

LOOKING AFTER THE CHILDREN

UNCLE SAM WILL DO SO THROUGH BIG NEW BUREAU.

Law Provides for Wiping Out Scourges of Illiteracy, Child Slavery, Immoral Environment, Unhealthful Housing and Ignorant Home Life



Charles Nagel, Secretary of Commerce and Labor, Under Whose Direction the Bureau Will Work.

ON APRIL 9 President Taft signed a law that means more to the future of the American race than any legislation of recent years.

A children's bureau, charged with the responsibility of wiping out the scourges of illiteracy, child slavery, immoral environment, unhealthful housing, and ignorant home life, has at last been established in the United States, after years of labor on the part of National leaders in social study and child welfare.

It is not a police body. It cannot go into the home and compel the nurture of children along lines approved by government officials; it will not accomplish its great ends by orders or commands.

But around its activities is expected to grow up a better understanding of child life; a new responsibility for those children who by poverty, orphanage or disease are forced upon the world at an early age, and who today constitute the great menace to the future of the American race—a weakened citizenship.

The children's bureau is to be part of the Department of Commerce and Labor. By the law which creates it, introduced in the Senate by Senator Borah of Idaho, and in the House by Representative Peters of Massachusetts, it is empowered:

To investigate and report on all matters relating to the welfare of children and child life, and especially the questions of infant mortality, the birth rate, orphanage, juvenile courts, desertion, dangerous occupations, accidents and diseases of children, employment and legislation affecting children in the several states and territories.

With all of the vast development of governmental agencies in the last two decades, there has been practically nothing done for the scientific improvement of conditions surrounding childhood, and for the proper directing of the activities of the future citizens of the Nation. That work which has been done has either been the voluntary activity of individual persons and societies, or the action of states following paths along which they have few guideposts of experience.

The government is spending over \$2,000,000 annually for the great bureau of plant and animal industry in the Agricultural Department. It is appropriating large sums for the study of plant diseases and for the improvement of plant breeds. But practically all that has been done toward a systematic study of the conditions surrounding children and women wage earners has been through the occasional investigations ordered by Congress.

Women Launched Good Work.

To two whole-souled women, devoting their hearts to the problem of the child, belongs much of the credit for the establishment of the new children's bureau. These women are Miss Lillian D. Wald, of New York, founder and head of the Henry Street Nurse's settlement, and originator of the system of "visiting nurses" in American cities; and Mrs. Florence Kelley, of New York, secretary of the National Consumers' League.

"It is most significant that some years ago, when she came to Washington to speak for this measure," said Miss Wald at a Congressional hearing on the children's bureau bill, "the bill would have appeared in the South, and quite rapidly had alarmed the people who were responsible for the elimination of such dangers.

"Yet nothing that could have happened to the children of the country, no excessive infant mortality, no evidence of illegitimacy, illiteracy, delinquency—nothing that could have happened to the children would have called forth any inquiry from the Government to find out what was at the bottom of it.

"There is not a farmer in the whole United States but has the power and privilege of sending to Washington if he is anxious about his crops or his hogs or his cattle. There is nothing that affects the grossly material interests of the country that the Government does not concern itself about.

"And yet, so far as the children are concerned, every community is dependent upon the accident of having some interested citizen who will be public spirited and go to the trouble to write all over the country to discover what has been developed.

Miss Wald and Mrs. Kelly, as members of the National child labor committee, began the agitation for a children's bureau many years ago. Around their efforts grew up the great movement that has taken in the full organization of the child labor committee and many great voluntary organizations, which has run through three Congresses, and which has finally resulted in the enactment of the desired law.

The National child labor committee has maintained offices in Washington for four years, under the charge of Dr. A. J. McKelway, its secretary for South-



A Shrimp Picker at 11.

ern states. In the campaign of education and argument that has been going on in behalf of the children's bureau, it happens to own a little farm down in Maine," said Mrs. Kelly in testifying for the bill in Congress, "and last Summer while I was there I got information out of the newspaper of two circulars published by the Federal Government. I have a little clam flat planted on my farm, of not much value because the clams have all died out. The farm was once covered with pines, but they have all been cut off.

Help Children as Well as Clams.

"The newspapers announced the issuance of two circulars by the Federal Government, one dealing with the rearing of defunct clam flats and the other calling attention to the fact that the seed of white pine trees if gathered that Summer would be worth \$2 a pound to the person who gathered them to be sold to people like myself who wanted to re-plant their abandoned farms.

"Now, it may be paternalism to have a bureau to give information about infant mortality and its relation to foul milk, but why should the Federal Government be a little father to my clam flat and to my pine forest, if it is not suitable for it to look after the children?"

"The entire Nation knows in a general way about child labor, both in the North and South. The textile strikes in New England have served recently to bring striking children before the public eye, with their stories of scanty wages and poor living.

"The cotton mills of the South have reposed upon the bodies of children for years, not only weakening them physically, but preventing their normal mental growth and education. The oyster and shrimp canneries of the coast, the glass factories of the Middle and Eastern States, the textile mills of New England, and scores of industries have laid their toll upon the childhood of the Nation.

"The firm hand of the state has been gradually applied to many of these occupations. There is but one state, Nevada, that has not child labor laws of some kind; but in many of them children of 12 or 14 are still permitted to work long hours; and in Georgia the orphan child of dependent parents can even go to work at 10 years of age. Children in the truck garden lands of Maryland and Delaware, who work through the long Summer in the fields, berry patches and canneries, are packed up by their parents in the Fall and taken to the Gulf coast, to work in the shrimp-picking and oyster-shucking establishments that line the coast. Education, recreation or normal childhood development has no part in their life.

Investigators for the National child labor committee have actually found children of 3 and 5 years helping in the oyster shucking establishments.

By actual count," says L. W. Hine, an agent of the National child labor committee, who made a trip through the canning factories from Florida to Louisiana in 1911, "I found 135 boys and girls whom I judged to be from 3 to 11 years of age."

Sincere efforts are being made in most of the states to better conditions of children; but the deplorable fact remains that there is no scientific basis upon which to work that betterment; no standard by which to judge whether any form of employment is for the best.

Would you know what the children's bureau proposes to find out? Read this array of problems prepared by Mrs. Kelly:

"How many blind children are there?



A Girl Baby of the Streets.



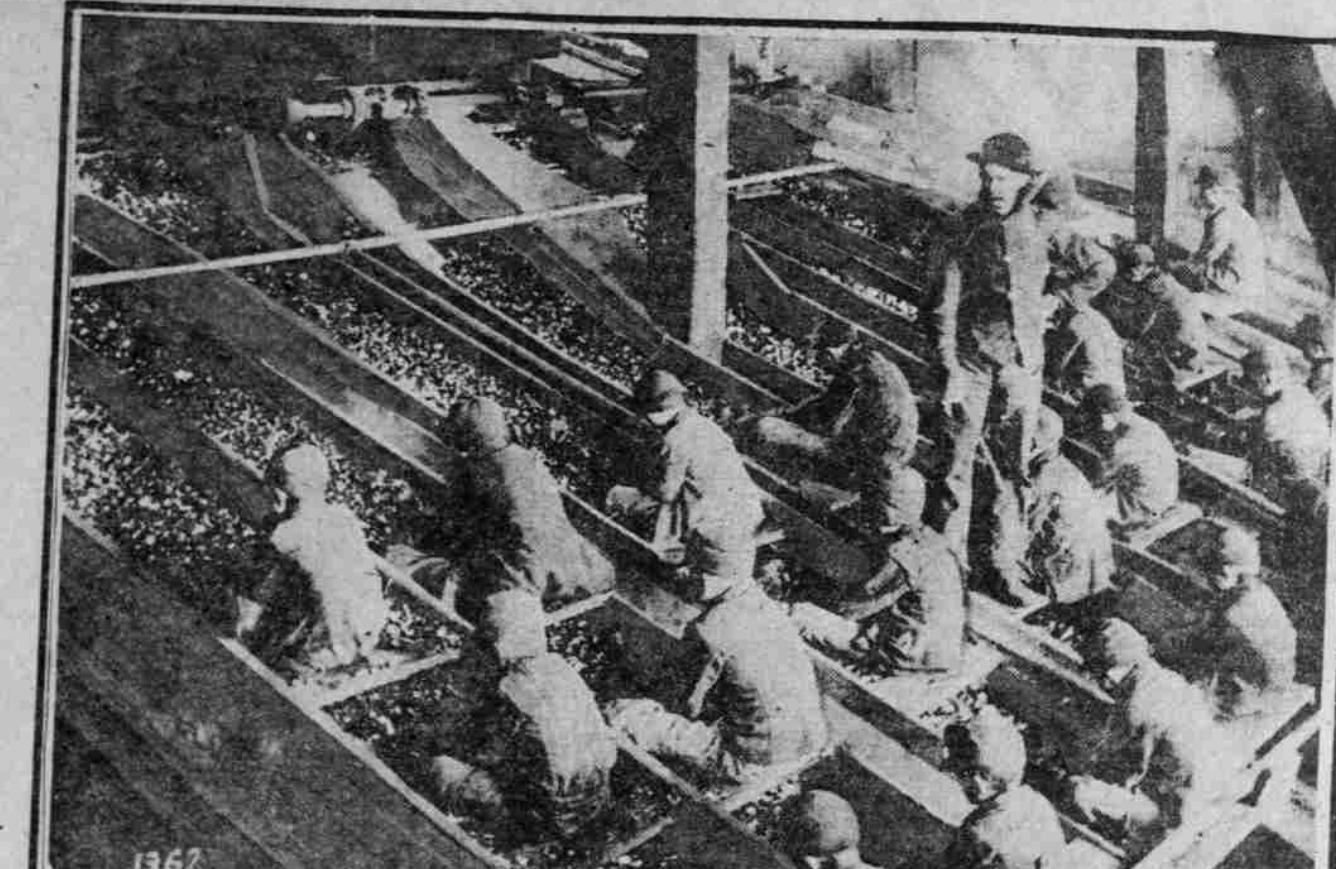
The Cotton Mill is a Poor School for These Children.



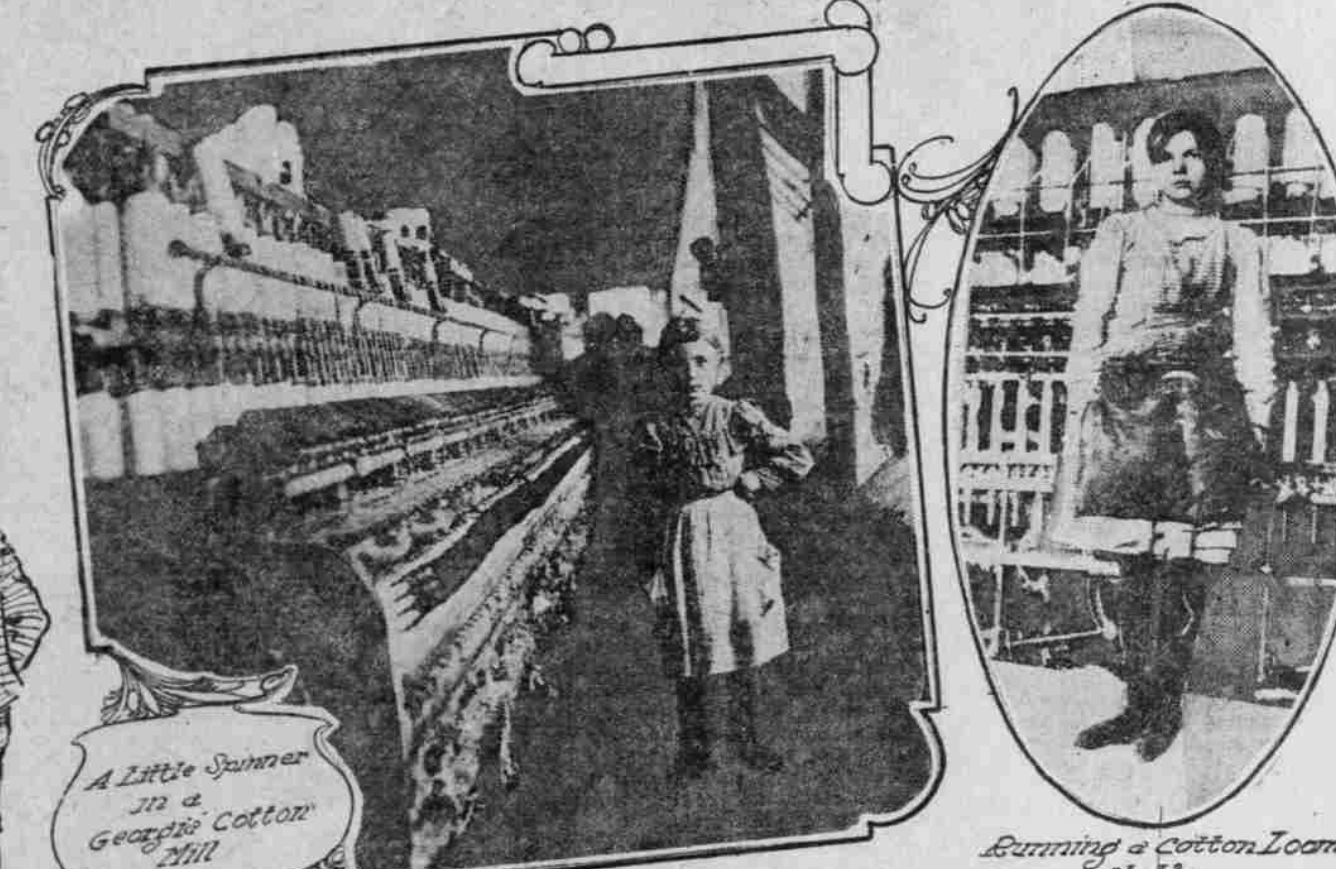
Oyster Shuckers 8 and 10 Years Old.



Senator Baruch, New York, Father of New Children's Bureau.



What Chance Have These Victims of the Coal Breaker?



A Little Spinner in a Georgia Cotton Mill.

Running a Cotton Loom at 12.

Why are they blind? How can blindness be prevented? How are they being educated? But of the great underlying causes that make children mentally, morally or physically weak; of the relation of living to infant mortality; of the association between the conditions of expectant mothers and the health of their children; and of the real facts surrounding child labor, with its effect upon the minds and bodies of the rising generations, the country knows but little of scientific value.

Certain industries have come to be recognized as destructive of the entire fabric of American citizenship, at least as far as they touch the children. The night messenger boy who runs errands and messages in a big city is subjected to demoralizing influences which almost never fail to destroy his moral sense and leave him a physical wreck and an industrial incompetent.

How many illegitimate children are there? What is being done for their care and development? How are the dependent children of weak mind being fitted for life? To what training do they most readily respond? What occupations are most hazardous for children? How many are left or-

phan by avoidable accidents to their parents?

How much illiteracy is there? Where is it? What are the causes and how may it be prevented?

What laws are needed to protect children against crime? Against accidents? Against moral delinquency?

How many children are employed in the different industries?

What is the ultimate effect of an inquiry upon the children engaged in it?

Inquiry to Be Thorough.

This is but a beginning. The census shows that infant mortality is frightfully high in certain towns and low in others. The children's bureau can go into these towns, study the reasons for high death rate, and solve problems that are now costing thousands of baby lives each year.

"The milk supplies of cities; the sanitary housing of the working classes; the employment of poor mothers too close to the time of child birth; the care of illegitimate children; the occupations of women that work greatest harm to the physical health of their children subsequently born—all these things come within the range of investigations that the children's bureau will direct, in the effort to protect the children whose home life is unfavorable, or who have not adequate protection or guiding influence.

"Is information about children of less importance to the people of this country, and raised her eyes to my country, to let her head fall to her hand in a half-collapse of weariness when she saw that it was no one connected with her work and that there was no harm in letting the mask drop for a space.

"Vacation!" she murmured dreamily. "I have heard that there are such things, but I don't expect ever to know what they are really like. Why, I can't, don't you see? I'm a very busy person. There is so much to do and so little time to do it in."

"Almost the identical sentiments one Cecil Rhodes expressed a short time before his decease," I ventured. "Better take warning and run on the low speed for a while."

"Can't be done," she put out decisively. "Just see what I have outlined for the next three months." The third book disappeared as quickly as it had come, and I finally set "right side up with care" in the condition that it should be, and that Miss Tennant had a half dozen appointments in that very room immediately on her return to Calcutta.

"And have I ever told you," she said in breathless conclusion, "that I'm doing at this without begging, borrowing or stealing from anyone? No? Well, I am. And what's more—"

"Without even stealing?" I interrupted in affected surprise. "The corners of her mouth drew down in another of her wry smiles. "Without even stealing," she asserted. "The young woman actually has a sense of humor, and a reformer with a sense of humor is such a rara avis!"

PUTTING A STOP TO CHILD MARRIAGE

(Continued from Page 3.)

Hon. Nadohva Rao, C. I. E., retired Prime Minister of Mysore and Travancore, recently, "but this little woman says to me 'do this' and I go and do it; and she says 'do that' and I go and do that also. It seems very strange, for we of the East are not in the habit of thus being ordered about by a woman; and yet, you know," he added naively, "I rather like it. And, what is more, than we do what needs to be done."

Said another prominent Hindu educator and reformer: "The league was a clock without a mainspring, a motor without gasoline, before the advent of Miss Tennant. She is our mainspring, our gasoline, our energy, and just look at the way we are running!"

But some are really concerned for the health of this dauntless young reformer; she is going under a pressure too heavy to maintain, and, besides, she is trying to "hurry the East."

And what was it Kipling said about the ill-advised individual who essayed that Herculean task?

And the end of it all? Was a tombstone tall? Will the name of the late deceased? And the Epitaph clear? "The man who tried to hurry the East."

During the last four months of 1911 Miss Tennant traveled through nearly every province and native state in India, speaking almost daily, the net result of the trip being the founding of thirty new branches of the League for men and half that number for women, to say nothing of the incalculable value of the incident educational campaign. Now her sitting-room in Calcutta between the hours of 9 in the morning and 10 at night is rarely empty of a waiting visitor, while every few minutes her interviews are interrupted by messengers, ranging from the telegraph boy or the "devil" from some native printing establishment to the red-coated, gold-braided "chuprassee" of a visiting Maharajah.

"Why don't you take a vacation?" I

asked her a couple of days ago, as she "dismissed" the president of a university and raised her eyes to my country, to let her head fall to her hand in a half-collapse of weariness when she saw that it was no one connected with her work and that there was no harm in letting the mask drop for a space.

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