# FACTORY ACT LEGISLATION: BEING THE COBDEN PRIZE ESSAY FOR 1891

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Factory Act Legislation: Being The Cobden Prize Essay for 1891 by Victorine Jeans



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VICTORINE JEANS

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Trieste

# FACTORY ACT LEGISLATION

## Its Industrial and Commercial Effects, Actual and Prospective

BEING

*THE COBDEN PRIZE ESSAY FOR* 1891



BY

VICTORINE JEANS

*"Spero Meliora"*

London

T. FISHER UNWIN

PATERNOSTER SQUARE

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## Cobden Prize.

### Victoria University.

A prize of the value of £60, to be awarded once in three years, was offered to the University by the Committee of the Cobden Club, and was accepted by resolution of the University Council on the 13th December, 1880.

The following are the conditions:—

1. The prize shall be awarded for an Essay on some subject connected with Political Economy, and shall be payable in money to the successful candidate.

2. The candidates for the prize shall be members of the University, who, having commenced residence, are not of more than six years' standing from matriculation on the first day of the Easter Term of the academical year in which the subject is announced.

3. The Adjudicators shall be the Professors or Lecturers of the University in Political Economy for the time being, and two persons to be nominated by the Vice-Chancellor and the Donors respectively, and appointed by Resolution of the University Council; and the prize shall be awarded to the writer of the Essay which, in the judgment of a majority of the Adjudicators, certified under their hands to the Vice-Chancellor, is the most deserving.

4. The subject of the prize shall be fixed by the Adjudicators or a majority of them; but the subject of the first prize shall be fixed by the Donors, subject to the approval of the Vice-Chancellor and the Professors or Lecturers in Political Eeonomy.

5. The times when the Adjudicators shall be appointed, the subject announced, and the Essays sent in, shall be fixed from time to time by Resolution of the University Council.

6. The Donors of the prize reserve to themselves the right to determine the said prize on giving one year's notice to the Vice-Chancellor.

7. The prize shall be called the "Cobden Prize."

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This prize was awarded in 1891 to Victorine Jeans, B.A., of the Owens College, Manchester.

# FACTORY ACT LEGISLATION.

A THOROUGHLY detailed and precise treatment of this subject would presuppose an intimate and technical knowledge of the conditions of all the great branches of industry which have from time to time been brought under the Factory Acts, and of their development during the last hundred years. For reasons, then, which will only be too painfully obvious, no attempt will be made in this paper to do more than summarize, in the fewest possible words, what seem to have been in the past, and what, by inference, will be in the future, the main marked general results of Factory Legislation.

## I.—HISTORICAL SKETCH.

The best historical sketch is Herr Ernst von Plener's, first Secretary of the Austro-

Hungarian Embassy in London. A point that he clearly brings out is that the legislation of the first thirty years of this century was practically without any result at all; it was almost inoperative, for the very simple reason that it was never properly enforced; the local justices were to appoint visitors to inspect the mills, but as they neglected to do so the law became virtually useless. The first four or five factory Acts may be neglected then as far as any actual results were concerned. Progress was made in 1833, when the system of Crown-appointed inspectors was introduced. But as their number was limited to four, the staff soon proved quite inadequate, and Lord Ashley called attention in the House of Commons to the fact that their reports for 1835 showed that no less than one out of every eleven mill-owners had been convicted of infringing the Act, and that no doubt the proportion would have been much larger but for the defiant attitude of the local magistrates, themselves very often connected with or interested in