention later, and if it promotes an attitude of free inquiry and develops power of independent judgment and intellectual alertness.—*Norwood Report*

Why is this new series of books, addressed to Sixth Forms and intelligent youth generally, called the *Charter for Youth*? For two reasons. First, the Atlantic Charter enunciated the principles that will govern the reconstruction of the democratic commonwealth in the post-war world, and all its terms demand as a *sine qua non* the establishment of Freedom of Speech. But freedom of speech is of greatly inferior value if not fortified by an educated and critical intelligence that will operate to maintain a high level of thought and expression. Knowledge and its application, science and its findings, and with them the scientist and the scholars themselves, must acquire a position of first importance. The Atlantic Charter connotes a respect and demand for Truth: its implementation requires informed citizenship.

Second, Youth to-day is no longer kept in blinkers, and its need to face the problems and responsibilities of a new world demands that it should have access to the latest knowledge in the chief fields of thought and action—the history of peoples and institutions, the arts and sciences, invention and industry, logic, philosophy, ethics, and religion. It should also have training in right thinking and clear expression, and all that leads to sound judgment and moral poise. Youth has a Charter of the City of the future, and the new series of books is intended to open the gates of one division of that city—Knowledge.

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