

## CRUELTY TO CHILDREN.



N the variety of subjects with which a writer may be called upon to deal, affecting the public interest and welfare, none can come home more intimately to "men's business and bosoms" than the subject of children. We have all been children ourselves; many of us are the parents of children; we have rejoiced at the birth which gave them to our arms, and but too often wept at the death which took them from our side. Companionship with them and responsibility for them have made up the chief features of the home life of every one amongst us. There can be no question, therefore, as to the universal interest of the subject, in its general sense.

But we are to speak of the *treatment* of children, and if we went into detail, this has its divisions. There is, first, the way in which children ought to be treated, then the way in which they ought *not* to be treated, and, generally, the way in which they *are* treated.

What more delightfully fascinating than childhood?—its naturalness, its innocence, its grace; the charms which even bachelor painters have made immortal on their canvas, as Reynolds and Landseer, for example. What happiness to make a child happy! and, on the contrary, what— But no! that will come in afterwards, and then quite soon enough. We will not anticipate.

It was recorded in classic phrase, as a duty, many generations ago, that great reverence is due to the young. The same truth was even more tersely expressed, in simple Anglo-Saxon, to the writer in his early manhood by a cultured American, and he has never forgotten it. The lips which spoke it have long been silent, but the saying is worth remembering and worth repeating. "It is a sin," said the good man, "to rob a child of his childhood." There is a far-seeing and a far-reaching wisdom in the words. The children who are robbed of their childhood are found in every stage of growth and every rank of life. The child is as truly robbed of his childhood who is spoiled, pampered, or forced into a precocity beyond his years, as is the poor and puny victim of terrors, oaths, and blows which make his life a burden.

Then this duty of reverence for the young receives the sanction of an awful emphasis when we remember how much is latent in the young. A "young Turk" who played practical jokes and revelled in mischief, in Warwickshire, in the days of "good Queen Bess," was Will Shakespeare. The grave-looking lad who spent his leisure at Grantham School in making windmills, kites, and lanterns, with which he frightened the country people, was Isaac Newton. And the sickly Norfolk stripling whom his sailor uncle thought could "never rough it at sea," but who wanted to know from his grandmother "what fear

was, for he had never seen it," was the hero of the Nile and Trafalgar—Horatio Nelson.

Every reader of the daily papers, observing the common incidents of our ordinary life, must have been struck by the frequent details of cruelty to children which come to light, and which serve now to mark the habitual course of English life. There is something shocking and unnatural in such an offence under any circumstances, but the ingenuity of torture which seems to mark the later developments of this horrible crime fairly takes the breath away of anyone in whom the feeling of humanity is not extinct. Five years ago a special organisation was set on foot to grapple with this offence, and to prevent cruelty by punishing it. For that is the only present remedy. There is no other way of reaching the savage than by treating him with severity. To treat the brute as a brute is the only way to get at so much of the capacity of feeling as may be left in him. In most cases either he never had any to appeal to, or what he had he has sinned away.

To appeal to any moral sense in such a creature were as idle as to appeal to the blind man's sense of sight. When the special Society to which we have referred was set on foot—that, namely, for the "Prevention of Cruelty to Children," it had to run the gauntlet of numerous objections, some of which were of the ordinary type, such as always start up in the path of any work of benevolence; while others were better founded and required answering. That answer they have received. The four or five years' success of the Society is a triumphant answer. But it was held then that no such society was necessary.

Indeed, both then and since it has been held, and declared by local magnates—mayors and magistrates, bishops and clergymen—that however other places might need looking after, their own favoured locality needed no such defenders. If it did—"there were the police!" *They* could do everything that was necessary: they could keep down the cruelty by their presence, or bring it up for punishment if it *did* break out. We now know better than this, as will presently be seen. Even in London it was thought, and conscientiously believed, by some who were well acquainted with such matters, that the ground for philanthropic effort was, so fully occupied that there was no need and no room for any additional society with a purpose separate and distinct from those already in existence. Yet this very Society, entering upon a new work peculiar to itself, has, by the character of that work and the urgent plea of the necessities which it has discovered, won from the community at large an amount of sympathy and support entirely exceptional, if not, within the time, altogether unprecedented.

The reports of the Society unfortunately abound with the most convincing and awful proofs of the commonness in almost every corner of the land—in the lonely country cottage as well as in the squalid garret of the crowded town—of this "most foul and most unnatural" crime.

Let us point out before we go further what is understood to be included under the title of "Cruelty to Children." It includes the cruel treatment, wrongful neglect, or improper employment of children; also all conduct by which life, or limb, or health is wrongfully endangered or sacrificed, or by which morals are imperilled or depraved. This is a copious programme, but it is one from which not a single item can be omitted, if the work is to be done thoroughly—traced out, that is, followed up, dragged to light, exposed and punished. We ventured to say just now that these crimes too commonly "mark the habitual course of English life." And we meant it. It was no *façon de parler* put in to balance a sentence or round a period, or to describe the work with a final flourish. Dainty diction is dreadfully out of place here. The want of love for children—the complement of that vile and selfish sensuality which marks their parentage—is, unhappily, to be found in various ranks of life. The creature who takes charge of another woman's children for hire, and under the phrase "insuring their lives," insures their death after as short an interval as is consistent with decency, under circumstances cleverly enough contrived to escape suspicion: the actual parents of children so treated—so dealt with and so disposed of when they come unwelcomely fast, become too many on the ground, and cost money which curtails the weekly drinking-bout: the irascible fiend whose dignity must not be disturbed by a child's laugh or cry, and who snatches up the nearest weapon—a poker or a toasting-fork, to strike with, or the nearest missile, a bottle or a knife, to throw—these are not the only nor the worst offenders against that law in the soul which forbids cruelty to children. These types are numerous, but they are not all.

They are bad enough, too, in all conscience; but if we estimate guilt by the comparison of temptation and of opportunity, it would be hard to say that they are the worst of the cases which the printed documents before us make us acquainted with. Besides these offenders of the baser sort, there are Women of gentle birth, delicately nurtured, trained in the surroundings of refinement and cultivation; Men of the professions to which humanity owes so much in the relief of pain, the assuaging of sorrow, the suggestion of the highest consolation under the sufferings of this life by holding out the blessed hopes and promises of the life to come—all these are amongst the branded breakers of the same Divine law, spurners of the Divine command which welcomed children to the Saviour's arms. How is this? The question has been frequently asked, and claims an answer, for the fact is a staggering one. How is it, we are asked, that professional, cultured men, on whom the advantages of high education have been exhausted, are guilty of these enormities? In the superior grades of society just referred to we should, *à priori*, think such crimes impossible. But they do actually exist there—cannot be ignored, and must be accounted for; and this can only be by assuming that passion and vice, working restlessly, rub off with horrible friction the enamel of social cultivation, leaving exposed, in all its deformity and hideousness, the bare animalism of the lowest natures. If, as we are told, the bravest are the

sons and daughters of the brave, what in the future which is coming upon us will the sons and daughters of the cruel be?

Thus the work of this Society amply justifies its existence, and shows that its mission of mercy was not begun an hour too soon. It was established in July, 1884. The original idea was American; thence it was transferred to Liverpool in 1883, and in the following year was brought to London. In November, 1884, the Shelter of the Society, in Harpur Street, Bloomsbury, was formally opened, where the children placed in its charge are temporarily received, pending settled arrangements, and where the Society's business is carried on. Its growth may be inferred from the following summary, taken from the annual reports published in 1885-6-7-8, and setting forth the total of its operations under the heads given:—

	1st Year.	2nd Year.	3rd Year.	4th Year.	Total.
Number of cases undertaken	95	147	258	284	784
Total convictions for cruelty	9	16	29	54	108
Nights' lodgings—Children in Shelter	779	1,768	2,906	3,017	8,470
Meals to Children in Shelter	2,294	5,010	8,834	7,936	24,074
	£	£	£	£	
Annual Subscriptions	109	299	651	883	...
Donations and other receipts	794	781	935	1,303	...
Total income	903	1,086	1,586	2,186	...
Number of contributors	225	420	953	1,250	...

These items will all exhibit a very large increase in every particular when the next annual returns come to be published. It is already reported that 1,070 is the number of cases dealt with since the foundation of the Society.

Where remonstrance or warning of a private character will apparently suffice, no more drastic treatment of the culprit is at first resorted to. But some of the offences are of such a heinous character that they can only be dealt with by process of law. At the Central Criminal Court, in Courts of Assize, of Quarter and Petty Sessions, and of Summary Jurisdiction, cases in which the Society prosecuted have been quite numerous; and now that Aid Committees have been established in many of the large provincial towns, and the country has become thoroughly awakened to the necessity and advantage of these operations, they are certain to become much more general. Fines have been inflicted in the slighter cases, recognisances required in others, and various terms of imprisonment and penal servitude inflicted, even to the severest known to the law—for the term of the natural life. It may now be asked again, as at first, is not this work for the police? What is that special need for the Society's action, which was asked for, by way of objection, at the outset? The answer is commendatory of the police, but experience has now abundantly proved that for a special work there is needed a special agency. For dealing with children, and eliciting their simple story, legal questioning and court examinations are out of place: not helpful but harmful; not educating the truth but driving it in, and defeating its ends. For such patient, tedious work as this, special fitness is required which is only to be found in patient men and women who do not think it

tedious. The ordinary policeman is not trained for this, and his other duties leave him no time to acquire it. The time, resource, and special training which are needful can only be provided by special agencies such as we have here described.

This description has been general, in order that as much might be brought under the notice of the reader as the space at our disposal would permit. To enter into details would be only too easy, but all of them are deeply painful, and some are too utterly revolting for repetition here. The publications of the Society are freely distributed to those who wish to have them, and additions to the funds are always wanted and always welcome. It is also a subject for thankfulness that all possible

influence should have been brought to bear upon the Legislature, to promote the passing of the Bill for the Better Prevention of Cruelty to Children. In this Bill the experience which the Society has gained has furnished the foundation for enactments of proved necessity, if we would, as men, Englishmen, and Christians, escape from the guilt of tolerating with our eyes open the enormities which the Society has brought to light. Good men of all political parties in the House of Commons have been found acting together to effect these objects. Let all good men and women throughout the country unite to help them, and to see the provisions of the Bill carried out when it has become law.

DAVID BUXTON.

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### "THE QUIVER" BIBLE CLASS.

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#### QUESTIONS.

121. What words of Jesus show that His risen body was real, and not a spirit-form?

122. What two qualifications of Saul and Jonathan are specially mentioned by David in his lamentation at their death?

123. What was the first wilful act of disobedience to God's commands of which King Saul was guilty?

124. Whence come the well-known words, "The memory of the just is blessed"?

125. St. Peter says, "Charity shall cover the multitude of sins." Quote Proverb which sets forth the same truth.

126. In what way did the children of Israel manifest at Mizpeh their sorrow for the sin of idolatry?

127. Quote some words of St. Paul in which he speaks of suffering as a special sign of God's love.

128. What words of St. Paul show the value he set upon intercessory prayer?

129. What was one of the first acts of David after he became king of all Israel?

130. Why did God command Moses to make the Ark?

131. From what passage do we learn that King Saul never used the Ark as a means of communicating with God?

132. In what way does Job speak of secret love of gold or wealth?

#### ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 794.

109. Their want of sincerity in their religious services. (Isaiah i. 13, 14; Jer. vii. 5, 6.)

110. Romans xiii. 1.

111. Ps. li. 17.

112. Because of Saul's disobedience to God's commands. (1 Sam. xv. 23.)

113. Against the Ammonites. (Judges xi. 12—17.)

114. Eliab, the eldest. (1 Sam. xvi. 6, 7.)

115. 1 Tim. vi. 13.

116. Judges xv. 19.

117. A great victory over the Ammonites and Moabites, in which the Jews had nothing to do, for their enemies killed each other. (2 Chron. xx. 22, 23.)

118. Gedeon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah and Samuel. (Heb. xi. 32.)

119. 1 Sam. xxiv. 12.

120. Proverbs xvii. 14.

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### SHORT ARROWS.

#### NOTES OF CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORK IN ALL FIELDS.

##### ON SUNLIT SANDS.



HUNDREDS of children are leagued together by the Children's Scripture Union. In the homes of the well-to-do, and those in humble circumstances, our boys and girls, to the number of more than two hundred and fifty thousand, are daily reading their Scripture portions, and the branches of this fruitful work have spread all over the world. Information as to its operations, and the Schoolboys' Scripture Union, can be obtained from Mr. J. B.

Bishop, 48, Paternoster Row. THE QUIVER has its own Bible-reading selections, and many societies exist to unite Christian hearts in the study of Scripture; but there is room and need for all. Not one of us, treading life's daily pathway, can afford to do without "this Lamp from off the Everlasting Throne." It is said that to address children acceptably is a task requiring special gifts and aptitude. The speakers of the Children's Special Service Mission are not above sharing their games and fun, and they believe in the Socratic method of asking questions during their instructions, so that the bright eyes do not grow