

"The Slaughter of the Innocents"

Next to Massachusetts, South Carolina manufactures more cotton cloth than any other state in the union. The cotton mills of South Carolina are mostly owned and operated by New England capital.

In many instances the machinery of the cotton mills has been moved entire from Massachusetts to South Carolina. The move was made for the ostensible purpose of being near the raw product; but the actual reason is that in South Carolina there is no law regulating child labor. Heartless cupidry has joined hands with brutal ignorance, and the result is child labor of so terrible a type that African slavery was a paradise compared with it.

Many of the black slaves lived to a good old age, and they got a hearty enjoyment from life.

The infant factory slaves of South Carolina can never develop into men and women. There are no mortality statistics; the mill owners baffle all attempts of the outside public to get at the facts, but my opinion is that in many mills death sets the little prisoner free inside of four years. Beyond that he can not hope to live, and this opinion is derived from careful observation and interviews with several skilled and experienced physicians who practice in the vicinity of the mills.

Boys and girls from the age of six years and upwards are employed. They usually work from six o'clock in the morning until seven at night. For four months of the year they go to work before daylight and they work until after dark.

At noon I saw them squat on the floor and devour their food, which consisted mostly of cornbread and bacon. These weakened pigmies munched in silence, and then toppled over in sleep on the floor in all the abandon of babyhood. Very few wore shoes and stockings; dozens of little girls of, say, seven years of age wore only one garment, a lincey-woolsey dress. When it came time to go to work the foreman marched through the groups shaking the sleepers, shouting in their ears, lifting them to their feet, and in a few instances kicking the delinquents into wakefulness.

The long afternoon had begun—from a quarter to one until seven o'clock they worked without respite or rest.

These toddlers, I saw, for the most part did but one thing—they watched the flying spindles on a frame 20 feet long, and tied the broken threads. They could not sit at their tasks; back and forward they paced, watching with inanimate, dull look, the machinery drowned every other sound. Back and forth paced the baby totters in their bare feet, and mended the broken threads. Two, three, or four threads would break before they could patrol the 20 feet—the threads were always breaking!

The noise and the constant looking at the flying wheels reduce nervous sensation in a few months to the minimum. The child does not think; he ceases to suffer—memory is as dead as hope. No more does he long for the green fields, the running streams, the freedom of the woods, and the companionship of all the wild, free things that run, climb, fly, swim or burrow.

He does his work like an automaton; he is a part of the roaring machinery; memory is seared, physical vitality is at such low ebb that he ceases to suffer. Nature puts a short limit on torture by sending insensibility. If you suffer, thank God!—it is a sure sign you are alive.

At a certain night school, where several good women were putting forth efforts to mitigate the condition of these baby slaves, one of the teachers told me that they did not try to teach the children to read—they simply put forth an effort to arouse the spirit through pictures and telling stories. In this school I saw the sad spectacle of half the class, of a dozen or more, sunk into sleep that more resembled a stupor. The teacher was a fine, competent woman, but worn-out nature was too much for her—to teach, you must make your appeal to life.

The parents of the children sent them there so they could be taught to read, but I was told by one who knew that no child of, say, seven or eight years of age who had worked in the mill a year could ever learn to read. He is defective from that time on. A year in the mills and he loses the capacity to play; and the child that can not play can not learn.

We learn in moments of joy; play is education; pleasurable animation is necessary to growth; and when you have robbed the child of its play, you have robbed it of its life.

The reason that thought flags and stupor takes possession of the child who works at one task for 11 hours a day, is through the fact that he does not express himself. We grow through expression, and expression, which is exercise, is necessary to life. The child in the mill never talks to any one—even if the rules did not forbid it, the roar of the machinery would make it impossible. All orders are carried out in pantomime, emphasized by pokes, punches, pinches, shakes and kicks. This we slave loses all relationship with his fellows and the world about him.

I thought to lift one of the little totters to ascertain his weight. Straightway through his 35 pounds of skin and bones there ran a tremor of fear, and he struggled forward to tie a broken thread. I attracted his attention by a touch, and offered him a silver dime. He looked at me dumbly, from a face that might have belonged

to a man of 60, so furrowed, tightly drawn, and full of pain it was. He did not reach for the money—he did not know what it was. I tried to stroke his head and caress his cheek. My smile of friendship meant nothing to him—he shrank from my touch as though he expected punishment. A caress was unknown to this child, sympathy had never been his portion, and the love of a mother, who only a short time before held him in her arms, had all been forgotten in the whirl of wheels and the awful silence of a din that knows no respite.

There were dozens of just such children in this particular mill. A physician who was with me said that they would all be dead probably in two years, and their places filled with others—there were plenty more. Pneumonia carries off most of them. Their systems are ripe for disease, and when it comes there is no rebound—no response. Medicine simply does not act—nature is whipped, benten, discouraged, and the child sinks into a stupor and dies.

There are now only five states, I believe, that have no law restricting the employment of children. Child labor exists in Georgia and Alabama to an extent nearly as grievous as it does in South Carolina, but in each of these states there are bands of brave men and excellent women who are waging war to stop the slaughter of the innocents; and these men and women have so forced the issue that the mill owners are giving way before them and offering compromise. But South Carolina lags behind and the brave workers for liberty there seem a hopeless minority.

For these things let Massachusetts answer.

South Carolina weaves cotton that Massachusetts may wear silk.

South Carolina can not abolish child labor because the mill owners, who live in New England, oppose it. They have invested their millions in South Carolina, with the tacit understanding with legislature and governor that there shall be no state inspection of mills nor interference in any way with their management of employees. Each succeeding election the candidates for the legislature secretly make promises that they will not pass a law forbidding child labor. They can not hope for election otherwise—the capitalists combine with the "crackers," and any man who favors the restriction of child labor is marked.

The cracker, the capitalist, and the preacher live on child labor, and the person who lifts his voice in behalf of the children is denounced as a sickly sentimentalist endeavoring to discourage the best interests of the state. The cracker does not reason quite thus far—with him it is a question of "rights, sah," and he is the head of his family and you must not meddle—his honor is at stake.

So at every election he jealously guards his rights—he has nothing else to do—he has lost everything else but "honor." If women could vote in South Carolina they would wipe child labor out with a sweep; but, alas! a woman in South Carolina does not own even her own body. South Carolina is the only state in the union that has no divorce law. In South Carolina the gracious, gentle woman married to a rogue has him for life and he has her. The state objects to their getting apart. The fetters forged in South Carolina never break (in South Carolina), and the key is lost.

I say these things with no prejudice against the people of South Carolina as a whole, for some of the bravest, gentlest, sanest, most loyal, and most heartiest friends I have in the world live there. I make the mention merely as a matter of fact to show that the majority of the people in South Carolina have a long way to travel and are good raw stock for missionary work.

I learned from a reliable source that a cotton mill having a pay roll of \$6,000 a week in New England can be run in the south for \$4,000 a week. This means a saving of just \$100,000 a year, and the mill having a capital of \$1,000,000 thus gets a clear gain of 10 per cent per annum.

One mill at Columbia, S. C., has a capital of \$2,000,000. In half a dozen other cities there are mills with a capital of a million or more. These mills all have "company department stores," where the employees trade. A certain credit is given, and the employee who has a dollar coming to him in cold cash is very, very rare. The cashier of one mill told me that 19 families out of 20 never see any cash, and probably never will. The account is kept with the head of the house. Against him are charged house rent, insurance, fuel—three things the man never thought of. Next, the orders drawn on the company must be met. Then come groceries, clothing, and gewgaws that the young women are tempted into buying, providing the account is not too much overdrawn. Sometimes it happens that the account is so much overdrawn by the last of the month that the storekeeper will dole out only corn-meal and bacon—just these two things to prevent starvation and keep the family at work.

The genial cashier who made this explanation to me, did it to reveal the pitiable ignorance of the "poor white"—the cracker can not figure his account—it is all a matter of faith with him. "To manage a cracker you have to keep him in debt to you," explained my friend, "then you can control his family.

The ingenuity displayed in securing the laborers reveals the "instincts of Connecticut," to use the phrase of

The Question of Spring Clothing

There are two questions, really, instead of one, connected with this matter of spring clothing. The man with money to burn need not consider either of them. But the man who has only a few dollars and must make them go as far as possible, asks himself these questions:

How Much Will It Cost? Will the Quality be Right?

We are prepared to answer both questions to your satisfaction if you buy your spring clothing of us. First, compared with the returns you will get the cost will be comparatively small. Second, the quality will be right, because we handle only the right kind of goods. We claim—and want an opportunity to prove—that price and quality considered this is the best clothing store in the city—or the west, for that matter.

Our line of Spring Clothing is now complete, and a better line was never offered in Lincoln. We bought to satisfy all tastes in cut, color and fabric. We bought to satisfy all purses. And when we speak of "clothing" we mean to include everything that man or boy wears—from shoes to hat, from collar to sock.

Lincoln Clothing Co.

N. WEST, COR. 10TH & P. ST.

Ralph Waldo Emerson. There are men called "employing agents," who drive through the country and make the acquaintance of the poor whites—the "white trash." This expression, by the way, was launched by the negroes and then taken up by the whites. No white man will acknowledge himself as "trash," but he applies the epithet to others who are supposed to be still more trashy than himself.

No matter how poor these whites are, they are always well stuffed with pride; they are as proud as the rich, and they would conduct themselves just like the F. F. V.'s if they had the money. They are F. F. V.'s slightly run down at the heel.

They apologize for their poverty and lay it all to the war. All consider themselves very much above the negroes—they will not work with the blacks.

The employing agent drops in on this poor white family and there is much friendly conversation, for time is no object to the cracker. Gradually the scheme is unfolded. There is a nice man who owns a mill—he will not employ negroes—they are not sufficiently intelligent. The visitor can get work for all the women and the children of the household with this nice man. There will be no work for the man of the house, but he can get odd jobs in the town. This suits the cracker—he does not want to work. A house will be supplied gratis for them to live in. A photograph of the house is shown; it is a veritable palace compared with the place they now call home. The visitor goes away, promising to call again the next week. He comes back and reports that he has seen his friend, the house is ready, work is waiting, wages in cash will be paid every Saturday night.

Cash! Why, this poor white family never saw any real cash in all their lives! A printed agreement is produced and signed.

If the cracker hasn't quite energy enough to move, the employing agent packs up his scanty effects and advances money for car fare. The family land in the mill town, are quartered in one of the company's cottages, and go to work—the mother and all the children over five. The head of the house stays at home to do the housework, and, being a man, of course does not do it. He goes to the grocery or some other loafing place where there are other men in the same happy condition as himself. Idle men in the south, as elsewhere, do not feel very well—they need a little stimulant, and take it. The cracker discovers he can get whiskey and pay for it with an order on the company.

He is very happy, and, needless to say, is quite opposed to any fanatic who would like to interfere in his family relations. He is not aware of it, but he has sold his wife and children into a five years' slavery. The company threatens and has the right to discharge them all if one quits. Even the mother is not free.

But the cracker knows his rights—

he is the head of his family; the labor of his children is his until the girls are 18 and the boys 21. He knows these things, and he starts them off to their work while it is yet night.

And at the mill the overseers look after them. These overseers are northern men, sent down by the capitalists. In war time the best slave-drivers were northerners—they have the true spirit and get the work done. If necessary they do not hesitate to "improve" their charges.

But the cracker wants to be kind; he wants to accumulate enough money to buy a home in the country—it will take only a few years! The overseers do not wish to be brutal, but they have to report to the superintendents—there must be so much cloth made every day. The superintendent is not a bad man, but he has to make a daily report to the president of the company, and the president has to report to the stockholders.

The stockholders live in Boston, and all they want is their dividends. When they go south they go to Pinehurst, Asheville, or St. Augustine. Details of the mills are not pleasant; they simply leave matters to the good men who operate the mills—it is against their policy to dictate.

Capital is king, not cotton. But capital is blind and deaf to all that is not to its interest; it will not act while child labor means 10 per cent dividends on industrial stocks.

Instead of abolishing child labor, capital gives a lot, near the mill property, to any preacher who will build a church, and another lot for a parsonage, and then agrees to double the amount any denomination will raise for a church edifice.

Within a quarter of a mile from one cotton mill, at Columbia, S. C., I counted seven churches, completed or in process of erection.

And that is the way the mill owners capture the clergy. In talking with various preachers on the question of child labor they all, I found, had arguments to excuse it, blissfully unaware that the entire question had been fought out in the world's assize, and that civilization fifty years ago had placed her stamp of disapproval on the matter. One preacher put it in this way, with a gracious, patronizing smile (I quote his exact words): "Oh, of course, it is pretty bad—but then, dear brother, you know the children are better off in the mill than running the streets!"

It is assumed that there are only two occupations for children, working in the mill and running the streets. And then this man of God confessed to me without shame that many of the men whose whole families worked in the mills subscribed one-tenth of their income to the support of "the gospel," and gave him an order on the mill company for the amount; and this amount was withheld from wages and paid to him regularly by the cashier of the company.

The majority of the clergy of South Carolina have always stood for slavery. The clergy never move faster

than the people, usually lagging a little behind. To get ahead of the pews is to separate from them, so the average clergyman will not champion an unpopular cause. The clergyman who speaks his mind for freedom has to get out of the church. Luther, Savonarola, Emerson, Beecher, McGlynn, Professor Swing, Dr. Thomas, and all that band of preachers who have stood out and voiced the cause of freedom have been regarded by their denominations as renegades. Exile and ostracism have been the lot of freedom's champions; and their ostracism and social disgrace have been the work of the respectable element in the church.

And the reason the church has always sided with slavery is because she has thrived on the profits of slavery.

We have heard much about the danger that follows an alliance between church and state; but what think you of a partnership between grasping greed and religion—the professed religion of the suffering, bleeding Christ, the Christ who had not where to lay his head?

The orthodox Protestant preacher is an institution in the south. You see his well-battered face on every train, at every station—he attends every gathering—nothing can be done without him. He preaches "the blood of Jesus," and nothing else. His gospel is the promise of a perfect paradise hereafter for all who believe as he does, and hell and damnation for all who don't. There has not been a patentable improvement made on his devil in two hundred years.

The south is priest-ridden to an extent that should make Italy and Spain jealous. The preacher is a power. One of them explained to me that most of the heads of the families that worked in the mills were "Christian people." He seemed to think that Jesus said, "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Cotton."

If the child workers of South Carolina could be marshaled by bugle call, headed with file and drum, and marched through Commonwealth avenue, out past that statue of William Lloyd Garrison, erected by the sons of the men who dragged him through the streets at a rope's end, the sight would appall the heart and drive conviction home. Imagine an army of 20,000 pigmy bondsmen, half naked, half starved, yellow, weakened, deformed in body, with drawn faces that show spirits too dead to weep, too hopeless to laugh, too pained to feel! Would not aristocratic Boston look her doors, bar the shutters, and turn in shame from such a sight?

I know the sweat shops of Hester street, New York; I am familiar with the vice, depravity, and degradation of the Whitechapel district; I have visited the Ghetto of Venice; I know the lot of the coal miners of Pennsylvania, and I know somewhat of Siberian atrocities; but for misery, woe, and anything to equal the cotton mill slave-hopeless suffering, I have never seen any of South Carolina—this in my own

Spring Suits \$5.00 Up.

Union Made Goods A SPECIALTY

Good shoes from \$1.50 up. Caps from 25c to 75c. Hats from 75c to \$3.00. Underclothing, Shirts, Collars, Cuffs, Hose—big lines of each and price and quality bound to suit.

Huge Line

...OF...

Work Clothes

Overalls, Jackets, etc., Union Made and of the best material.

We want your trade and try to secure it by deserving it.

This is "The Different Store."

America, the land of the free and the home of the brave!

For the adult who accepts the life of the mills I have not a word to say—it is his own business. My plea is in defense of the innocent; I voice the cry of the child whose sob is drowned in the thunder of whirling wheels.

The iniquity of this new slavery in the new south has grown up out of conditions for which no one man or class of men, it seems, is amenable. The interests of the cracker, the preacher, the overseer, the superintendent, the president, and the stockholders are so involved that they can not see the truth—their feet are ensnared and they sink into the quicksands of hypocrisy, deceiving themselves with specious reasons. They must be educated and the people must be educated.

So it remains for that small, yet valiant, band of men and women in the south, who are fighting this iniquity, to hold fast and not leave off in their work until the little captives are made free. We reach friendly hands across the miles, and out of the silence we send them blessings and bid them be strong and of good cheer. Seemingly they fight alone, but they are not alone, for the great, throbbing, melting, mother-heart of the world has but to know of their existence to be one with them.—Elbert Hubbard in *The Philistine*.

GENERAL MENTION.

For union made shoes go to Rogers & Perkins.

Jess Mickel had business in Cedar Rapids this week.

Mrs. Will Bustard is enjoying a visit with relatives and friends in Wahoo. Central Labor Union meeting next Tuesday night. If you are a delegate do your duty.

Mrs. Jesse E. Mickel returned the first of the week from a visit to the Arkansas farm.

Woman's Label League meeting next Monday night. If you are a member, be there on time.

Rogers & Perkins have the largest line of union made shoes at popular prices in the entire city.

Mrs. G. W. Armstead has returned to her home in North Bend, Neb., after a two weeks' visit with her daughter, Mrs. W. M. Maupin.

Capital Auxiliary's April social at Bohannon's hall, Wednesday evening, April 19. Now don't say you "never heard a word about it."

Mrs. Frank D. Eager, who was injured in a runaway accident one day last week, has completely recovered. Mrs. Eager had a very narrow escape from serious injury.

The local Teamsters' Union reports that it is progressing finely with the work of getting signatures to its scale. Ask to see the card of the man who hauls your coal, ice or household goods.

There has been so much "political

dolls" in the last week that there was little news in the local labor field, and what little there was the editor didn't have time to get. Next week things will be different.

Porto Rico has now over 100 crafts union, all affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

The International Brotherhood of Carpenters has renewed its lease on the international offices at Indianapolis.

"Big Six" Typographical Union of New York held its annual ball recently, and only 3,000 people were present.

The factory inspectors of Pittsburg have started a crusade against sweat shops and child labor. More power to the inspectors.

C. C. Keister, a union painter of Oakland, Calif., has just fallen heir to \$80,000. If he is wise he will not begin another branch of painting.

The Potters' Herald says the cleanest and most honorable piece of cardboard is a paid-up union card. The Potters' Herald says good things in a concise way.

Philadelphia electrical workers are negotiating with the Electrical Contractors' association for a new agreement for the coming year. The outlook is favorable.

The Washington legislature was asked by the Parryites to enact a law prohibiting the boycott, but the legislature refused. Then the Parryites asked for the repeal of the 8-hour law and met with another refusal.

Dave Parry's organ says that the Typographical Journal in every issue abuses and vilifies the Los Angeles Times. This will be cheerful news to Frank Kennedy. The only trouble with Parry is that he can not tell the truth about union workmen.

The business of the Philadelphia Trades Union News has grown so big that the managers had to move recently into larger quarters. The Wage-worker has its eye on a three-story building covering a quarter of a block, and is waiting for the business to grow up to it.

Lincoln painters and paperhangers have coined a new one. Instead of a "strike" it will hereafter be known as a "temporary cessation of labor pending settlement of a slight misunderstanding appertaining to the hours of manual toil and commensurate compensation therefore." That sounds awfully good.

Monday, March 27, was George M. Wathan's 'steenth birthday, and Mrs. Wathan planned and executed a complete surprise on him in honor of the occasion. A number of friends came in while Wathan was sitting around in his stocking feet and a pipe in his mouth, and they took complete possession. The evening was pleasantly spent in various games and social conversation, and at a seasonable hour Mrs. Wathan served refreshments. Mr. Wathan says he hopes to have more of 'em, and the guests present were united in expressing a desire to help him celebrate 'em as they come for about the next hundred years.