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INTRODUCTION

This book is designed to give an outline of the recent war, from the standpoint of the women and children. There is no fear of aggravating a controversy amongst the Boers by its publication, for it will add nothing to their knowledge; these facts and many more are already well known in South Africa. But, so far, little has been heard in England of the farm-burning and the camps, from the side of those most concerned. The story is therefore largely told in the letters of women and in descriptions written by their friends. On them fell the brunt of the war. More adult Boers perished in the camps than fell in the field of battle, and over four times as many children. A sketch is given of the history and extent of farm-burning, to demonstrate how wide was the eviction of families, and how powerless they were in the grasp of circumstances. The comments put forward by all parties on its policy and on that of concentration are recorded. My own connection with the movement is shortly described, as well as the opposition aroused by my efforts to lessen the hardships and save the lives of the women and children.

I take also this opportunity of publicly denying the accusation, so widely made in the Press and elsewhere, that I have slandered the British troops. No one has yet substantiated this accusation from my words or writings.¹ I have, on the contrary, done my utmost to uphold the honour of the army. It is true that as long as war exists the honour of a country is confided to its soldiers, who will never cease to shield it; but is not the converse also true, and is it not often forgotten? viz. that the honour of the soldiers is confided to the country? If advantage is taken of the necessary obedience of soldiers to demand of them ser-

¹ See Blue Book, Cd. 1163, 1902, p. 109. "Mr. G. H. Turvey expressed astonishment at persons like Sir H. Campbell Bannerman and Miss Hobhouse slandering, without foundation, men fighting for the honour of old England."—Public Meeting at Ladybrand, "On Vile Fabrications and Slanders."

vices outside the recognised rules of warfare, or in performance of which their moral duty must clash with their professional duty, the blame lies on the country and its Government but not upon the army.

In these pages it is no part of my object to cast blame on any individual, but I have striven simply to portray the sufferings of the weak and the young with truth and moderation.

To the plain man and woman, outside the political and military worlds, it seems as though in war an arbitrary line is drawn, one side of which is counted barbarism, the other civilisation. May it not be that, in reality, all war is barbarous, varying only in degree? History shows that as nations have advanced in civilisation this line has gradually been raised, and watchful care is needed lest it slip back. None of us can claim to be wholly civilised till we have drawn the line above war itself and established universal arbitration in place of universal armaments.

The deaths of the Boer children will not have been in vain if their blood shall prove to be the seed of this higher rule of nations. Their innocent histories ought to become fully known and widely understood, and so implant a hatred of war and a shrinking from its horrors, which shall issue in a ripened determination amongst the kingdoms of the world to settle future differences by methods more worthy of civilised men.

My thanks are due to Mr. Alfred Marks, for a detailed and careful compilation of the rates of mortality.