

anyone to employ children under fourteen during the time the schools are in session, have slight bearing upon actual conditions, as they are quite universally disregarded. Kentucky leads the states in tobacco-growing, and in this industry children as young as nine are considered "hands." In addition to tobacco-raising, plowing, corn-growing, berry-picking, etc., help to occupy the 82 per cent. of child laborers engaged in agriculture in this state. The case of the two children of a certain dairyman, the owner of 150 acres, is fairly typical. His oldest daughter is fourteen and his oldest son ten. She and her brother rise at four to milk the 17 cows, she separates the cream, cleans the pans, cares for the younger children, helps with the housework, drives the cows in from the pasture at night, helps again with the milking, and they finish the day's work just before supper. She has been enrolled in the eighth grade for two years, but each year has left school to work at home. Her father said, "I couldn't get along this year without her help. She's been out o' school since Christmas helping with the dairy and housework. I told her if she'd help me out now, I'd let her finish the eighth grade next year. She wants to be a teacher, but there's plenty o' time."

It is evident beyond any shadow of doubt that in the rural districts studied the agricultural work of the children is responsible for the greater part of the non-attendance in the schools and consequently for general backwardness in education. For it is not only the children who remain intermittently out of school who fail to progress normally, but also the children with whom they are associated. There are few people who have not experienced at one time or another the sensation of being behind—of the impossibility and hopelessness of trying to compete against odds. This is what happens to the over-age boy or girl in school. Once let him fall back among younger children, where he feels hopelessly out-distanced by his fellows, and he will easily and naturally give over the race. He will turn to farm work as a much more interesting occupation than the daily grind at school, like the Kentucky boy

whose father said, "He'd rather work than go to school." In such a case the father is responsible, the school is responsible, for failing to make education as live and vital a thing as chores, and the attendance officer is also responsible.

But very little can be done toward a strict enforcement of the existing laws in rural districts until there is a change in the method of selecting supervisory officers, both for the county and for the districts. In 27 out of 40 states in which the county superintendent is the supervisory officer, he is a partisan political officer elected by popular vote and consequently disinclined toward doing anything unpopular. One such officer said, "I do all I can to encourage attendance. I do not attempt to enforce it because I like my job and want to keep it. Elections in this state are only two years apart." Local school trustees, in the states which are organized for administration on the old district basis, are too close to the people to enforce the law. One doesn't like to prosecute his next-door neighbor for his children's truancy. It is much more convenient and pleasant all round to allow the law to remain in peace, a dead letter. When, as in the rural districts, the law is unsupported by any uniform restriction of child labor, it simply means that individuals will do very much as they please.

But the greatest responsibility of all lies with public opinion, which has tacitly consented that the interests of agriculture and not of the child should become the primary consideration, observing the forms of democracy without its spirit and meaning. More crimes are perhaps committed in the name of personal freedom than for any other cause. In industry it is admitted that personal freedom should not be permitted as an excuse for a man engaging in a dangerous occupation. A man is not allowed to jump off Brooklyn Bridge because he wants to, nor to beat his wife because the fancy strikes him. The hair of our national conscience has finally risen in horror at the picture of thirteen-year-old youngsters in coal mines and cotton mills. But we have not yet measured the monotony of the