

CHILD LABOR. The employment of children in industry, while dating from the earliest historical times, did not become a social problem of the first importance until the introduction of the factory system in England in the latter part of the eighteenth century, in other modern countries during the nineteenth century, especially after 1860. Under earlier conditions the employment of children, either under their own parents or as apprentices under a master bound by law and custom to safeguard their interests, was regarded as an excellent thing. Thus the habits of steady industry, so necessary under the existing system of production, were inculcated in the earliest years. The close personal relation between the master and apprentice or parent and child and the restraining influence of public sentiment were, as a rule, sufficient to prevent serious abuse; moreover, experience showed that it was difficult to drive a child beyond his powers of physical endurance.

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century the introduction in England of power machinery for spinning cotton, and later for spinning wool and for weaving, brought about a fundamental change in the conditions of child labor. The work required rather deftness than physical strength; accordingly the labor of children was in many cases more productive than that of the existing adult population, trained in agriculture or in the more leisurely methods of domestic industry. A large supply of child labor was to be had from the poorhouses, the custom having long existed of apprenticing pauper children to any person who would engage to bring them up to honorable employment. Accordingly the new cotton mills in the north and west of England collected pauper children throughout the kingdom, obtaining their services for the cost of their maintenance. Profits were naturally high at first, and competition increased. In the struggle to maintain profits the various manufacturers—especially those who operated antiquated

machinery—lengthened the hours of employment for their child workers and cut down the costs of food and housing, until at last an indescribable condition of child slavery came into existence. Children of five years were in some cases compelled to work from 13 to 16 hours a day; their food was barely sufficient to keep them alive, and no regard was had for the most primitive rules of sanitary housing. At length in 1802 an Act of Parliament limited the working day to 12 hours, forbade night work, and required elementary instruction for apprentice laborers in cotton factories. In the meantime the competition of the factories had practically destroyed domestic production of textiles, and families formerly engaged in home work were driven to migrate to the factory towns, where the low rate of wages and high cost of living compelled them to place their children in the mills. To such children the Act of 1802 did not apply; and the evils of the apprentice system were duplicated in the case of children living with their parents. In 1819, after many years of agitation, a law was enacted forbidding employment in cotton factories of all children under nine, and limiting hours for children under 16 to 12 daily. No special provision was made for the enforcement of the law, and it was frequently evaded. In 1825 an Act was passed which provided a Saturday half holiday for child workers in cotton factories, and in 1831 night work of persons under 21 was prohibited. This legislation was replaced by the Factory Act of 1833, which made provision for factory inspectors, prohibited night work for persons under 18, fixed 48 hours a week as the maximum for children between 9 and 13, and 69 hours for persons between 13 and 18. Two hours' schooling per day was required for all children. The Act applied to all textile works with the exception of silk mills. In 1842 employment of children under 10 in mines and collieries was prohibited. The Act of 1844 limited the hours of children under 13 to 6½ per day and required school attendance for the remaining half day. In 1848 the hours for children under 13 were limited to 5, and those of "young persons" (13-15) to 10. This Act may be regarded as the basis of all modern regulation of child labor. In the following three decades a number of acts were passed extending the scope of the law and improving its machinery for enforcement. In 1878 all previous legislation was consolidated into one great factory act. The minimum age of employment was raised to 10 years, and children from 10 to 14 might be employed only one-half day or on alternate days. For persons from 14 to 18 the work day was required to begin at either six or seven in the morning and to close at the same hours in the evening, with an intermission of two hours for meals and rest. All Saturdays were made half holidays, as well as eight other days in the year. Minute regulations were made relative to the fencing of dangerous machinery and to sanitary conditions. In 1902 a new and more complete code went into effect, raising the minimum age to 12 years. Many of the provisions of the law were extended to home workshops.

In the United States, while some children were employed in factories in the first half of the nineteenth century, the problem did not become serious until the great industrial expansion in the first decade after the Civil War in the Eastern and Middle Western States and in

the last decade of the century in the Southern States. By 1879, in Massachusetts children from 8 to 11 were found working in factories from 11 to 14 hours daily. Even worse conditions prevailed in New York and Pennsylvania. According to the census of 1900 children under 16 formed 13.3 per cent of all persons engaged in cotton manufacture in the United States. In 1909 the percentage had declined to 10.4. For manufactures in general the percentage of children under 16 declined from 3.4 in 1899 to 2.4 in 1909. The largest percentages of child workers were in South Carolina (12.9) and North Carolina (11.3). The total number of children under 16 employed in manufactures remained practically stationary through the decade 1899-1909. In the former year the number was 161,276; in the latter, 161,493. The greatest employer of child labor in 1909 was the cotton manufacturer (40,221). Hosiery and knit goods (11,111) and canning and preserving (11,035) were next in order of importance. Over one-half of the children employed in industry were found in the Middle Atlantic States (44,464) and the South Atlantic (41,856). New England employed 33,575.

Laws relating to child labor in the United States generally fix a minimum age limit, prohibit certain kinds of employment for children, as dangerous to health or morals, limit the number of hours a person under a certain age may be employed, prohibit night work for children, and, in a large number of cases, fix educational requirements for children under a given age as a prerequisite to employment. In 26 States the age limit is 14 years; in three other States the limit is 12 years for certain industries, 14 for others. South Dakota has an age limit of 15 years and Montana of 16. In several of the Southern States the age limit is 12 years. For employment in mines, quarries, smelters, the limit is fixed at 14 years in most States. Fourteen (in certain cases 16) years is the limit in Pennsylvania, while 12 years is the rule in the South. In most States the affidavits of parents or guardians are accepted as proof of age; in New York and Massachusetts more reliable evidence is required, such as a birth or baptismal certificate or a convincing school record. Evasion is nevertheless common in most of the States, many children under age being employed.

In California and Michigan children under 18 may not be employed in factories more than 9 hours a day. Children under 16 are limited to an eight-hour day in factories in New York, Ohio, Massachusetts, and several nonindustrial States. Ten hours is the usual limit.

In a majority of the States children under a certain age, ranging from 14 to 21 years, may not be employed in places where alcoholic liquors are sold or in such occupations as that of rope walker, gymnast, contortionist. Singing or playing on a musical instrument in a public performance is also prohibited in many States. Peddling, the selling of newspapers on the street, and other street trades are prohibited for children under 14 in a majority of the States.

Almost all the States prohibit the employment of children in operations especially dangerous to life and limb. Cleaning of machinery in motion is prohibited for boys under 18 and girls under 21 in Michigan and New York; for boys under 16 and girls under 18 in Indiana and Iowa; for children under 16 in many States; for all minors in West Virginia, Missouri, and

New Jersey. The progress in the regulation of the employment of children in dangerous trades is indicated by the fact that while in 1879 only four States had enacted laws on the subject, 44 States had enacted such laws in 1910. As a rule, 16 is the age limit for dangerous occupations.

Night work is prohibited in over half the States for children under a specified age. In manufacturing establishments no children under 18 may be employed at night in California, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New York, and North Carolina. Laws relative to night work are in a large measure evaded in the glass industry. The conditions of the industry require continuous operation by day and night, and for each glass blower a boy must be employed as helper. Such boys are often below the age limit prescribed by law. The glass-works are as a rule located in rural districts, where fuel (natural gas) is readily obtainable, and hence escape frequent inspection.

In a large number of States the attendance at school during a specified number of weeks of the previous year is made a prerequisite to the employment of children over the minimum age limit. In about 30 States restrictions are placed upon the employment of children who cannot read and write the English language. Fifteen States prohibit the employment of illiterate children under 16.

The administration of the child-labor laws is in some States intrusted to a body of factory inspectors; in Massachusetts it is conducted by a special branch of the police. In some States, especially in the South, no machinery for enforcing the laws exists. In very few of the States is the administration of the law effectively conducted. Inspectors, when such are appointed, are usually too few in numbers to perform the work of inspection adequately. Trade-unions are often active auxiliaries of the factory inspectors in securing the enforcement of the law, and in some parts of the country voluntary associations of citizens assist in this work. In some 15 States child-labor committees have been formed to secure the enforcement of existing laws and the enactment of further child-labor legislation. The State committees are federated in a National Child Labor Committee, which holds annual meetings and carries on a propaganda throughout the country. In this way it is hoped that one of the most serious objections to child-labor legislation may be removed, viz., that stringent laws in one State tend to drive industries across the border into States where such laws are lax or are unenforced. A uniform child-labor law was adopted by the committee in 1911, which in several instances has been enacted by State legislatures.

An official movement in the same direction is represented by the creation in 1912 of a Children's Bureau under the Department of Commerce and Labor (now under the Department of Labor) to systematize inquiries into the conditions under which children, particularly child laborers, live throughout the country.

On the continent of Europe child labor in factories became a serious evil in the seventies in Germany and Belgium; in Italy, about a decade later. In practically all European countries at present children are employed in factories, but in none so extensively as in the three states mentioned. Germany as early as 1839 enacted a child-labor law after the model of the English

law of 1833, but in many particulars improving upon that law. In the other countries child-labor legislation is of much more recent date. European laws fix a minimum age, limit the working day for children employed in certain occupations, and prohibit night work and employments regarded as dangerous to health or morals.

In Germany the age limit is 13, and children from 13 to 14 may be employed only 6 hours daily, children under 16 may be employed not more than 10 hours. In Belgium, for factory labor, the age limit is 12 years. In Italy, under the law of 1902, the limit of 12 years is fixed for all factory labor and for work in mines, quarries, etc.; in France the limit is 13, and children from 13 to 16 may not labor more than 10 hours daily. Twelve is the age limit in Austria, Hungary, Denmark, Sweden, Holland, Portugal, and Russia; 10 is the limit in Spain, and 14 in Switzerland and Norway. Night work for girls under age is prohibited in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Russia, and Switzerland; for girls under 18 in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden; for girls under 17 in Spain; under 16 in Hungary. Night work for boys under 18 is prohibited in France, Norway, and Switzerland; for boys under 16 in Austria, Belgium, Germany, Holland, Sweden, and Hungary; under 15 in Italy, Russia, and Spain; under 14 in Denmark, and under 12 in Portugal.

The enforcement of the child-labor laws is in most European countries very strict. The enactment of child-labor laws has in every country encountered determined opposition from manufacturers engaged in occupations where child labor is profitable; from certain property owners, who fear that prohibition of employment of children will augment the burden of pauperism, and from a class of political theorists who regard all classes of state interference in industry as objectionable. Experience has shown, however, that the abolition of labor of small children does not seriously handicap any branch of manufacture, automatic machinery being usually introduced when reliance is no longer placed upon cheap labor. Nor does it appear that the burden of pauperism is actually increased, the wages of the adult members of a family usually increasing with the disappearance of child labor. Recent investigations in Great Britain have brought to light striking evidence of the physical and mental degeneracy of the population in districts where children have been largely employed; accordingly there appear to be strong grounds for the view that child labor is uneconomical from a social point of view as well as morally indefensible.

Consult: Gibbins, *Industrial History of England* (2d ed., New York, 1898); Warner, *Landmarks in English Industrial History* (New York); Cheyney, *Industrial and Social History of England* (New York, 1901); Oliver, *Dangerous Trades* (New York, 1902); Murphy, *Problems of the Present South* (New York, 1904); Hunter, *Poverty* (New York, 1904); Adams and Sumner, *Labor Problems* (New York, 1905); Kelley, *Our Toiling Children* (Chicago, 1889); id., *Some Ethical Gains through Legislation* (New York, 1905); Spargo, *Bitter Cry of the Children* (New York, 1906); Thompson, *From Cotton Field to Cotton Mill* (New York, 1906); *Bulletin of the Bureau of Labor*, No. 52 (Washington, 1904); Nosedá, *Il Lavoro delle*

donne e dei fanciulli (Milan, 1903); Ferraris, "Das neue italienische Gesetz betr. die Frauen- und Kinderarbeit," *Archiv für soziale Gesetzgebung und Statistik* (Berlin, 1903); Bauer, "Die neure Kinderschutzgesetzgebung in Deutschland und in Grossbritannien" (ib., 1904); Clark, "Woman and Child Wage Earners of Great Britain," *Bulletin of the Bureau of Labor*, No. 80 (Washington, 1909); Veditz, "Child Labor Legislation in Europe," *Bulletin of the Bureau of Labor*, No. 89 (Washington, 1910); Bureau of Labor, *Report on the Condition of Woman and Child Wage Earners in the United States* (19 vols., Washington, 1909-13); Ogburn, *Progress and Uniformity in Child Labor Legislation* (New York, 1912). See LABOR LEGISLATION; FACTORY LAWS.