

it. The worms will only eat wood that is in the right condition for them. In an ancient piece they may have bored the unsound parts, spun their cocoons and fled a hundred years ago, so that no contamination can come from it, though the grub-holes are perhaps obtrusively in evidence, while an unsuspected one may be ripening (under the influence of damp and close air,) portions quite out of sight into a suitable matrix for the eggs of the next beetle that comes that way. The dust that is so much feared comes from the operations of the worm who has to become the beetle before he can "spread to other furniture."

HOW THAXTED LIVES. II.

THE NORTH ESSEX SWEET FACTORY.

As we are particularly anxious that these articles should be accurate even to the smallest details, we welcome correspondence in our columns on this or any other subject dealt with in the "Country Town." The facts in this series however, are drawn not from one or two persons, but from so large a number, in various parts of the parish, and in various occupations, that serious inaccuracy is most unlikely. I am not so much anxious that readers should draw from these facts a particular conclusion either entirely favourable or entirely unfavourable to the employments mentioned in these articles, as that we should do for Thaxted what Mr. Seebohm Rowntree has done for York and Sir Charles Booth for London, and many others have done for small towns and villages; for the basis for all reform and re-construction is familiarity with the facts themselves.

In estimating the value of wages, readers must take into account the cost of rent in the country which is comparatively low, and the cost of food which is comparatively high. The Sweet Factory has been built up from very small beginnings by the untiring energy of Mr. George Lee, in conjunction with his workers and the foremen and managers. The number of those employed varies greatly, but might be put down very roughly at about 200, including a large percentage of women and many boys and girls from fourteen years of age. Occasionally, a child of thirteen obtains work at the factory, but apparently no one under eighteen is allowed to work overtime. As to hours, the employees work a five-and-a-half-day week and a ten hours day, not counting overtime. Work begins at 7 a.m. There is a break of ten minutes at about 9.30, the dinner hour is from 12 to 1, work is then continuous from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. The children generally begin in the packing department at a weekly wage of about 3/6, but most of the packing is by piece work, as is also the box making, chocolate dipping, and to a less extent sweet weighing. The boiling departments are supplied by men working for a wage of from 16/- to 18/- a week. The lowest wage for men in the factory is about 14/-.

Boys doing this class of work in a very little time become proficient and are worth a good wage. Lads of 16 years of age are working in the factory at a wage of 8/6 a week. Girls often earn at piece work a penny halfpenny an hour or 1/3 a day. It is not an uncommon thing for a really able woman to be making 12/- a week. A considerable proportion of the wages so paid ultimately finds its way back into the employer's pocket; for the employees often deal at their employer's provision store. Readers of the "Country Town" are advised to keep former numbers carefully for reference, so that they may compare hours and wages in industry and in agriculture. We hope in some subsequent issue to give the average earnings in the hatting industry, which at one time employed many in Thaxted. We do not suggest that the margin of profits in the case of the sweet factory is very considerable, and have no data wherewith to determine the point. It will be interesting as years go on to study the development of the recent Governmental policy as regards a minimum wage in its gradual application to an ever-widening area of industries; but we would warn the would-be social reformer that unless it is accompanied by a constructive industrial programme that it may in some instances lead from bad to worse, involving the closing down of certain works run at present at a very small margin of profit. The introduction of new industries or in some cases the reconstruction of older ones in such a way as to meet the new social and political demands may of course provide a way out of a difficulty with which employers will soon be face to face.

CONRAD NOEL.

ESSAYS BY THAXTED CHILDREN.

We see God's creation of the Universe. How was it done? Learned men tell us that this world came slowly into existence. There was one man a Naturalist who said the world was created by Evolution, that is unfolding. God's creation never seems to come to an end, it is always unfolding. We call the study of these things Science, which means knowledge of the world. When we think of the vastness of nature and the glory of the heavens we shrink at the thought of our insignificance. What are we poor mortals, things of a day, creatures of an hour, less important than a rotting leaf to a grand old forest. By the help of a microscope we behold the wonders of the little world, and in a drop of water or a grain of sand discover marvels equally great as those of suns and planets. The object or reason why the author of Genesis wrote was to explain what God had done in creating the world. God who created the world saw that all was good and that God who is Father of all is over all and through all and in all. Let us never forget in contemplating Earth, Sea or Sky the Infinite Wisdom of their Divine Creator.

(Meaning of Life, C. C., aged 15.)