

Annotations.

HOMELESS.

During the recent spell of severe weather we have all found the difficulty of keeping up the temperature of houses and of hospital wards to a comfortable heat. We pile on the coal, we heap on extra blankets, we fill hot-water bottles, and we still complain of the impossibility of keeping warm. But what of those who have none of the comforts with which those in better circumstances surround themselves? The efforts of the Public Health Committee of the London County Council, made by the medical officers and eighteen inspectors of the Council's staff on the night of January 29th last, to obtain some estimate of the number of people in London who are homeless, revealed the fact that about one in every 2,000 of the London population was homeless on the night in question; by homeless is meant those people who have not the means to pay for a night's lodging in a common lodging-house, and who are unwilling to seek the shelter of the workhouse, the dread of which besets the better-class poor who are out of work. On the night of January 29th, 857 persons who had used the kitchens of common lodging-houses during the day were turned out because they were not able to pay for a bed. Eleven of these were single women. The Council's officers counted 1,463 men, 116 women, 46 boys, and 4 girls walking the streets, the boys and girls being, apparently, under sixteen years of age. This homeless army passes the night in the street, or under archways, and in the recesses of front doors; while some enter tenement houses of which the front doors are open, and sleep on the landings and staircases, or in the water-closets. In the Whitechapel Road, and Stanhope Street, Strand, at the premises of the Salvation Army, free food is given to applicants between 2 a.m. and 3 p.m., and people tramp from different parts of London to obtain these meals. Think of it, you who sleep snug at nights, who cannot get on without something hot the last thing before you go to bed, and a cup of tea before getting out of bed in the morning, and see if there is nothing you can do to remove the reproach of 2,000 homeless wanderers in the richest city of the world on these bitter nights.

COURTS OF JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN.

No one can contemplate the harm resulting to children from association with an ordinary police-court, its frequenters and appliances, and

the stigma which attaches to them in after years, without desiring that some other method should be found to deal with juvenile offenders. In a letter addressed to a contemporary, Miss Davenport Hill points out the desirability of adopting in this country the "Massachusetts Plan" of providing Courts of Justice for Children, and is of opinion that this reform might be achieved without even applying to Parliament for new legislation. The suggestion is one which must commend itself to all thoughtful persons.

In our own Colonies, South Australia led the way in the formation of a State Children's Council, to deal with the affairs of children, in the eighties—an excellent plan, which has since been adopted more or less completely by other Australian colonies and by New Zealand. On the South Australian Council the sexes are equally represented, while at least in one of the United States of America a lady acts as chairman of the Children's Council, a plan which is amply vindicated, as Miss Davenport Hill points out, where the ages of those to be dealt with may date from a day old. It would be for the welfare of the children of this country if a similar Council were appointed.

MENTAL TRAINING OF THE FEEBLE-MINDED.

A conference, convened by the National Association for Promoting the Welfare of the Feeble-Minded, met last week at the offices of the Association, 53, Victoria Street, Westminster, to consider the question of the mental training of this section of the community. Dr. Francis Warner said that in anybody of feeble mind it was generally found that there was a considerable amount of latent capacity, which needed cultivation even in those beyond school time. Feeble-minded children might be trained by movements or muscular sense, the most educative agent acting on such children being the teacher's body, hands, face, and voice. The brain could be gradually educated by the impressions the children received through their hands; physical exercises formed a valuable part of education. Breathing exercise was much needed, and speech was best cultivated by individual lessons to each pupil. In homes for the feeble-minded the teacher would have to make a constant study of each child. Eye movements were particularly important in the training of the adult feeble-minded. The speaker found also that physical exercises involving free movements of the hands and legs formed a valuable and very useful part of education.

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