

CHAPTER VI

THE CHILD LABOUR COMMISSION OF SHANGHAI, 1923-24: ITS ORIGIN AND ITS CONCLUSIONS

Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,
Grinding life down from its mark ;
And the children's souls, which God is calling sunward,
Spin on blindly in the dark.

E. B. BROWNING

The children are holy people.

LAO TZ

IT is already clear from the foregoing chapters that many persons, in face of all the difficulties, had worked hopefully together to discover practicable ways whereby China might begin to attain some degree of health and safety for the workers—to add to the speed in production which is the foremost feature of the new industrial system.

In all the history of British factory legislation, since 1802, with its "Health and Morals of Apprentices Act" for the cotton industry of Lancashire, the first step has always been to protect the children. Originally, owing to the nearly absolute sway of economic doctrines that are now derelict, it was the only legislative action that was possible in the way of "interference" with human conditions in industry. Although it is no longer necessary to suppose that individual adults in factories can by their own unaided efforts take care of their health and safety, and secure the conditions requisite for this, it is still, practically, an urgent matter to begin with legislation for the children—for the sake of the adults as well as for the children!

Those who have not yet seen little children at work in