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Editorial.

THE SUFFERING OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

SOME idea of the mortality in the Refugee Camps at Johannesburg, and in the Transvaal, is gained when we consider that in a time of epidemic amongst our soldiers the death-rate went up to 52 per thousand, while at one time amongst the women and children in these camps it reached no less an average than 450 per thousand.

Mr. Lloyd-George, who moved the adjournment of the House of Commons on Monday last in order that this question might be considered, told a tale of women and children herded together, sometimes as many as twenty in a tent, and, as the tents leaked, soaked with rain and dew, the food with which they were provided being bad, and short in quantity, and the clothing supplied to them being so insufficient that the wife of the British Military Governor at Pretoria begged for clothing from America.

We do not for a moment believe that this appalling condition is due to any lack of feeling on the part of British officials. We can trust to the chivalry of the British soldier, and know that our confidence will not be misplaced. But we can by no means place the same reliance in

official red tapeism, and it is quite possible that the same lack of organization which has caused havoc in the ranks of our own army has also dominated the management of these camps for the wives and children of the enemy.

Mr. Brodrick stated that the mortality amongst children was accounted for by an epidemic of measles. But why? Nurses know well enough that in measles, a disease frequently fatal if neglected, the mortality may be reduced practically to nil if proper care is taken.

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannermann described the condition of these camps of concentration as being in some instances "simply heart-rending." He laid the blame on that old, old foe, "the system," and said that he believed no one felt the barbarity of it more than those whose duty it had been to carry it out. He urged the Government to send out a staff of competent civilian medical men, and of nurses, to care for these women and children. It was the only way of convincing them that the British people did not intend to treat them with unnecessary cruelty.

From the report issued by Miss Hobhouse, who has visited these camps, it is evident that many more trained nurses are needed. We hope to deal with this report next week.

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