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## EDITORIAL.

### THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN.

*"Whoso shall offend one of these little ones . . . it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea."*

This terrible warning was uttered nearly 2,000 years ago, by "the Lord and giver of life," and yet by ignorance, neglect and backward thinking, these little ones of ours have been, until comparatively recent times—to use the obsolete word—*offended*.

In 1837, when Queen Victoria came to the throne, "there was not a single Act on the Statute Book of England, framed for the welfare of children; ere she died, she had set her sign-manual to over one hundred." Early in last century, children worked in the mines, children could be, and were, sentenced to imprisonment, deportation and hanging!! It is highly probable that some of the feeble-mindedness among the poor that we are continually bewailing, may be traced back to the tortures of mind and body then endured. In spite of the undoubted improvement in the standard of National health, the rate of infant mortality is still a serious blot on the Empire's escutcheon. The mothers of the poor are still appallingly ignorant, and require to be taught the rudiments of mothercraft. Two hundred Schools for Mothers throughout the Country are not nearly enough; we need two thousand, twenty thousand would better meet the need. The Mother of Parliaments is behind many younger ones in the matter of legislation for the welfare of children, even now. Two years ago official figures quoted in the House of Commons in respect of infant mortality, were as follows: Death rates under a year old per 1,000 infants born:—New Zealand, 62; the Commonwealth of Australia, 72; Norway, 72; England and Wales, 109; Province of Ontario, 131; Ger-

many, 170. The reading between the lines here will be easy for women of foresight and understanding hearts, and they will, with quite a different intention, urge the time-honoured argument of the Antis, that woman's sphere is the *home*. Through the influence of women voters legislative enactment has greatly benefited the children and the home. We do not wish to minimise the importance of parental responsibility; but that is a witless argument, so long as the conditions under which so many of the poor live, make it an utter impossibility for the best of mothers to bring up the children well and healthily. There should be no discrepancy between the children of the rich and poor, in the matter of elemental rights. A deeply interesting pronouncement has been made in respect of the laws of Colorado by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (an International Body), namely, that "this State has the earnest, the most humane, the most progressive, the most scientific laws relating to the child to be found on any Statute book in the world." Some more reading between the lines!

In this State women have had the vote since 1893! We challenge any one to deny the truth of the assertion that the freedom of women is the fundamental basis of reform in domestic legislation. "The presentation of ideals from other ages is perhaps the most important among the educative functions of history," writes Mr. Trevelyan, which reminds us of the wisdom and patriotism of the ancient Greeks, who, without any revelation of Christianity, deemed it the State's highest duty to care for the children, and so the Lawgiver whose name is a synonym of wisdom, made laws for the protection of child life and the tender care of pregnant women. Any Nation that wilfully neglects its first duty, may be likened to a man who hangs a millstone about his own neck and drowns himself in the depths of the sea of ignorance and perversity.

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