

**CHILD LABOR "PIRATES."**

**This Investigator Could Not Discover  
Any in Southern Mills.**

*To the Editor of The New York Times:*

I would call attention to the speech by former Senator Albert J. Beveridge in Carnegie Hall last night, which was practically a repetition of his speech made in Congress four years ago. He dwelt upon the awful conditions of child labor in the textile mills of the South. As an outcome of that speech Congress appropriated \$300,000, to make an investigation, presumably to ascertain if the Senator's charges were true. The investigation was directed by Charles P. Neill, Commissioner of Labor, Bureau of Labor, and the country was scoured by upward of a hundred agents looking for those awful conditions represented to exist by Senator Beveridge and other child labor agitators, with the result that they could not be found.

I know whereof I speak, because I was on that investigation, and was assigned to study particularly the conditions of the families on the farms before they are drawn to the mills in the South, where the conditions are represented by Mr. Beveridge and the agitators as so terrible. In the beginning I was cautioned to beware of the unscrupulous mill men; that they hid their working children away from the investigators; that they were "pirates," feeding upon the toll of the poor children whom they held in a state of peonage, and so on.

Determined that these "pirates" should not get the best of me, I got into my first mill before any of the managers or mill magnates was aware of my visit, and the first thing that encountered my gaze was a group of the children such as Mr. Beveridge and the agitators tell us about working twelve hours a day, and these children were at play. I ascertained that they actually worked about fifteen minutes to every hour they were in the mill, and that the larger mills in the South had well-equipped playgrounds in which they played.

Child spinners represented as toiling beyond their strength were seen sitting around on window sills and boxes, and as for "threads breaking all the time," requiring the child's constant attention tying them up, as represented by Mr. Beveridge, I learned that if such were the case the product of the spinning frames, the finished yarn, would be unfit for use. The children working in the dye houses, who "could be tracked to their homes by the dripping of the dye," were not there; I learned that no child was ever employed in a dye house, and the youngest person I could find in the weave room was one boy over 16. After my visit to the mill I found the Secretary and Treasurer of the corporation teaching a class of his mill boys arithmetic.

Such conditions as these respecting the employment of the child were found by our agents throughout the South, but upon their return to the Bureau of Labor at Washington the data secured by them were in many instances changed; in other instances new data were manufactured out of whole cloth, and in other instances they were destroyed. By processes of juggling with other data reports were written to conform to the theories and prejudices of the agitators. While the actual investigation of conditions at the mills was made by some twenty-five agents within eight months, more than two years elapsed before a final report appeared purporting to be the results of this investigation.

THOMAS R. DAWLEY, JR.

Brooklyn, N. Y., Jan. 18, 1912.