

CHILD LABOR IN THE CAROLINAS

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SOME HUMAN DOCUMENTS RESULTING FROM INVESTIGATIONS MADE IN THE COTTON MILLS OF NORTH AND SOUTH CAROLINA BY A. E. SEDDON, A. H. ULM AND LEWIS W. HINE (STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER FOR CHARITIES AND THE COMMONS) UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE SOUTHERN OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL CHILD LABOR COMMITTEE.

Lewis W. Hine, well-known to readers of this magazine by his photographs of social conditions in New York city and elsewhere, was sent by the National Child Labor Committee to investigate conditions in North and South Carolina and record the results with his camera. In November, 1908, he went to Charlotte, N. C., the center of the cotton mill region of the South. Over fifty per cent of the cotton spindles and looms of the South are within one hundred miles of Charlotte. Mr. Hine visited nineteen and investigated seventeen mills, taking 230 photographs.

In only two mills, one at High Shoals, N. C., and the Atherton Mill at Charlotte, was he forbidden by the management to photograph the children, but as these mills are both under the management of

Gastonia, N. C.—Boy on right of picture is ten years old. Has worked three years in the mill, though in school part of the time. Boy on left said he was twelve years old. Has worked in the mill two years and at night nine months. Work below the age of twelve years in factories, even as apprentices, is illegal. Work at night is illegal before the fourteenth birthday.

For editorial discussion of this article see another page of this issue.

D. A. Tompkins, president, the conditions at High Shoals may be illustrated by the photograph reproduced on page 751, which Mr. Hine, in spite of the prohibition, secured by taking the children at the hour of dismissal. D. A. Tompkins is treasurer of the National Child Labor Commission of the National Civic Federation, organized to secure correct information about child labor conditions. This and other photographs from the Atherton Mills may help the federation to locate some children employed under thirteen years of age. On page 749 is a picture of the High Shoals mill running at night.

There is more night work in the North Carolina mills than in those of South Carolina and in other southern states, about fifty mills now running at night. A difference of a year in the age limit for North Carolina does not seem to make much difference in the size of children employed. The children work twelve hours on the night shift and say that they have no special time off for lunch, that they "eat-a-workin'." Those of us who

remember with what joy we hailed the closing hour of school after a period of five or six hours may appreciate what the closing hour means for the boys in the mills. One boy said that he had been at work in the mill for two years. The lint on their caps and clothes indicates the character of the atmosphere which they breathe. The little fellow of six at the Daniel Mill, Lincolnton, who stays at the mill all day with his mother and sister, is just "helping" a little, but will probably be drafted into regular service, though it may be some years before his name appears on the payroll. The presence of such children in the mill indicates need for a day nursery.

The pictures tell their own story but the statement of the president of the Ivey Mill at Hickory is worth repeating. He said very frankly that the North Carolina child labor law is violated by practically all the mills: "Not over ten per cent of the mills observe it. . . . I now have a family of four girls nearly grown, all A No. 1 hands, and they are going to another mill because I will not employ a ten-year-old child. In my opinion the only remedy is to have the law amended so as to have an inspector."¹ It should be noted that, not only do the present ages of some of the children in the photographs show violations of the law, but some of tender years have already worked a considerable time in the mill.

As to conditions in South Carolina, Mr. Hine thus states his opinion: "In general, I found conditions here considerably below those of North Carolina both as to the age and number of small chil-

¹Report of the North Carolina Bureau of Labor, 1907.

dren employed, though several of the mill towns in North Carolina approach the worst ones in South Carolina. In Chester, S. C., an overseer told me frankly that manufacturers all over the South evade the child labor law by letting children who are under age 'help' older brothers and sisters. The names of the younger ones do not appear on the company's books and the pay goes to the older child who is above twelve years."

In South Carolina, Mr. Hine found a mill settlement, the Wylie Mills at Chester, with no schoolhouses accessible to the children. He found distressing types of older boys and men, a group of whom is

shown in one of the pictures. He found a boy of twelve, fifty-two inches high, who is a weaver running six looms and making a dollar a day,—a boy who has been at work two years. This forms interesting testimony in view of the statement of Ellyson Smyth of South Carolina to the effect that the children are all in the spinning room and that "no

child ever stood at a loom." In the town of Dillon Mr. Hine heard many complaints among workmen about conditions in general,—low wages, long hours, pressure of work and use of young children. During the past year some children have been turned off, but many remain, some under the guise of helping. The children themselves overstate their ages,—their parents have misstated their ages so long. Illiteracy seems to prevail here. Many boys and women could not even spell their own names. The mill schoolhouse is a shed-like structure and very small. The mills were not running at night, but the men

NORTH CAROLINA CHILD LABOR LAW.

AGE LIMIT FOR EMPLOYMENT IN

FACTORIES 13 YEARS

FOR APPRENTICES 12 YEARS

AGE LIMIT FOR NIGHT WORK 14 YEARS

HOURS OF LABOR FOR CHILDREN

UNDER 18 66 A WEEK

EMPLOYMENT CERTIFICATES REQUIRED ARE MERELY WRITTEN STATEMENTS OF PARENTS OR GUARDIANS.

EMPLOYERS MUST "KNOWINGLY AND WILFULLY" VIOLATE THE LAW TO BE CONVICTED.

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

NO PROSECUTIONS UNDER THE LAW.

expected them to start up soon. In the Maple Mill at Dillon, one boy was found,—a boy of ten,—who had worked for three years and who is now earning thirty cents a day. The present report and photographs on Lancaster confirm the report on the same mill early in the year by Rev. A. E. Seddon who examined forty-five children at work and found thirty-four illiterate. One little girl of seven had been working in the mill for eighteen months; that is, she went to work at five and a half years, though as the child is an orphan, *this is not a violation of the South Carolina law.*

Mr. Seddon began his work in South Carolina with a visit to the "show mills",—so styled by Commissioner Watson of that state. Much was written in praise of the betterment work at the Monaghan Mills at Greenville, the Victor Mills at Greers, and the Belton and Pelzer Mills. Yet in the Monaghan Mills, of 250 employes in the spinning room, it was estimated that eighty-five were under sixteen years of age and of those questioned, two said that they were ten and two that they were nine years of age. Of forty-one examined as to their ability to read and write twenty-eight were found to be illiterate. At the Victor Mill one of the children confessed to the age of ten, another to the age of eight, and five children examined out of eight were unable to read or write.

The report of Mr. Seddon was confirmed by an independent investigation

made later in the year by A. H. Ulm, who says of the Victor Mills: "I stood at the gate of the mill and watched the children come out at noon. I saw several, at least seven or eight, who could not have been twelve years old. I saw several very sad cases of little girls from twelve to fourteen, who had evidently from their stooped appearance and stupid countenances been working in the mills for several years." He found the school attendance to be 132, which means that out of a community of about 3,000, one child

out of every twenty-three of the population attends school, or about one-fifth of the average for the state as a whole, including Negroes. It was noticeable that fewer than a dozen who appeared to be as old as twelve were attending school.

Mr. Seddon reported better conditions as to school attendance at the Pelzer and Belton mills, though his impression of the spinning looms at Pelzer was that there

were almost as many children there as in the other mills in proportion to the adults. Among them he found a boy "going on ten" who could neither read nor write. Mr. Seddon also brought out that sometimes other mills, under the same management, do not show such good conditions as those which investigators are invited to inspect. A striking example of this is the Ninety-Six Cotton Mill at Greenwood under the same management as the Pelzer and Belton mills. Of seventy-five hands in the spinning room fifty were children, and of ten interviewed, six

SOUTH CAROLINA CHILD LABOR LAW.

AGE LIMIT FOR EMPLOYMENT IN FACTORIES, 12 YEARS.

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

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

AGE LIMIT FOR NIGHT WORK, 12 YEARS.

EXCEPTION: EXEMPTED CHILDREN UNDER 12, AS ABOVE. MAY WORK UNTIL 9 P. M. TO MAKE UP LOST TIME.

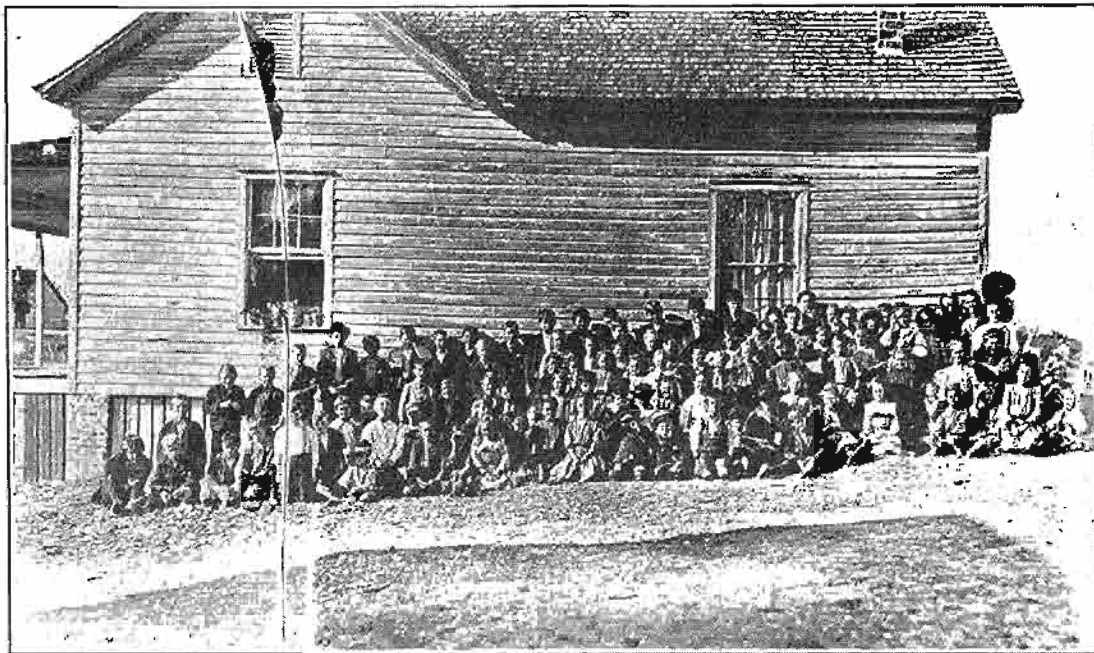
HOURS OF LABOR FOR ALL OPERATIVES IN TEXTILE MILLS, 60 A WEEK. NO FACTORY INSPECTION.

EMPLOYERS MUST "KNOWINGLY" VIOLATE THE LAW TO BE CONVICTED.



LANCASTER, S. C.

Spinner. A type of many in the mill. If they are children of widows or of disabled fathers, they may legally work until nine p. m., while other children must legally quit at eight p. m., but neither closing hour is enforced or regarded in the absence of all inspection.



WHERE MILL CHILDREN GO TO SCHOOL AT LANCASTER, S. C.

Enrollment 163, attendance usually about 100. There are more than 1,000 operatives in the mill. The mill is geographically part of Lancaster, but on account of the taxes has been kept just out of the corporate limits.

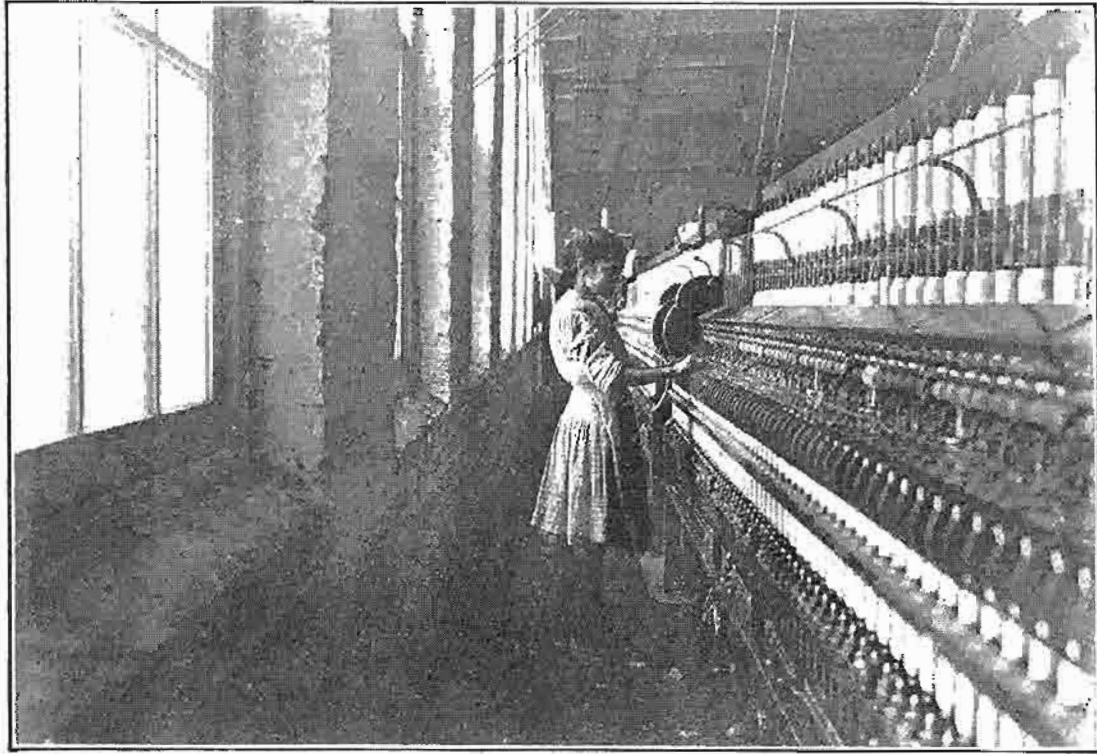


LANCASTER, S. C.

Has worked six months, is forty-eight inches tall. One of many small children at work in Lancaster Cotton Mills. Children may legally work at any age in June, July and August if they have attended school four months that year and can read and write.

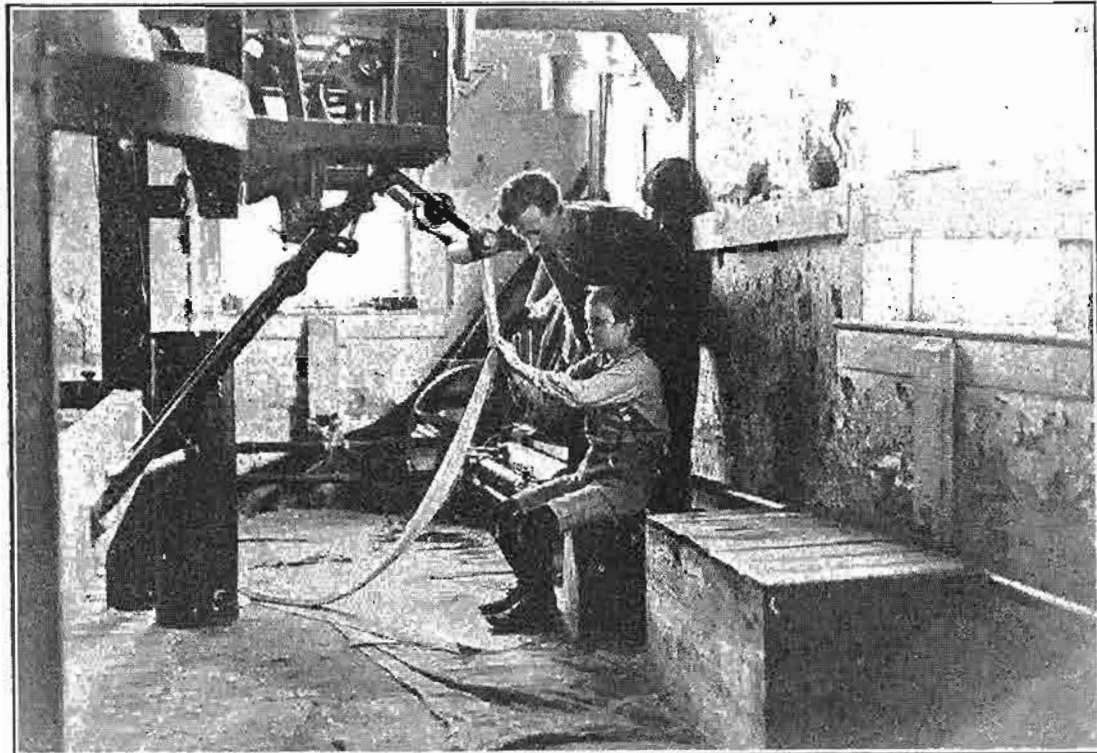


WHERE OTHER CHILDREN GO TO SCHOOL AT LANCASTER, S. C.
This is a public school.



COTTON MILL, WHITNEL, N. C.

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



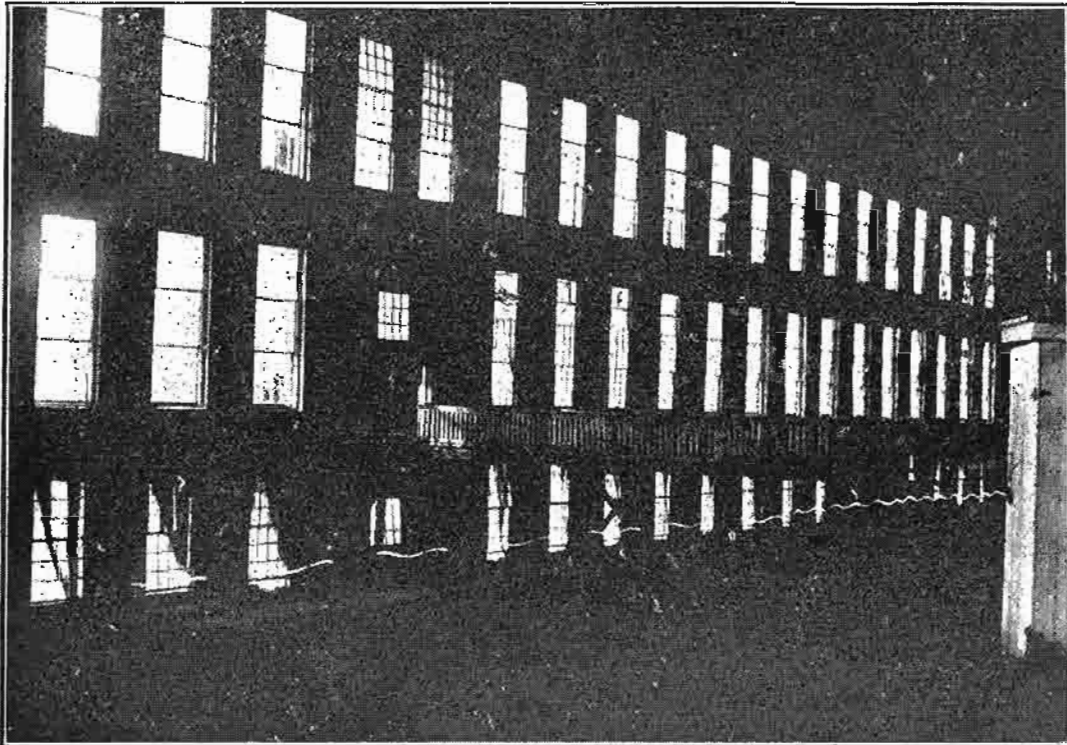
NEWTON COTTON MILL, NEWTON, N. C.

Boy has worked two years at warping mill. It is usually stated that children work only in spinning rooms. Among 150 employes twenty appeared to be twelve years of age or less.



COTTON MILL, WHITNEL, N. C.

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



HIGH SHOALS.

Mill running at eight p. m. Mr. Hine was forbidden to photograph children. This mill and one at Atherton, where also photographing was forbidden, are under the management of D. A. Tompkins, treasurer of the National Child Labor Commission of the National Civic Federation.



CATAWBA COTTON MILL, NEWTON, N. C.
Of forty employes ten were not larger than these. The girl is spinning, the boy a doffer.



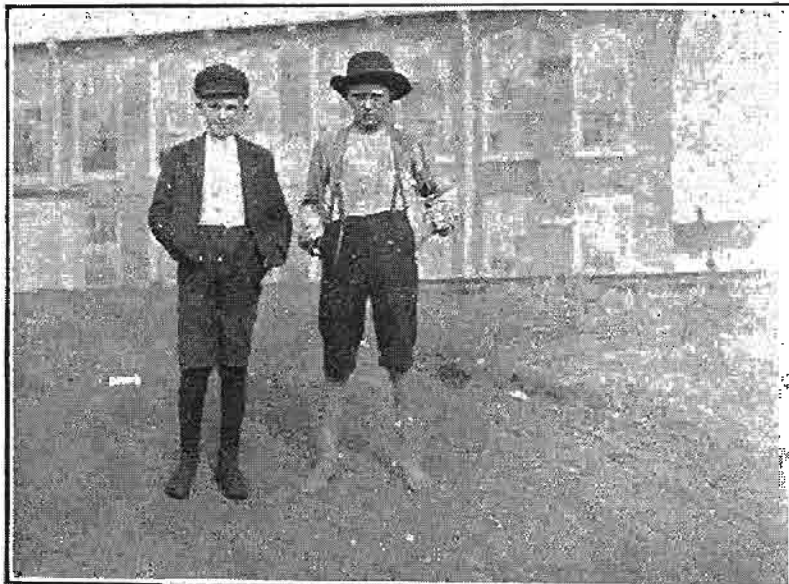
DANIEL MANUFACTURING COMPANY, LINCOLNTON, N. C.
Six years old. Stays all day in the mill where his mother and sister work. Is beginning to "help" a little and will probably soon be regularly at work, though his name may not appear on the payroll.



MELVILLE MANUFACTURING COMPANY, CHERRYVILLE, N. C.
Doffer, says he has worked two years. One of the many below the legal age.



NEW YEAR'S DAY AT ATHERTON MILLS, CHARLOTTE, N. C.
Mr. Hine was refused permission to photograph children in the High Shoals Mill. These doffer boys work at another mill of which D. A. Tompkins is also president.



WYLIE MILL, CHESTER,
S. C.

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



MAPLE MILLS, DILLON,
S. C.

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

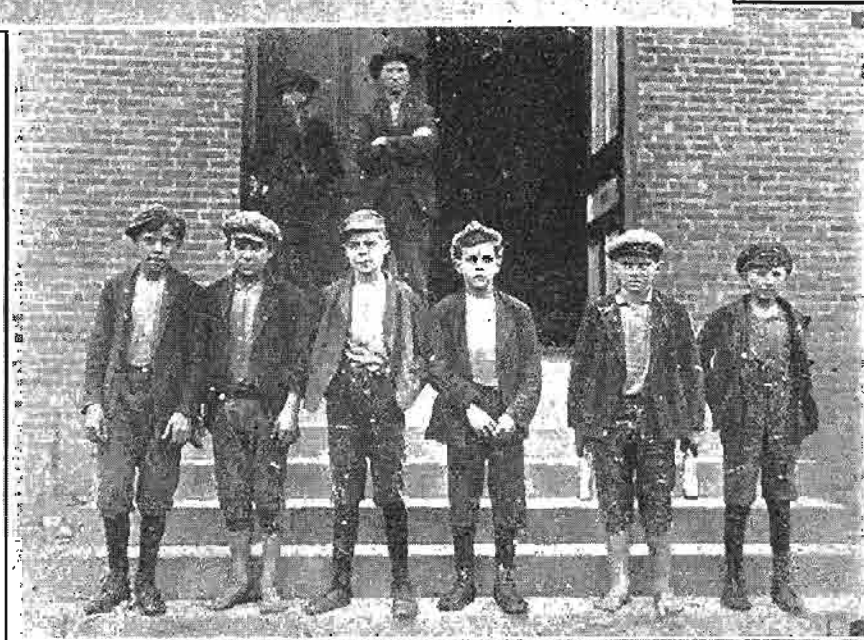


L. H. HINE



**KESLER MANUFACTURING CO.
SALISBURY, N. C.**

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

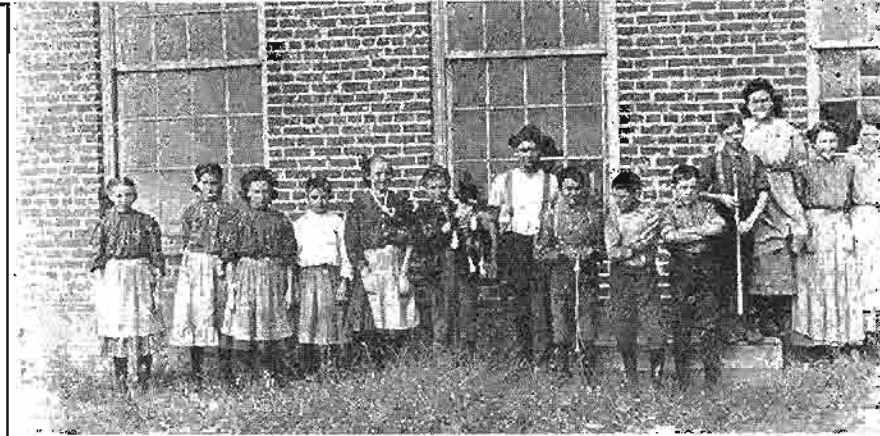


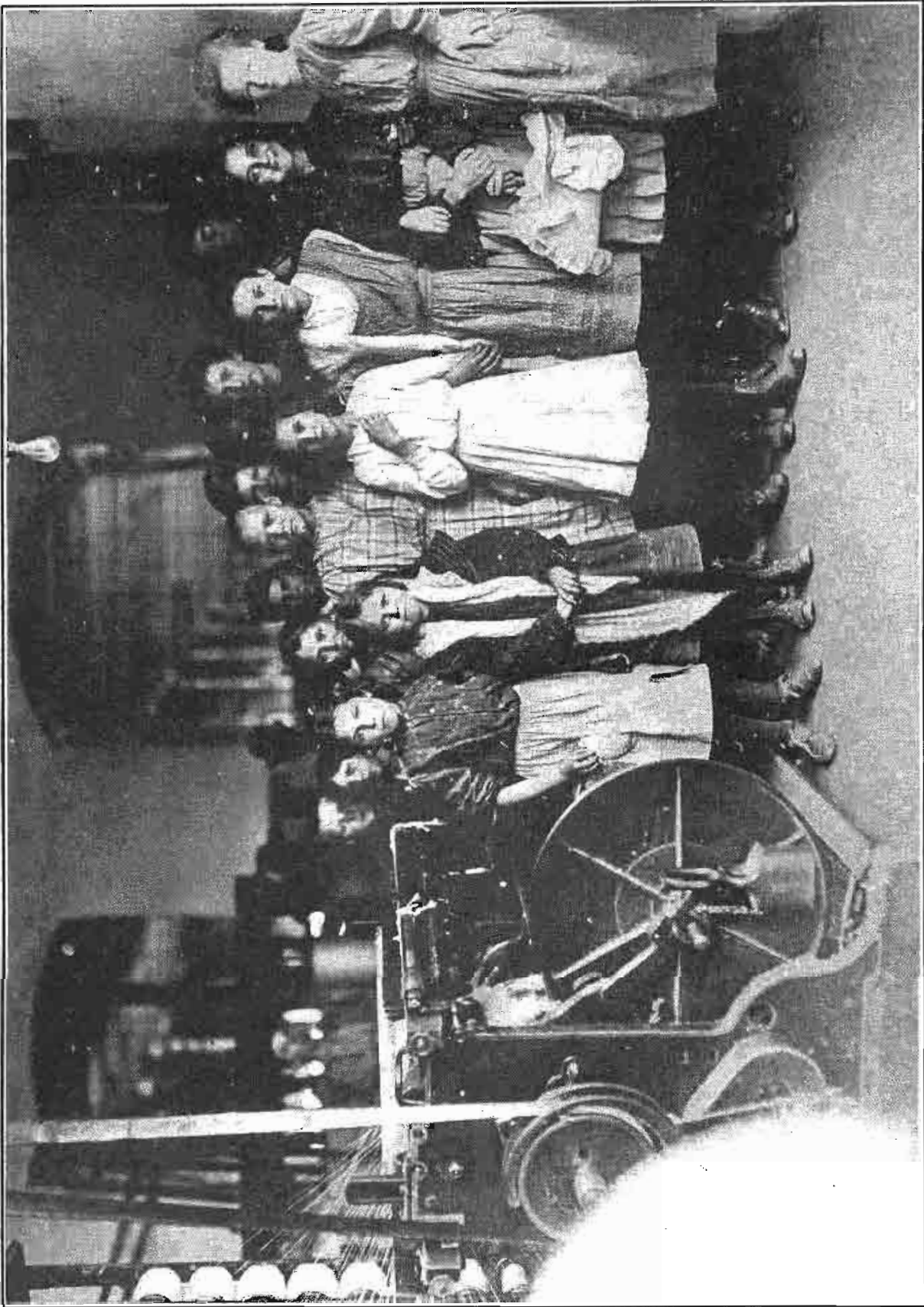
**LORAY MILL,
GASTONIA, N.C.**

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

**WAMPUM MANUFACTURING CO.
LINCOLNTON, N. C.**

Photograph taken at noon hour. Investigator not allowed to take pictures inside the mill.





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



1. DILLON MILL, DILLON, S. C.—Tallest girl has helped six months in mill; Mumie, holding baby, three years.
 2. MAPLE MILL, DILLON, S. C.—Larger sister one year in the mill; the mother said the little sister "helps," but a bystander said "She works regularly." 3. IVEY MILL, HICKORY, N. C.—Doffers and sweepers. The president of this mill says: "Not over ten per cent of the mills observe it" (the child labor law). 4. SPRINGSTEIN MILLS, CHESTER, S. C. Saturday ballgame. Boy with ball was twelve years old, fifty-two inches tall, a weaver running six looms. Two years in mill. 5. EUREKA COTTON MILL, CHESTER, S. C. —Tallest, ten years in the mill; second tallest, three years; shortest, ten years old fifty-two inches tall, two years in the mill, spinning, earns sixty cents a day.



DICKSON MILL, LAURINBURG, N. C.

Children of night superintendent. Bessie runs four sides, has worked two years at night. Frank (smallest) doffer, has worked two years at night. George (largest) doffer, has worked three years at night. Was proud that he could write his name. Night work of all these children is illegal.

were illiterate, two were ten years of age and three were nine. Mr. Seddon found in the Granby Mills at Columbia, under the same management as the Victor, that a "half-time" system had been adopted and in the factory school, for the first four grades only, about half the children worked half the day in the factory. Mr. Seddon and Mr. Ulm both visited the Franklin Mill hard by the Victor Mill, but under a different management. Here no welfare work was done; there is not even a school building, and six children out of a population of 600 attend the public school at Greers. None of the children Mr. Seddon examined was able to read or write. Mr. Ulm counted not less than eight little girls in the spinning room who were certainly below twelve years of age. There were at least ten boys equally youthful. He found a widowed mother who had come from the mountains many years ago, all of whose adult children but one had married and had ceased to contribute to her support. Three of her

children were at work in the mill, the youngest of whom, twelve years of age, had been at work two years and had never been to school. She regretted that she had left the farm, saying that otherwise she would have been able to give her smaller children some education, besides rearing them in a better environment. As to the problem of the poor widow, Mr. Ulm says: "In no case investigated on my trip or that I know of personally, is mill work for small children absolutely necessary to keep the wolf from the widow's door. On the contrary, with laws to prevent the working of the children, they and their mothers would fare better in ninety per cent of the cases."

The most encouraging thing about Mr. Ulm's report is the unanimous opinion of the outside public as to the evils of child labor, while the depressing part is the story of the beginning of moral decadence in the mill villages, of illegitimate children, deserted wives and resulting cases of bigamy.

The testimony of these witnesses of standing and character, corroborated by the photographic fidelity of the camera, is unassailable. The names of the children are all mentioned in the reports. The Legislatures of North and South Carolina are now in session. What are the legislators going to do about it? The fate of thousands of children is in their hands. They can, if they will, abolish child labor in these two states, compel the children to attend school, raise their standard of legislation to that of the rest of the civilized world, and enforce their

laws by providing for adequate factory inspection. There can be no doubt that the present laws, shamefully low in their requirements, are violated openly, and when violation of law means destruction of childhood, law should be enforced regardless of the feelings of very respectable gentlemen who create a demand for child labor in mills, which ignorant and indifferent parents supply. The children are helpless, and their appeal for protection must be addressed to those who make and execute the laws.



SCOTLAND MILLS, LAURINBURG, N. C.

Tallest lad about fourteen years old, has worked eight years in mill, six years at night.
The next in height has worked there three years.

THE FOREIGNER AND HIS SAVINGS

PETER ROBERTS

INDUSTRIAL DEPARTMENT, INTERNATIONAL YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

The foreign born come to this country because of better economic conditions obtaining here. They know that in America unskilled labor is paid from three to four times as much as in their native land; they know that industrial

opportunities are far more numerous here than in older countries; and they know that once they make money in the United States, if they can keep it, they are free to use it as they think fit.

The immigrant, coming with this prime