

The Factory Act of 1831

(*Statutes of the United Kingdom* 1 and 2 William IV, c- 39, (1831), pp. 248-252; in A. Aspinall and E. Anthony Smith, eds., *English Historical Documents, XI, 1783-1832*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1959, p. 739.)

An Act to repeal the laws relating to apprentices and other young persons employed in cotton factories and in cotton mills, and, to make further provisions in lieu thereof [15 October 1831]

... Be it ... enacted ... that from ... the 1st day of November 1831 the said recited Acts [*i.e.* 59 Geo. III, c. 66; 60 Geo. III, c. 5; 6 Geo. IV, c. 63; 10 Geo. IV, c. 51; 10 Geo. IV, c. 63] shall be ... repealed.

II. And whereas it has of late become a practice in cotton mills and cotton factories to employ a great number of young persons of both sexes late at night, and in many instances all night; and certain regulations have become necessary to preserve the health and morals of such persons; be it therefore further enacted, that from and after 1 Nov. 1831 no person under 21 years of age shall be allowed to work in the night, (that is to say,) between the hours of 8.30 in the evening and 5.30 in the morning, in any of the cotton manufactories of the United Kingdom, where steam or water power is used to propel or work the machinery used in such mills or factories.

III.... That no person under the age of 18 years shall be employed in any such mill or factory, in any description of work whatsoever, in the twisting, spinning, carding, or weaving of cotton, or in any way preparing or manufacturing that material, or in cleaning any machinery or mill work, more than 12 hours on any one day, or more than 9 hours on a Saturday.

IV.... That there shall be allowed to every such person, in the course of every day, not less than 1 1/2 hour for meals.

V-VII. [Owners of water-powered factories may order the working of extra hours, within defined limits, to make up time lost by want of or interference with the supply of water, breakdown of the driving machinery, &c.]

VIII.... That in cotton mills or factories no child shall be employed in any description of work until ... the age of 9 years.

IX. [Masters not to be liable to penalties for employing or over-working children of the protected ages, in cases where their parents or guardians have given certificates of their being of the proper ages required by this Act, or where the person concerned has certified himself to be 21 years old. Persons giving such certificates liable to penalties for each offence, not exceeding £5.]

X.... That no justice of the Peace, being also a proprietor or occupier of any such mill... or the father, son, or brother of any such proprietor or occupier, shall act as a justice of the Peace under this Act.

XI. [All ceilings and interior walls of such factories to be limewashed once a year.]

XVII. [Occupiers of every such factory to keep a correct account of the time worked each day, for the inspection of the justice whenever required.]

XXI. [Occupiers, managers, and foremen acting contrary to any of the provisions of this act liable to a fine of not less than £10 nor more than £20 for each offence: half the fine to be given to the prosecutor, half for the benefit of the poor in the parish where the offence was committed.]

