

THE SENTINEL

CHILD LABOR IN THE SOUTH.

Miss Irene Ashby, an English student of industrial economics, has recently made an investigation of the conditions attending the employment of child labor in the South. Her conclusions are embodied in an article published in the New York Herald last Sunday. Miss Ashby has had experience in work for the amelioration of the condition of the London poor. She is a graduate of Westfield College, University of London, where she specialized in sociological studies. "Child labor, the tragedy and shame of industrial England one hundred years ago," she declares, "is the specter of the 'New South' today."

Miss Ashby's inquiries appear to have been limited to the cotton mills. For such conditions as she claims to have found there, she says, the Southern manufacturer is not responsible. "The responsibility," she asserts, "lies entirely with the Northern capitalist. Of eleven practical superintendents to whom I talked, several being from Massachusetts or Pennsylvania, ten declared that doing away with labor of children under 12 years of age would benefit rather than harm the industry." In the ten mills run by Northern capital, according to Miss Ashby's statement, the number of children under 12 years of age was almost twice as great as in the mills conducted by Southern owners. In Alabama, prior to 1901, there was a State law limiting hours of labor of women and children and prohibiting the employment of children under 14 years of age. It is alleged that this law was repealed at the instigation of a Massachusetts company, which owns one of the largest and best equipped mills in the South. As a result of the repeal of the law the age minimum for children employed in Alabama mills has been removed, as also the provision restricting the hours of labor of women and children.

Miss Ashby alleges that Northern capitalists refuse to invest their money in Southern cotton mills unless it is with the specific understanding that they shall exploit child labor. They claim, it is stated, that unless this concession is made they will be unable to compete with the productions of Northern mills. Miss Ashby describes the methods by which a supply of labor is guaranteed. Before a corporation will agree to build a mill in new territory it must have assurances in writing of sufficient labor to operate the mill. The people who are earning a scanty living on their little farms are induced to sign contracts to contribute so many members of their families to the mill. "The father of the family must not only promise his labor at a miserable pittance, but he signs away the labor and liberty of his little children. The company promises them good houses in exchange for their log cabins, and free schools for their children. There are schoolhouses in the mill village, but they are empty. The father has pledged his little ones to work in the mill, and there is no time to go to school. The wages are so small it takes the earning of all the family to pay the rent of the company's neat little house and to pay the grocery bill at the company's store." Little children, Miss Ashby charges, work not only 12 hours a day, but are also employed for night work.

The picture which this English woman draws is not pleasant to look upon. It seems to be overdrawn. In her earnestness she may have laid on the somber colors too heavily, and, in her desire to ameliorate the condition of the mill toilers, she may have fancied that conditions are worse than they are. Yet it is unquestionably the fact that many Southern manufacturers are not entirely satisfied with the conditions. As a rule, the Southern mill owner is humane and treats his employes with the utmost kindness. As a rule, his employes have in the past been satisfied with the conditions under which they worked, and strikes were of rare occurrences. The mill workers had comfortable houses and ground for gardens. They were as healthy as any class of industrial workers, and they were well respecting people. Miss Ashby asserts that the situation has changed materially since Northern capital sought investment in the "New South." Child labor is exploited now as never in the South, and for this exploitation the Northern capitalist is responsible. "The little white slave is sacrificed to appease a tetch of commercial superstition and not for a real or fancied necessity of the industry." Such laws as the South had governing child labor have been repealed at the instigation of Northern capitalists, and Miss Ashby indignantly declares that "there is no condemnation strong enough for those who deliberately induce an inexperienced set of men to enter upon a course of self effacement in the persons of their little children by misrepresentation and political corruption in order that they may secure present wealth." The people of the South may be trusted to do all that is necessary for the protection of child labor. The "New South" industrial development has been so rapid that abuses of some kind may have crept in. A year or two ago mill owners in North Carolina were considering measures for the protection of children employed in the cotton factories of that State. No doubt Southern manufacturers in every other State in that section would gladly cooperate in any reform that might be practicable and necessary. — Baltimore Sun.

WEALTH IN OCEAN DEPTHS.—Quite apart from the many wrecks which strew its floor, there are portions of the Mediterranean which are fabulously rich—£1,200 worth of sponges were taken, in 1887, from one patch of sea bottom near the Island of Rhodes. The space was not more than 150 by 120 yards. Near Rhodes, too, is coral of great value, but much of it at a depth which is absolutely prohibitive for divers without dresses. On August 1 a mass of branch coral said to have cost nine lives. These nine men went down one after another, and simply disappeared. The tenth was named John Cataris. Taking a large slab of stone in his hands, he dived into seventy feet of water. About fifty feet of rope were out when the men in the boat found it floating loosely. They began to haul back. The rope stuck, and then came loose again, and up was pulled John Cataris with his back scored by rows of wounds like those of saw teeth. His story was that he dived, stone foremost, into a hot, dark place, and then was suddenly hurled back. His mates declare that he descended head foremost into the jaws of the huge shark which had swallowed the other nine, and, but for the great stone he held, that he would have shared their fate.

There is a saying in China that the Tartars conquered the men of the South by never overcame the women. These hated foreigners first took the empire about 1269, and though expelled and resisted during more than two centuries, they re-established themselves at Peking in 1644, and placed on the throne the first representative of the T'ing dynasty, which still reigns. They issued an order that, as a sign of surrender, all the men were to grow a tail, but to have the rest of their heads shaved, and all the women were to unbind their golden lily feet. The men submitted; the women planted those suffering little stumps with terrible resolution and answered "Never." To this day they would rather endure the misery of crushed bones, and their little girls would rather bear the agony of the crushing process, than suffer the loss of self respect and society's respect if they became like Tartar women. The Taping rebellion, in the quelling of which General Gordon gained the title of "Chinese Gordon," was a revolt against the foreign yoke, and its first act of open revolt was cropping the tails and scorning the razor.

THE JEWS OF IRELAND—Ireland is the only portion of the United Kingdom in which a religious census is taken. The enumeration just completed shows that all religious denominations in that country have declined in numbers during the last ten years with the exception of Methodists and Jews. The Roman Catholics have decreased 6.7 per cent, the Protestant Episcopalians 3.5 per cent, and the Presbyterians .3 per cent; while the Methodists have increased by 10.4 per cent, and the Jews by no less than 111.9 per cent. Even with this more than doubling of the Jewish numbers, however, the members of our community in Ireland do not total more than 3,769, as compared with 3,310,028 Roman Catholics, 579,385 Episcopalians, 443,376 Presbyterians, and 61,255 Methodists. As regards the distribution of the Jewish population most of them (2,246), as was to be expected, are found in the province of Leinster, in which Dublin with its considerable Jewish settlement is situated. Eight hundred and fifty-one are settled in Ulster, 670 in Munster, and only four in Connaught—the latter being a decline from eight at the previous census.—Jewish Chronicle.

THE DISCOVERY THAT a certain sort of sea moss can be used to clarify beer has added very much to the value of several small bays on the Massachusetts coast of America. At a place called Scituate there was gathered last year nearly a thousand tons of this sea moss, worth, in all, over \$60,000. Mossers make from \$5 to \$10 a day during the season when this moss is fit to gather, and many a family has \$400 to \$500 to put by against the long, cold, stormy winter of the North Atlantic coast.

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