

taken against it. The flooding of mines was also to be provided against. No workman suffering from illness or infirmity was to be admitted into a mine, and boys under twelve and girls under fourteen might not go down into or work in or about mines. This law only partially realised the aims of the Academy of Medicine, which were a higher prohibition age for males, and total prohibition for women. In 1889 a further step was made, it being enacted that, under certain conditions, the employment of boys under sixteen or girls or women under twenty-one might be prohibited or temporarily authorised by Royal decree.

In 1893 a decree to the effect that girls and women under twenty-one might no longer be employed at underground work in mines and quarries was issued. The application of this decree was made progressive so as not to do harm either to the industry or to families of workpeople. Its realisation is now almost complete. This law, while not interfering with the rights of the adult, really attains its aim of preventing female labour in mines, for at the age of twenty-one women are either married or have some other occupation, or they are not disposed at that age to begin work as miners. To complete the legislation on the subject, the decree of 1893 fixed, for both surface- and mine-work, the hours of labour by night and by day. The maximum hours are: For persons under sixteen, $10\frac{1}{2}$ hours, descent into and return from the mine included, with interruptions by rests which may not be less than one-eighth of the actual time worked.

The Belgian miner is no longer the pariah that he was. The young men have been to school. Thanks to the new legislation, children may now stay there two years longer than previously, and, if they wish to continue their education after going to work, night-schools, &c., are open to them. Many of the miners, however, are still imbued with prejudices, and are easily swayed and gulled by rhetors and sophists.

It is not too much to expect that eventually schools will be established in which instruction in individual hygiene and professional education will be imparted to workmen to enlighten their understanding by dissipating the clouds which darken it; that proper workmen's houses will be built; that serious legislation will intervene to reduce to a minimum the number of drinking-shops; and that thrift will grow and the family become consolidated.

NOTE.—The *Gazette des Eaux*, enclosed with the Agent-General's letter, No. 2694, of 29th November, 1898, being very voluminous, has for that reason been omitted in making up this paper for presentation to Parliament.

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