

ed together, are all attacked by the measures now before the general assembly. We have been assured by northern men, not mill owners, and before any of these bills were introduced, that, as things stand now, they are all that prevent equalization of the conditions of the two sections. Are we ready to abandon them? Are we prepared to give up the advantages which offer us our hope of controlling the manufacture of our great staple and forcing hither the capital devoted to it?

Our hours of labor are longer than in the east. This is permitted and justified by our climate. Our scale of wages is lower. This is warranted by the greater cheapness of living here, but as the mills multiply and the competition for help increases the difference will become less and less. Our mill hands are nearly all drawn from the farms. They make more money in the mills, else they would not go to them and stay in them. The growing scarcity of help, caused by the rapid expansion of this industry, is by natural process increasing the rate of wages and ensuring for the operatives better accommodations and more considerate treatment. It is poor policy to check that demand by checking the building of mills. There is no oppression anywhere that we have heard of; no scandal to demand legislative repression. Why single out this industry, upon which so much of the future of the State depends, for governmental interference?

Several years ago this question of shorter hours came up in the legislature and was fully discussed. The effort was to limit work to 10 hours. After full discussion a compromise was agreed upon, fixing 11 hours as the maximum. It is this compromise, made by a legislature far more radical than the present one, that two of these bills seek to upset. And two others propose to select this industry from among all other private industries of the State to be controlled in its management by the State government. We have a railroad commission because railroads are semi-public institutions to which the State has granted exceptional powers and privileges; but cotton mills are private enterprises, and no greater reason exists for regulating them by commission than exists for regulating the newspaper offices, machine shops, cotton ginneries and saw mills of the State. In many an industry the employes work harder and longer and have their health and comfort far less considered than do those in the cotton factories.

We speak not for the owners of cotton mill stock but for the whole people, not for the dividends of the present but for the industrial prosperity of the future when we urge the general assembly to negative emphatically these propositions. If the vote be close the probability of future interference will be inferred, and the capital within and without the State which has been flowing so freely to mill investments will be alarmed and checked. South Carolina is not in a position to dictate in this matter. There are other southern States where no such laws are threatened and which have in coal and water power advantages rivaling ours. Restrictive legislation here will divert money to the mills of North Carolina, Georgia and Alabama, our supremacy in southern cotton manufacturing will pass away and the east will chuckle at a folly by which a most dangerous competitor puts itself out of power of competition.

Harmful Factory Legislation.

The Kibler bill, to create a commissioner of labor and give him dictatorial powers as to cotton mills, was reinforced yesterday by another labor commissioner bill, and two bills to reduce the hours of labor in cotton mills.

We think The State has as earnest a sympathy with labor as any paper in this country. Every man connected with it is a laboring man in the most radical sense of the term. No paper recognizes more fully than The State the value not only to the laborer but to the community, of good wages; none has less tolerance of the idea of an industrial serfdom by which the destitution of the many augments the wealth of the few. But it is impelled by a sense of its duty to the people of South Carolina to warn the legislature most earnestly against such measures as are now proposed to it in the name of labor. It will not really help the factory operatives and it will retard the progress and development of the State.

What are the main advantages that the south possesses over the north in the manufacture of cotton? 1. Proximity of the cotton, effecting a saving of freight charges. 2. A milder climate, in which watercourses are never obstructed by ice. 3. Cheaper and more abundant water powers. 4. More contented and reliable labor, unaddicted to strikes. 5. Longer hours of labor. 6. Slightly lower rates of wages. 7. Comparative freedom from disturbing legislation. It is a fact, which we shall demonstrate, that the advantages our people commonly set most store on are being steadily minimized by progress, leaving as our chief dependence those which legislation now seeks to take away.

The cost of transportation of the raw material is a vital item in the manufacture of coarse and cheap goods, and it is this tax upon New-England industry which is transferring the coarse goods business from the east to the south. But this transfer is almost completed, and the south already controls the market for such goods. In fact the making of them is almost overdone, even in this section of cheapest production. We have practically reached the limit, and henceforth our struggle will be for supremacy in finer weaves. Both of the newer Columbia mills are making goods finer than the average of the north. The finer the goods the smaller the influence of freight charges, and hence the less the advantage of proximity to the cotton fields. When we come to competing with the east in the more delicate fabrics the difference in the cost of cotton will hardly be appreciable. And we shall have to compete in these or abandon the most profitable weaves to the east, limiting the scope of our industry.

The second and third advantages are being steadily minimized by the increasing efficiency and economy of steam power. New engines are almost annually doing more work with less consumption of coal than their seniors, and coal itself is cheapening to the southern consumer. Steam mills compete all over the State with water mills, and in the not distant future may have an actual and marked advantage over them if the new Brambel engine, of which an account was printed in The State yesterday, shall do what a payment of \$1,600,000 attests it will do. Here are three advantages reduced by progress.

The north has seen that our labor was more contented and less troublesome than the labor of that section, and so the spinners of the east have recently sent an agent through the south to organize our mill hands, impress them with the idea that they are being imposed upon by their employers, and prepare them to strike for higher wages and shorter hours, thus doing away with an advantage which we now possess. If strikes and lockouts can be inaugurated in the south, southern competition with the east will be hampered. Our operatives are to pull chestnuts out of the fire for their rivals; to duplicate New-England conditions here, so that the New-England mills may maintain themselves against us. Should this plan succeed, a fourth advantage will be gone from the south. And three remaining advantages, group-