

THE CHILD AND THE STATE

AN APPEAL FOR THE NAMELESS.

(By Emily Wright).

Since the depletion of the male population through the ravages of the recent world war, attention has been called to the birth-rate and the percentage of infant mortality. The British Commission is disturbed over the fact that the upper and middle classes of Great Britain are rearing only small families. For social or economic reasons, or from insufficiency of domestic help or from sheer indifference to the continuance of the human race, these classes of society are not contributing their share to the population of the country. The lowest class is being left to replenish the nation. Thus, those people who have either made the least struggle in life for advancement, or who have sunk in the trial for it, possess the largest families. This is causing much anxiety, for a preponderance of those who may inherit the quality of unstableness when confronted with adversity, whose mental faculties are stunted, and whose physical needs have been neglected is not desirable. The perpetuation of this class would tend to weaken the blood of the race and lower the standard of mental and physical efficiency.

The Commission recommends that on the one hand the young people should be educated in the laws of sex hygiene and kindred subjects, including the duties and privileges of parenthood, and on the other, that the environment of the lower classes should be improved, in order to give that doubtful method a chance to offset the inheritance of the physical and moral defects of their class.

This is all very laudable, but children are being brought up, in Canada as well as Great Britain, with the idea implanted in them that trouble and expense forbid the rearing of a large family. Much education will be necessary to bring the rising generation to see that their duty lies in plunging themselves into a state of genteel poverty for the sake of the Empire. Something more than lectures will be necessary. Large families are beautiful in theory—and in reality, too, if funds are sufficient—but Commissions are apt to forget that they are a tremendous source of worry, however much there may be of love, when there is only one pair of hands to do the housework and nursing, and one income with which to provide the necessaries of life. When food and clothes are increased in price, they are increased for the whole family—not for just one as in the case of a bachelor. The appeal, which is being sent forth to the United Kingdom and the Dominions "for the women of the Empire to save the Empire by securing its continuance for the fulfilment of its beneficent mission in the world," will have to be accompanied by some practical help. Unfortunately, employers do not pay according to the size of the family. Efficiency only is what counts. In building up the "nation's capital of men and women," why should parents become poorer? Children are the assets of the country and beyond a given limit their expense should be borne by the country. There are still several methods of taxation left which would go far towards equalizing the burden. By this means those who are spared the duties and tasks and sacrifices of the married would bear a little of the responsibility of bringing up the nation's children.

With regard to those people in the lowest scale of society, the position, which exists in most large cities, is extremely difficult. If they ever had the initiative to struggle to provide for their families, their environments and an increasing family are sufficient to have defeated them. Unlike the middle classes they are apathetic as to what becomes of their children. Religious and charitable institutions have done a splendid work, but, at last, there is a possibility that

the government might intervene. Improvement of their environments is undoubtedly necessary, for a certain amount of material endowment helps the spiritual and moral well-being of man; but the real change must come in arousing the spark of Divine within him into a living reality, replete with its ideals, ideals which man must always have and ever strive after if he would elevate his character. The strength of these people, at present, lies in the number of their children. The Empire needs children, but not such children as these! Nevertheless, they are, unconsciously, by force of their numbers, demanding their "rights" from the government of their country. The fault is none of theirs that through ignorance and privation they have not a chance to live decently.

An Appeal for the Nameless Child.

We now come to a phase of the subject which, though unpleasant, forms a part of the life of the nation and has to be faced, namely, that unwanted, despised, dishonoured atom of humanity—the illegitimate child.

That we are in the twentieth century of the Christian era and so little has been done in the great, civilized English-speaking countries of the world for the solving of this problem is deplorable. The British Commission regard it as a "national problem urgently calling for a solution." The facts are that in Great Britain the number of illegitimate children is not decreasing and that mortality amongst them is double that among legitimate-born children. In the United States thirty-four thousand of them are born annually. In Germany the problem grew to be really alarming previous to the war; but with the fall of the dynasty came the emancipation of women, whose leaders realised that this prob-

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