

Annotations.

THE NATIONAL LIFEBOAT INSTITUTION.

The National Lifeboat Institution is one which is second to none in its claims for public support, and we regret to learn that it is suffering from lack of funds. During the past year the lifeboat men have saved no less than 400 lives, and the stories connected with some of the rescues are pathetic in the extreme. In the Caister lifeboat disaster one old man of seventy-five who had often gone out with the boat watched it bearing seawards two sons, two grandsons, and a son-in-law, and, on its return after many hours, when almost on the beach, it was wrecked and eight lives lost, including those of the veteran's two sons.

Another incident related is that of the lifeboat which went out in a heavy sea to the aid of a barque off Berwick. When, after great difficulty, three of the rescuers at length boarded the ship the storm blew the lifeboat away, and only after the utmost peril were communications again re-established. And besides risks to life from the peril of the sea are those from exposure, which often kills, if more slowly, none the less surely. Thus the bow man of the Clovelly lifeboat, after exposure for a whole night, went home with a chill, and never again left his bed. All round the coast such episodes in various phases are being repeated day and night, as a matter of course. For little reward, except that of an approving conscience, our lifeboat men face the perils of a stormy sea, and the nation is the richer for their unselfish devotion to duty, and for an example as invigorating as the salt breezes in which their lot is cast.

CHILD LABOUR IN THE STREETS.

A memorial, signed by members of both Houses of Parliament and many other representative persons, has been presented to the Government, expressing the hope that the recommendations of the Inter-Departmental Committee appointed to deal with the question of wage-earning children may be embodied in the Bill, which is shortly to be brought before Parliament. It is specially desired that the following recommendations should be enforced:—

There should be power by by-law to prescribe for all children, or for boys and girls separately, with respect to all occupations or to particular occupations, and with respect to the whole district or any part of it.

1. The hours between which they may be employed;

2. The age at which employment may begin; and

3. The number of weekly or daily hours beyond which they may not work; with further powers to prohibit employment entirely in occupations specially dangerous to health or to morals, and to require medical certificates as a condition of employment.

That power should be given (to municipalities) to establish a system of licences in the case of street traders.

These recommendations are so eminently reasonable and desirable that there is ground for hoping that the measure may be passed as non-contentious.

An influential deputation representing the Metropolitan Asylums Board, the London School Board, the Borough Councils, Boards of Guardians, and others, also recently waited on Mr. Akers-Douglas at the Home Office, urging him to introduce into his Bill for the Regulation of the Out-of-School Employment of Children clauses providing for the special requirements of the Metropolis. Archdeacon Sinclair pointed out the evils of the present state of things in London in regard to children trading in the streets, and Mr. T. J. Macnamara, M.P., asked that no child should be permitted to engage in labour before eleven years of age, and that the maximum age for licensing children for street labour should be sixteen. The Home Secretary said he was very glad the deputation had put its recommendations before him, and gave an assurance that he was fully alive to the difficulties and dangers of street trading.

CELLS OR INFIRMARY?

The fact made public in the Report of the Commissioners of Prisons, that within one year thirty-five prisoners died within a week of admission to prison, directs attention to a serious condition of things which demands the attention of prison authorities. It might be well if all prisoners were medically inspected when committed to gaol, so that cases of genuine illness could be detected, and such prisoners sent to the infirmary instead of the cells. No useful object, either from a disciplinary point of view for the individual, or for the public welfare, is served by condemning dying persons to solitary confinement, and it should be a rule in the case of prisoners seriously ill that they should be attended not only by a medical man but by also a trained nurse.

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