

### CHAPTER III

## HONGKONG AND THE PROTECTION OF CHILD WORKERS IN INDUSTRY

“China should learn from the West their experience of Labour Legislation as well as keep her old virtues.”—*Letter of a Chinese Christian Priest.*

FROM the nature of its position as a British world port on the threshold of the Republic of China, having little ground for agriculture—the immemorial occupation of the majority of Chinese working people—Hongkong would appear to have been marked out for two great things in relation to China's entry into modern industrial development.

These I believe to be, first, sound and wise development of the secondary industries that naturally grow up in a centre of world commerce; and secondly, the establishment of the factories on sound lines giving full play to good conditions of labour which would at the same time serve as an illustration to the mainland of the essential part played by such conditions in mass production for world markets. The good conditions should include modern hygiene of the workplace, safety for the worker from accidental injury, protection by limitation of hours of the strength and welfare of the worker, and exclusion of young children from power-driven industry.

In the Western world it was discovered during the nineteenth century that the factory system, based on applied science and use of mechanical power with highly developed machinery, called for national regulation and trained inspection. Only in the twentieth century did the truth begin to be widely realised that the human element, not the power machine, is always the economic fundamental in manufacture.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *My Life and Work*, Henry Ford. Introduction.