

SOCIAL SERVICE.

"THESE LITTLE ONES."

Nothing better can happen to a nation than when its great heart is stirred, and it is roused from apathy to a sense of wrong, and righteous indignation, however much the cause may be deplored. Nothing has made us feel the profundity of the horrors of this war more than the many acts of dishonour, cruelty, barbarity and outrage which have been wantonly committed by the relentless foe, more especially on unarmed civilians; and our blood gets hottest when we hear of ill-treated children, the weakest and most defenceless victims. But I say without fear of contradiction that the sufferings that some children have endured during this war, cannot be compared with the sufferings of the children of all *civilized* (?) countries, which, in spite of laws made specially for their protection, and the pains and penalties prescribed by those laws for those who "offend these little ones," go on continuously. Laws are easily evaded, miscreants are frequently sheltered by those who are paid to administer justice. If time and space permitted, I could furnish abundant proof of this statement. Let those who doubt my words, go to the Police Court when a case of outrage on a child under 16 is being tried. There may be some difficulty in getting admitted, but let it be remembered that it is *unlawful* to exclude a woman from the Court, and at such a time the police court is "the woman's sphere"—the womanly woman, with an aching heart for the ill-used child. The most cowardly wickedness is that committed against a child, and the most cowardly and cruel form of wickedness is that committed by the fiend in human form who outrages a little girl. If legislation were effective, if it were deterrent of evil, evil would decrease. *This supreme evil is on the increase!* How can we be surprised, when punishments are so inadequate and often nil! How can we be surprised when a judge says to the jury: "We are all liable to fall, gentlemen; we must be lenient"—and they *were* lenient! In Australia, where legislation bears the stamp of the influence of the women's vote, a judge said to a man convicted of this crime: "I will give you the minimum punishment of ten years"! Comment is unnecessary, the significance is obvious. Jurymen should be men of character, possessing a profound sense of their responsibility and of justice. When the evidence is abundantly clear, gentlemen of this ilk in our country sometimes deliberately refuse to convict; one was heard to say: "I do not intend to convict, and I wont."

These, and many other things that we know of, go to prove that the whole system of our Law Courts is a travesty of justice, a mere parody. The ideal of justice in the Law Courts of the Ancient Greeks was far higher, than in this—our Christian country.

A very excellent suggestion has been made by Mrs. Nott-Bower, who deplores the fact that there

is often considerable difficulty in getting sufficient evidence to convict, where the outrage upon the child has been committed in the home. She suggests that something should be done on the lines of the Protection of Animals Act; namely, that the outrage should be deemed an act of cruelty, if it is committed under the parents' roof and by their connivance. At the present time the law protects animals better than it protects children! "The Nation is wide awake and fully conscious of its duty" writes a contemporary. In view of this great and prevalent evil, this war on the future race, we must most emphatically deny that statement. In this respect the nation is asleep. Between the years 1905 and 1915, 7,325 cases of defilement of little girls were tabulated. These were *known* cases, possibly the unknown ones might double the figure—staggering, is it not? What are we going to do? Get the parliamentary vote as quickly as we can? By all means, that is our aim and purpose; but in the meantime let the country ring from one end to the other, we need not wait till the war is over. It is most gratifying to learn that at long last, a Committee has been formed for the Prevention of Criminal Assaults on Children as the results of a conference held last July. The credit of this is largely due to the splendid and untiring work of the Women's Freedom League, which has done so much to show up this worst of evils. A simple way in which we could help the Committee, would be to send information of any case that comes under our notice to the Hon. Secretary, Mrs. Arthur Hutchinson, Aysthorpe, New Road, Cambridge.

Words uttered nearly 2,000 years ago are ringing in my ears:—"Whoso shall offend one of these little ones, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea."

BEATRICE KENT.

OUR GALLANT COMRADES.

A beautiful Anglo-Boer Memorial to the horses that perished in the South African War, has been erected at Port Elizabeth "in recognition of the gallant animals who perished in the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902." It takes the form of a drinking fountain for man and beast, and above is a khaki-clad and helmeted soldier, giving a drink to a noble horse.

CARE OF SOLDIERS' DOGS.

Our Dumb Friends' League have made arrangements to take free charge of pets belonging to soldiers and sailors, who have no relatives or friends with whom to leave them. For this purpose a ward has been opened at the Animals' Hospital of the League, at 1, Hugh Street, Belgrave Road, S.W. It is presumed that the pets will be limited to dogs, cats, and birds. To those interested in the care of animals, the hospital will be open for inspection on Tuesday afternoon next. No doubt many soldiers and sailors will be glad to leave their pets in such good care.

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