

Day and night in the wynds of Edinburgh / by George Bell.

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DAY AND NIGHT

IN THE

WYND OF EDINBURGH.

BY GEORGE BELL, M.D.

Third Edition.

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THE TWO TIGERS

WINDS OF EDINBURGH

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DAY AND NIGHT, &c.

ONE of the most curious and at the same time distressing truths we know is, that a man may be miserable and not be conscious that he is so. He need not be insensate; but what we understand by the term misery does not distress him, it does not engage his mind, it tells upon him simply as an animal. Such a man is more contented and more gross than the beasts with which we find him associated. In virtue of his having a mind, he can, and therefore does, sink below nature, and manifests an apathy to, or a liking perhaps for, that from which brutes instinctively retire. This trebly base condition is the inheritance of very many, and it is acquired by not a few. It is acquired by the drunkard, and it is the inheritance of his children.

No one who has studied the subject of sanitary reform, as it deserves to be studied, or who has studied the lowest class with a view to *understanding* their condition, will require this to be illustrated. Such a student must have descended into the places where alone he can get information, and he must have tarried among the inhabitants of these, which are the lowest places of the earth. The study of such a subject involves very much more than what is called *examining* or *inquiring* into it: it involves analysis, and a sustained, unimpassioned reflection about the objects for whose sake chiefly the subject is worth being studied. This reflection must include the *morale* as well as the *physique* of the people, together with the relation which subsists between the two. What induced, and what continues them in the condition in which we find them?—this is the next step in our study; and thus we move on to the halting-place, which is not a “rest and be thankful,” for the *cui bono* of the journey remains still to be discovered. What is the use of our

knowledge? It does not benefit the poor, and it distresses us. No doubt the note of war has been sounded, and an attack is being made upon filth—upon that which offends the senses of the common observer—upon those glaring causes of disease and death, whose persistence compromises the safety of the public at large. But the attack is not of that thorough character described in the enactment proposed by the Lord Advocate. Nothing but a stout and comprehensive sanitary measure like that, will secure the purification and keeping pure of our cities.* Sanitary reform is the skirmish, as it were, before the great action with the causes which have degraded and retain so large a section of the plebeian class in a state of the most complete and thorough debasement.

These causes are vital, and possess a malignant energy which is almost irresistible. Although we are habituated to think about them, a gloom ever enshrouds our reflection. The saddest emotion contends with thought; and if a spark from any of the elevating sentiments flits across the field of our mental vision, when looking through memory at the mass of dehumanized humanity about which we are solicitous, wisplike it vanishes—the field is dark again, and we are in trouble. We are in trouble; for we are called on, not only to think about these people, but to act among them. What can we do? We return day after day, and night after night, to the scenes of misery, disease, and death. We listen to the cry of children, the wail of women, and the deep utterances of men. This awful harmony is in keeping with the picture before us. The pathos of the drama is profound. What can we do? Can we feed the children, comfort the women, and impart hope to the men? Can we do any thing that will materially tend to keep these people in the condition in which they are? No; they must descend a step lower, and then they get out of sight, but not out of memory. We shall here illustrate.

A few years ago we were called to visit a family occupying

* Every thing proves the necessity for sanitary reform. The statistics of fever prove it. Thus, of 14,861 patients admitted into the Royal Infirmary during the three years ending October 1848, 9,148 were the subjects of fever. Of these 6,528 resided in Edinburgh, viz.:—

1,108 in the High Street and adjoining closes.

1,690 in the Cowgate and adjoining closes.

1,281 in the West Port, Grassmarket, and adjoining closes.

Thus leaving only 2,449 for Canongate, Calton, Greenside, Stockbridge, and Water of Leith, including the whole of the south side, and the whole of the New Town.

a small room in a large and lofty tenement at the bottom of the High Street. The family consisted of father, mother, and five or six children. A number of rooms in the same story of the building were similarly occupied. Typhus fever had invaded the premises. Those in the upper story were first assailed. The messenger of death descended, and his having reached the family to which we allude was the reason why we were sent for. Every member of the family was smitten by the disease. The father, an industrious yet half-starved mechanic, died; the mother made a slow recovery; and the children, who were soon convalescent, for a time ran riot, being free from maternal restraint. Not yet recovered, but still an invalid, the mother began to work; the little strength she had failed her, and in a short time the family of the mechanic was a family of paupers. In process of time they left their dwelling, and we feel assured that they, like hundreds of others whose history is analogous to theirs, were finally absorbed into the class which is at the base of society—a class which is at once a disgrace and a peril to our country. Where did these people go to? Are there cheaper habitations to be had than that which they left? There are none cheaper, but there are many worse, and the class we allude to *must* inhabit them, or remain without shelter. They constitute what are called lodging-houses; they are in themselves all horror, and are situated in the vilest parts of the city. For the shelter which these places afford, each adult has to pay twopence a-night, which is equal to about £3 per annum. If the family is of average size, their lodging will cost nearly three times this sum. The shelter of these horrible places is resorted to because the parties have no regular income, and therefore cannot pay a rent. They live from hand to mouth, and they shelter themselves on the same principle. Their lodgings do not constitute a home in *any* sense of the word. The wretched people have only a nightly interest in them; and, besides this, they are crammed full of a motley crew of the destitute, squalid, obscene, blaspheming, vicious, and often criminal of both sexes, young and old. Who or what these people were, the widow of the mechanic knew not when necessity drove her into their company; but she and her family no doubt soon began to feel the influence of the association. Her subsequent history was in all probability identical with that of others. Horror-stricken at first, the subject of a moral *skunner*, the edge of feeling soon gets worn off,

and men get habituated to squalor as they do to other things. Unsympathized with, they gradually cease to experience the working of those affections which whilom rendered their poverty not ungraceful. Being without hope, they don't think about the future. The love of offspring shrinks into something smaller and less kindly than instinct, all sentiment departs, the base elements of nature assume the ascendancy, and thus they go down, "deeper and deeper still," until at length we find them in a state of complete apathy, and utterly debased. Such is the acquired condition of many a mother, and such the early fate of her offspring. Death in time removes the mother, but not perhaps until some, if not all of her children, have become pests to society, thieves proper, and thieving beggars.

The dens inhabited by out-door paupers, beggars, vagrants, the parents of ragged-school children, &c., &c., &c., are in obscure places. They are hidden among the masses of rotten, rat-haunted buildings behind the Grassmarket, Cowgate, West Port, Canongate, &c. They are as repulsive as the class which inhabits them, and they are as difficult to describe. No description can convey an adequate idea of the horrors of these places. They are—

"Pierced by no star,
That e'en I wept at entering. Various tongues,
Horrible languages, and cries of woe,
Accents of anger, voices deep and hoarse,
Made up a tumult, that for ever whirls
Round through that air, with solid darkness stain'd,
Like to the sand that in the whirlwind flies."

INFERNO, *Canto* iii. v. 22.

These places must be seen; and whoever wishes to have a just perception of what they are, must visit them. We advise such a person to go at night, under the guidance of a criminal officer familiar with the districts. He must not yield to the feeling of horror and disgust which will likely seize him when he, for the first time, finds himself in the entrance to one of these obscure and dismal abodes. This feeling will increase as he advances, that which awoke it having increased; but, arrived among the intricacies, his attention being demanded, the feeling will abate. He must look to his stepping, and not be too much startled if rats rattle past him, or if a cat, whose midnight vigil has been disturbed, spits in his face. After a good deal of threading and winding, ascending and descending, the officer will stop and

knock at a crazy door. Before reaching it, the unmistakeable and most disgusting odour of living miasm has perhaps been perceived. A moment after the officer has knocked, a hum will be heard like that which proceeds from a wasp's nest when it is disturbed, and above the hum a loud "Wha's there?" and on the utterance of the talismanic words, "The police!" the door will be opened. Go in, and look at the place and its occupants. The filling of this den was an instructive scene. We describe what we have witnessed:—A young woman with an infant had already arrived when we entered; she was chewing a crust, and feeding the innocent one with her fingers. Her breast was dry. In a short time, a lean, pale-faced, squalid man, with a couple of ragged, hungry-looking urchins, dropt in, and lay down without saying a word. They cast a glance on us; but, strange as we were in such a den, we were not an object of curiosity to them. Two or three grown girls next appeared—the worst kind of thieves. Next, a whole family arrived; they were strangers. They looked strange; for, though haggard and in the scantiest garb of poverty, they were not squalid: there were traces of sentiment in their faces. They had not yet got what painters call the finishing-coat. Apathy is the finisher. This company actually fell asleep, and, more wonderful still, they awoke again!

Any one who beholds and reflects upon the scene to which we have just referred, will understand why it has never been described. The describing of such a scene involves very much more than the telling of what one has beheld. It involves a reference to the past and future of the people as well as to the present. It involves the transfer of our perception of their moral condition, which is the spirit, or rather the demon, of the scene. The black-hole at Calcutta, in which men were stifled, has been described, and the hold of a slaver has been described; but no description *has*, because none *can*, be given of the interior of a low Edinburgh lodging-house. It defies the graver of Hogarth, the pencil of David Scott, so familiar with nightmare horrors, the pen of Dickens, and the tongue of Guthrie. How would the artist manage the background and middle distance of the picture, so varied, so full of national history,* so pregnant with dark biography? What could an uninstructed

* Statistics prove that the Scotch are the most drunken people on the face of the earth.

gazer make of the little sparks of light upon the black canvass, marking the morning beams of a mortal's day, which became dark as night before his sun had got a footing in the sky? Such lights would seem to him like falling stars—they would not light the gloom. And then what about the foreground? But we must ask no more questions. Here is a sketch by Guthrie—truly an enlightened Christian patriot:—

“On the forenoon of a winter day, some years ago, we received a note, urging us, if we wished to save his life, to hurry to the abode of the writer. We knew the man. He possessed more than ordinary talent, along with an uncommon knowledge of Scripture. He had seen a great deal of the world, and had now returned to spend his days at home, possessed of what, with a little industry on his part, amply sufficed for the maintenance of his family. A prudent, tidy, sober, sensible wife, with two or three fine children, made up his domestic circle; and a sweeter circle or happier home there need not have been in Edinburgh. But what availed all these? He was a drunkard; and in exploring that district in the first instance, he was found, a woe-begone wretch, sitting idle and gloomy in a foul apartment, his wife heart-broken, and himself the terror of his sweet children, who, clad in rags, waited on no ministry, and went to no school. Mainly through the kindness and Christian attention of our excellent elder of the district, there was wrought a visible and sensible change on this man's home and habits. Efficient allies of Him who seeks to recall the wanderer and reclaim the lost, our efforts were powerfully seconded by a conscience that had not yet lost its power to sting, and the tender affection with which, during his periods of sobriety, he regarded his wife and children. They came at length to the house of God; and it was as pleasant a sight as a man could desire to look on, to see that man on the Sabbath-day—his family seated beside him, the rose in their cheek, the light of love in their eye, and the rags exchanged for a comfortable and becoming attire. True to the summons of the Sabbath bell, they were there in the house of God; and on that man, as he sat before us, drinking in the truth, his glistening eye raised to the pulpit and fixed upon the speaker, we have often looked with wonder, and with thanks and glory to God. A corresponding change was presented by his house: how had the wilderness become an Eden, and the desert a garden of the Lord! In course of time his home was comfortably and fully furnished; and there was even no little taste exhibited in the cheap and simple ornaments which adorned its once naked walls. Bent on being another man—sincerely anxious to reform his habits—he committed his income to the keeping of his elder, and studied with the utmost care to avoid the neighbourhood of temptation; and it was impossible to stand on the clean swept hearth, before the bright, brisk fire, amid so many comforts, with such a changed and cheerful family around, and not cling to the hope that this was a brand plucked from the burning.

“Such, for a while, had been the state of matters; and therefore when we received the ominous note, it was with dark forebodings we made for the locality, and climbed the five flights of stairs, at the top of which stood the room to which drunkenness and poverty had driven W——, and in which, though brighter days had dawned, he had continued to reside. His wife, ‘her eyes consumed with grief,’ with her three children, who were clinging in terror to their mother, was the first sight that met us. Making a sign of silence, she led us into a neighbour's room, and there, in whispers, told how he had been mad with drink for some days gone by; and, bent on mischief, had compelled her, trembling for her own and children's lives, to seek an asylum beneath this kind neighbour's roof. She warned us of his deadly purposes, so that we used some caution in approaching the man himself. The door, which was bolted, he opened when we knocked and announced our name. And, on pushing up the

door, how did we stand astonished at the scene! The furniture was gone, the bedding gone, the fire was quenched on the hearth, the very grate was removed from the cold, black chimney—all sold for drink. And on the bare boards of this dismantled dwelling, that cold winter day, stood the man himself, without coat, or vest, or stocking, or shoes—the sleeve of his shirt rolled up to the shoulder, and a large knife in his hand. He was weary of life, and stood uncertain by which of three passages to leave the scene. The knife would open the shortest; the window was thrown up for a leap, and it was six stories down to the street; while our eye fell on rope and noose, which hung ominous and frightful from a post of the bed—too cumbrous an article to be removed without help. We shall not stay to tell how we dealt with this terrible and troubled spirit; but can we forget the agony into which he was thrown when we introduced his wife and children!—what groans rent his bosom!—what tears streamed from his eyes!—how he humbled himself on the floor at the feet of his wife!—how he kissed his little ones, and pronounced himself the veriest, vilest wretch on earth! The scene would have melted a heart of stone; and it afforded us some hope that, from the struggle with his enemy which had commenced anew, he might at length come off victorious, earning the blessings of his family, and the praise of Him who hath said, ‘He that ruleth his own spirit is greater than he that taketh a city.’ Alas! his goodness was like the morning cloud: the storm gathered and burst again; and at length he left his home, adding one to the vast number of miserable families which have been deserted by their natural protectors. He was soon forgotten, as a broken vessel flung among the rubbish—as a dead man out of mind; and yet, when we supposed that he had ended his days in the canal, or perished by some hedge-side, we met again. Engaged, one day, in visiting in the Grassmarket, we entered a low lodging-house, kept by an Irishwoman; and, while we were conversing with some of her countrymen, the mistress told us there was one in the back room who wished to see us. She lighted a candle,—which seemed strange enough in broad daylight, but of which we found the use on ascending two or three steps,—and, bending down, entered a low, long, dark, narrow apartment, with a passage up the middle, and beds, as thick as they could be placed, ranged on each side. We followed her till she stopped at a bed, on which, beneath a dirty coverlet which was drawn over both face and feet, was the form of a human being, like a corpse beneath its shroud. The only answer we could obtain to the question, Who sought to see us? was a heavy sigh; and our attempt to pull the coverlet from the face being resisted, we were left to wonder who this could be. Yielding at length, the face was uncovered, and the light of the candle fell on the haggard features of W——.”

A man is apt to be absorbed by what he sees, and, if the scene is very dreadful, to imagine that nothing can be worse. Let us tell the reader that very, very great is the misery which is in the earth; it is greater than the most horror-inventing can imagine. Before the catastrophe occurs, before death comes in, very many of the human beings about whom we are now writing must act a part in still another scene. For a time the living and the dead must be associated, and those living so dead, so numb, their moral sense so withered and frozen that they feel nothing; they utter no cry; they make no complaint; they are dead too, and they do not exclaim, “Who will deliver us from this body of death?” By this we intend to give a glimpse of the horrid reality, that the dead and the living are often to be found in the same chamber, and that the presence of the former is no source

of disturbance to the latter. Surely humanity cannot descend lower? It can. It was seen in a lower phase at Skibbareen.

We meet with aged people in the dens of the city, and we have often wondered at this as we do when we see a *lusus naturæ*. Their preservation is almost miraculous; at all events, it is providential. In one room, twelve feet long by ten broad, we once saw twelve women asleep. There was not even straw for them to lie on; but they lay on the boards, such as they were—for they were riddled with rat-holes—with their heads to the creviced wall, and their feet across the chamber. They had no covering save the rags in which they wandered about during the day. We awoke one of the sleepers, an old Irishwoman, and asked her some questions. She paid a penny per night for the privilege of sleeping in this den. She lived by begging, and charity makes us suppose that all the rest did the same. The odour of the human miasm in the place was, beyond all conception, dreadful; and it was with great effort that we managed to sustain it during our short midnight interview with this hag, who did not perceive it at all. Cholera prevailed in this tenement, yet none of the inhabitants of this chamber were victims. Providence preserved them.

Such is an indication of what constitutes the substratum of society in Edinburgh. What is technically called the pauper class is, in reality, part and parcel of it. They are almost, if not quite, as wretched; they are as base, taken as a whole; and they are equally dangerous to the country, in every sense of the term. The only distinction between them is, that the one gets from the parochial board what the other begs or steals.

Here is a disease—How should it be treated? When a physician is called to visit a patient, one inquiry he always makes, or always should make, is, Has any thing been already done—if so, what? He endeavours to discover the natural constitution of the patient; for constitution imparts a particular temper, so to speak, to the disease. This he does in addition to examining the features of the malady presented to his inspection. According to his understanding of the case in its details—its cause—its tempering by constitution—and its modification by previous treatment, are his proceedings regulated. The social disease now under discussion must be dealt with after a like fashion;—previous treatment must be considered—constitution must be attended to—and the cause or causes of the

malady must be kept steadily in view. We propose to consider the causes of the disease. The consideration of these will involve a reference to constitution and previous treatment.

Idleness and vice are the two prime causes of the evil which is distressing the country. These are always associated; for so soon as the one takes up its abode in a man the other follows, just as the settlement of one attorney in a village determines the advent of another. The experience of every man who has observed individuals, families, or classes, coincides with the great general truth, that idleness and morality cannot coexist—and the converse, that idleness and immorality are always coupled. These two are admittedly the causes of pauperism. By pauperism we mean that base condition in which a man is who does not support himself, or strive to do so, by honest industry. It is manifest that if the causes are ever in operation the result must persist; and that, if the result is to be modified or lessened, it must be by moderating the energy of the causes. What, then, is the nature of these causes?

Is the idleness complained of a thing altogether of spontaneous origin, or is it in a sense, and to a large extent, a production?

Is the vice complained of a thing of spontaneous origin, or is it largely dependent on other causes than those which naturally exist in every man?

We say that both these causes of pauperism are to a great extent artificial productions. Every cause is the effect of something, and the question here is, of what are the causes of pauperism the result? The right answering of this question is of the first importance; for in this case, as in many others, it is only by destroying or modifying the causes that we can hope to remove or ameliorate the effect.

Chalmers demonstrated, that very much of the idleness and immorality which prevail, are both directly and indirectly dependent on compulsory or legalized charity; and very many who have devoted their attention to this subject, since he expounded it, have not only observed the sequence of an increase of pauperism on the expenditure of "rates," but they have likewise recognised causation in the sequence. The fact is now so palpable and so notorious, that rate-payers in the mass perceive it; and, reasoning from effect to cause, they see how that which experience has demonstrated was inevitable. Men, who looked

deeper than the surface—who took the nature of man into consideration when reflecting on a measure which was to be directly applied to him—foresaw the result of the Scotch poor-law. They did not believe that poverty is the cause of every evil, and, among others, the cause of fever. They classed poverty with its concomitants, depravity, dissipation, swarming, uncleanness; and they saw in this malignant combination the hot-bed of pestilence. They were right in classing it, and in refusing to detach it.

The tail of a worm has been described as its head. The description was true as regards the tail, but the reverse of accurate as regards the head. Similar mistakes are often made in observing complicated events—heads and tails are confounded—causes and effects are not distinguished. Thus, poverty is always associated with misery, squalor, &c., and these latter have been attributed to poverty. But poverty, in reality, ranks as one of the elements of the state called misery, being, as it is, an *effect* and *not* a *cause* of that which brings men down to the basement story of society. The fester has been mistaken for the disease, whereas it is only an evidence of the disease. Poverty is the evidence of something. Certainly not of the want of money, for it consists in a want of money. If it was simply the evidence of the want of money, giving money would cure it; but it is universally notorious that giving money aggravates the evil. Yet this is the principle of the poor-law. The workhouses are now fuller than ever they were—out-door *relief* (?) is rapidly extending—vagrancy is on the increase—the hospitals are crowded—in a word, pauperism, in all its phases, is thriving.

The poor-law says that money is a plaster suited for the gangrene which is eating society. We never heard of a gangrene being treated with a plaster. Plasters aggravate the malady—they fret, tease, whip it into a gallop. The principle of the treatment is to bridle it—to arrest its progress. Nature does the rest. She casts off the slough, and heals the sore. Money is not a cure for pauperism, because it is not a cure for any of the causes of pauperism. It confirms the existing pauper in his condition, and it smoothes the way for the advance of followers. If there be truth in what we so confidently assert, then the sooner the poor-law is amended the better. Let it be

made applicable, as it was in the days of yore, to the halt, maimed, blind, and impotent poor. Let the law be the reflection of its genius.

The criminal is a grade above the modern pauper—his activity alone renders him superior. He takes, in defiance of law, what law is weak and simple enough to give to the other. The plunder taken by the first, and passively acquired by the second, is exchanged by both for whisky. This whisky exaggerates the *callus* deposited on the mind of the one, and thickens the vile crust of moral *sordes* which envelopes the other. It all but damns them both.

The criminal is as ill used as the pauper; for while the latter is deprived of his only chance of rising to independence, the former has no inducement held out to him to become honest. He is experienced in law—he knows that it varies in its execution according to the magistrate who administers it—he knows the comforts of the jail, that they are superior to any to be had elsewhere and within his reach. He has energy—he is a poacher on the public manor; and, when he is weary of sport, he retires to an hotel provided by the public for his accommodation and comfort. He is there recruited in body and mind. Much of the success of this creature depends upon his temerity, and much of his temerity depends upon his experience of the uncertainty of the police law. He may almost choose his sentence; for he may choose the day of his caption, and consequently he may select his judge. Four bailies—as unlike each other, body and mind, as four bailies can be—and two sheriffs preside in the police court. If Bailie A. tries the case, “thirty days” will be the sentence; but if Bailie D. tries it, “sixty days,” to a certainty, will be the condemnation. He prefers Bailie A. therefore. If possible, he keeps clear of the sheriffs; they know the law—they understand the nature of their guardianship. Why should one prostitute be dismissed from the bar of the police court with a second-rate moral admonition, and another be locked up in the jail for thirty days? Why should one spirit-dealer be fined five shillings for keeping his pauper-making shop open after eleven o’clock, and another be fined one pound sterling for the same offence? What do bailies, *qua* bailies, know about law? how can they be expected to know any thing about it? Would the town employ a doctor, a minister, a writer to the signet, a merchant, a baker, a butcher, a hosier, or any other

than an architect, to plan a city church? It is not enough that a man is a good, sensible, public-spirited man—that won't qualify him to be a judge. If it did, it would qualify him to be any thing; it would qualify him to paint the Provost's picture. Is the planning of a church of greater moment than the administration of law? It is idle to argue the matter. None should be permitted to wield such a weapon as the law, excepting those who have a full knowledge of its nature, power, and meaning. A radical reform is imperiously demanded. Instead of a baker, a hosier, a merchant, and mayhap a spirit-dealer, presiding alternately in the police court, with our most admirable sheriffs, let the former be freed from their ludicrous position, and the latter from this part of their arduous and important duties; and let there be a police magistrate appointed, who is learned in the law, and skilled in its application. Let there be, above all things, uniformity of administration. But we must return from this digression.

Chalmers would expunge the poor-law from the statute book, because it abridges the comfort and deteriorates the character of the population—because it releases a man “from the office of being his own protector, or the protector of his own household,” and rifles him “of all those virtues which are best calculated to dignify his condition.” These are very sufficient reasons why the poor-law should be expunged, or, at all events, amended. It is a first step towards the elevation of the people. But, according to our understanding, Chalmers' philosophy does not “tak end” in this proceeding. It goes deeper. Its practical issue involves the retention of the country population in the country, and the receiving back into the country the heaped surplus population of the towns. It discountenances the idea of a man being *forced* to be idle, and aims at his being coaxed to be industrious. If his philosophy prevailed, men would not be swept off the land, and deposited like wreck upon the coast; but they would be encouraged to cultivate the valleys and slopes in the places of their nativity. Now, where nothing is to be heard but the bleating of sheep and the challenging of muir-cocks—then, we should listen to the whistle of the ploughboy and the horn of chanticleer. While the pastures would be clothed with flocks, the valleys would be covered over with corn; “the people would eat in plenty, and praise the Lord their God.” Under such a *regime*, nothing would be more hope-

ful than the labour of the schoolmaster and the pastoral ministration of the gospel messenger among the people, emerged from a state of forced or otherwise induced inactivity. Now, we have a depopulated country and plethorized towns; then, we should have a land full of life, and cities unoppressed.

We have said that idleness is a prime cause of pauperism, and we have more than hinted that very much of this idleness is necessitated or forced. Work fails the agriculturist, and he must either live as a beggar in the country, or tramp into town there to live as a beggar, and perhaps to learn vice. There is nothing for him to do in the town—he is forcedly idle. Again, the labour market is surfeited with craftsmen of all trades, and the surplus of this class are necessarily idle. By one way of calculating, it takes nine tailors to make a man; but, by another way of computing, it takes at least nine men to make a tailor. Edinburgh cannot muster enough of men to make the tailors it contains. Again, many of the victims of eviction find their way into the towns where there is nothing for them to do; and they too are forcedly idle. The cause or causes which drive these people in, keep them in; and thus paupers are imported into, as well as bred in, the towns. We might here trace a bitter sentence about the Irish, who are forced over in crowds to deepen the die of our pauperism; but we shall not do it, for, we believe, that our Government will soon begin to think of protecting our shores from this dreadful invasion.* The causes of pauperism, to which we have alluded, are always in a state of energetic activity—they work much faster than death, and produce more than the grave absorbs. Thus, pauperism is a growing evil. It is a mockery to tell men to be industrious when there is nothing for them to do.

There is no good reason why any agricultural labourer, or any unemployed artisan, should be idle so long as five or six millions of cultivable acres of land in Scotland remain uncultivated. The two facts—waste labour, and waste land—stand staring and wondering at each other; and well they may. If

* We learn, from the Report of the Royal Infirmary for 1847–1848, that, on the 19th of September 1847, there were 511 fever patients in the house, and that 379 of these were Irish. The number of Irish admitted into the Royal Infirmary during this year, for “all diseases,” was 2563. Each patient, on an average, costs £1, 10s.; and thus the low Irish, who have nothing to do in Edinburgh, cost the Infirmary about £3800 in the year 1847–48. The migratory Irish are a pestilence as well as a pest. This country both desires and deserves to be protected from them.

the ground could speak, what would it say? It would say, "Relieve me from thralldom." Waste land is the natural resort for waste labour, and the cultivation of it is the sure, and we will add, the *only* method by which pure consumers can be converted into producers. The practicability of it was doubted; but it has now been demonstrated. We direct attention to the demonstration of it in Holland, and likewise to the demonstration of it at home. We shall not argue further, but give the history of an experiment on a large scale, as we find it recorded in the *Sheffield Times* of July 28, 1849.*

"In order to exhibit the circumstances in which this enterprise originated, it will be necessary to advert briefly to certain matters affecting Sheffield as a manufacturing town. It is generally well known that the staple trade of Sheffield, like that of other manufacturing districts dependent upon the caprice of supply and demand, monetary variations, and other occult influences, is subject to frequent fluctuations—now in a state of vigorous health, succeeded by a delusive plethora—then under the depression of a blight, the severity of which is felt more keenly by contrast with the temperateness of the atmosphere recently inhaled. A few weeks of bad trade finds a large number of our artisans—chiefly those engaged in the unorganized trades, and having no union funds to fall back upon—shorn of their scanty fleece, and consequently unprepared to endure the commercial storm which has set in. Should this ungenial condition of affairs continue, the number of the destitute is weekly and every week augmented almost in the degree of a rolling snowball, until, as was the case less than a year ago, there are many hundreds of able artisans deprived of their usual resources, and reduced to a state of dependence on the bounty of the parish:† then may it be said of the Board of Guardians for the time being, that their cup of responsibility is full to the brim. These matters, we apprehend, at such times claim their especial consideration:—1. The application of a test which shall enable them to discriminate between the really destitute though industrious applicant for relief, and him who prefers a lazy dependence to honourable toil. 2. How the helpless and dependent can be supported at the smallest possible cost to the rate-payers, by rendering them as far as possible self-supporting. 3. How to employ these supernumerary hands so as not to deprive them of their desire or their fitness to return to a course of independent labour.

"At the commencement of the recent depression of the trade of Sheffield, which had its origin early in 1847, the Guardians of the Sheffield Union seem to have addressed themselves to a solution of the foregoing problems. During the too frequent recurrence of the state of things just adverted to, it has generally happened in most parts of the country, that those upon whom this responsibility has rested, have suffered themselves to be stultified by their embarrassed position. They have gone on doling out relief as long as they were able to raise a rate, seeing no ray of hope save in the return of prosperous trade. By this inertness how many small tradesman and others of that class have been reduced to the condition of those for whose support they were ruinously taxed, and how many of the working classes, by the enervating and vitiating

* See likewise Dr Begg's ample and vigorous exposition of this subject in his pamphlet, entitled, "Pauperism and the Poor-Laws," &c. Johnstone and Hunter, Edinburgh. And Discussions in the Edinburgh Town-Council, and at the City Parochial Board; Edinburgh Newspapers, October and November 1849.

† About the time when the Union Farm was projected, there were between five and six hundred able-bodied adult males dependent on the parish for support.

effects of long exemption from labour, have been permanently rendered paupers !

"It was the desire to guard against those oppressive evils that originated the idea of the Sheffield Union Farm. Various 'labour tests' had beforetime been resorted to, but these were little better than merely digging holes to fill them up again. Such an application of physical power was almost, if not entirely, unproductive ; and this kind of work, for the very reason that it was unproductive, was, to a large class of thinking men, accustomed to well-applied useful labour, the source of unmixed disgust. For the employment of this surplus labour the cultivation of the land seemed the obvious and natural outlet ; and it possessed this great recommendation, that it in no degree diminished the employment of those who had the good fortune to remain engaged in the workshop. Perhaps we may here be allowed to remark, parenthetically, upon the impolicy, if not the folly, sometimes displayed by public men and public bodies under similar circumstances. Instead of finding a proper outlet for the superabundant labour thrown upon the market, they only aggravate the evil they are striving to remedy. We will suppose a case by way of example. Let us imagine that there are in the Sheffield Union Workhouse a number of file-cutters ; the Guardians are resolved, at all hazards, to employ these men at file-cutting, and they succeeded in procuring employment from the file manufacturers at diminished prices. The result of this must necessarily be the pauperizing of the whole body of file-cutters. For this reason, supposing that the amount of files at this time being cut is ten per cent. of the ordinary quantity, that amount of work would on the short-time principle be divided amongst probably three times the number of workmen actually required to perform the task. These men, as soon as deprived of their 'stint,' would be reduced to the necessity of falling back upon the parish funds, which, besides vastly increasing the number of paupers, would be additionally burdened rather than relieved in consequence. A host of other inimical results simultaneously present themselves to view ; but with those we have at present nothing to do, our object being merely to show that the reclaiming of waste land is, above all others, the best description of work upon which surplus pauper labour can be employed, because it interferes with no independent man's labour, but benefits the country materially, by creating, as it were, an additional quantity of productive land.

"The proposition to commence a farm in connection with the Sheffield Union Workhouse originated with Mr WATKINSON, the union clerk, who, besides having a good knowledge of agriculture, had previously designed and carried into operation a similar plan while acting in connection with the guardians of the Chorlton Union. Mr WATKINSON's proposal, when first broached at Sheffield, met with the opposition of several members of the Board of Guardians ; but, encouraged by the approval of other members of the board, he persevered, till, impelled by the growing necessity for some additional provision for the employment of the class of paupers under consideration, the Board at length consented to make the experiment. The design, be it understood, was not so much to undertake the pursuit of agriculture in such a manner as to require men skilled in farming operations, as to render pauper labour reproductive by the reclaiming of waste land—a description of work upon which unskilled workmen may be employed to advantage. To this end a negotiation was early last year opened with Mr ELLISON, steward to the Duke of Norfolk, the result of which was that a tract of moorland, fifty acres in extent, the property of his Grace, was transferred to the guardians on a lease for twenty-one years, at a yearly rental of 4s. per acre. This land is situate at Hollow Meadows, some six or seven miles west of Sheffield, and on the road to Glossop. The aspect of the site is as sterile and unpromising as can be imagined, and it is obviously of such a character, considering also its distance from any considerable town, as to deter any one from attempting to bring it into cultivation unless it was insured to him at a very low rent, and he had at command an abundance of unprofitable labour.

"Operations were commenced at the Union Farm in May 1848. That part

of the country is but very thinly peopled ; and the first requisite, therefore, was a house for the labourers. A substantial building, situate near the eastern extremity of the new possession, within a few score yards of the Surrey Arms, was forthwith erected, at a cost of about £1000, and in the month of October had arrived so nearly at completion as to be partially habitable. At this period there were nearly 400 able men receiving parochial relief, for the employment of whom there existed only very inadequate provision, consisting of grinding corn by hand-mills, and picking oakum—both of them branches of employment at once irksome and unprofitable. In the month of October, then, a qualified superintendent of farming operations having been engaged, some fifty men were drafted out of the ranks of the able-bodied paupers and sent to the farm. The mode of employment, although to many entirely novel, was greatly preferred to the corn-grinding and oakum-picking, and the farm consequently became in a short time the abode of the privileged, scarcely any being sent thither besides those whose general conduct was deemed worthy of reward and encouragement.

“ Having given some account of the origin of the enterprise, we will now endeavour to describe the farm as it appears at the present time. We are enabled the more easily to do this, in consequence of having, by the courtesy of Mr WATKINSON, been allowed a few days ago an unreserved inspection of the place. The first object that attracts the notice of the visitor when he arrives at the farm, is the newly-built house. At present there is no farm-yard, the operations having yet scarcely advanced so far as to require the execution of that part of the plan. The building, which is of white stone, is of considerable dimensions. The kitchen and other offices, together with the apartments of the superintendent and his wife—the latter individual acting as matron of the establishment—constitute the eastern wing, at right angles with which, and branching from its centre, is the accommodation for the work-people. On the basement story is a spacious hall, fitted up with benches, tables, &c. Here the men take their meals, and it also serves them for a sitting-room. Attached to it, on the same floor, is a place supplied with a sink and a row of water-taps, where the men wash themselves, and there is in addition some further accommodation of the same kind. Above are the sleeping apartments. The first flight of steps leads into a long, lofty room, with bare stone walls, but well whitewashed. It contains, on opposite sides, sixteen double beds. There is a room of the same size over this, similar in all its chief features ; and at the end next to the superintendent's house are three smaller rooms, intended, if necessary, to be occupied by aged men. The bedsteads are of iron, and are well furnished with clean bedding. All the apartments, though plainly furnished, are well ventilated, and are as clean as a Jew's house on the eve of the Pass-over. Every thing wears the appearance of comfort and order ; and when one observes the simplicity and inexpensiveness of all the appointments, one is pleased to find that domestic comfort can, under proper arrangements, be procured at so cheap a rate. The building, and every thing belonging to it, are exceedingly simple, but substantial and well contrived ; and taken as a whole, bearing in mind the class of men for whose use it is designed, there scarcely remains any thing to be desired.

“ Now for a few words as to the appearance presented by the farm. It is enclosed on one side by a good stone wall, upon which an immense amount of labour has been bestowed. It is eight hundred and eighty yards in length, five feet high, and about a foot and a half in thickness. The whole of the stone was bored and quarried by the pauper labourers, and by them conveyed to the spot where it was required, the only labour having to be paid for being the dry walling. The opposite or south side of the area is bounded by the turnpike road, which previously was walled on both sides ; and a short wall at each end encloses the entire farm. Towards the road the enclosure slopes, in some parts rather steeply. There is plenty of stone on the land adjacent, the free use of which is allowed. To facilitate the conveyance of the stone from the quarry a tramroad has been laid, along which the stone for the erection of the house was conveyed, having been got by the men themselves, and laid on the building

site, ready for the masons. They have in a similar manner contributed to the erection of a spacious shed, about midway between the house and the quarry, intended to be occupied during inclement weather by the men, in the rough-dressing of stone for the numerous out-buildings yet to be reared. Another important operation, performed by the labourers, is the construction of the water-works, a line of pipes having been laid under ground to the house, from a fine spring of pure water at the distance of several hundred yards.

"The work of clearing has been accomplished upon about eight acres adjacent to the homestead. The superficial stone, which is only too abundant, has been thoroughly eradicated, and used in the formation of deep under-drains, a description of improvement very extensively resorted to. These eight acres, having been well broken up by the spade, thoroughly cleared, and efficiently drained, are now for the first time under cultivation. With the exception of a garden plot, the land is cropped with potatoes, oats, wheat, barley, turnips, and mangel-wurzel. The tillage used has been carted from the Union establishment at Sheffield. Some portion of the crops upon this newly reclaimed land are remarkable for extraordinary luxuriance, and the produce generally promises to be quite an average. The oats in particular, as they appear in certain places, would do credit to a well-managed farm in the best cultivated part of England; and it may justly be said of the whole, that there is nothing in its appearance to bring to mind the fact, that prior to this season all was one dreary waste, like the country now is by which it is mostly surrounded. The portion of the fifty acres not yet broken up, is used as pasturage for the farm-house, and a number of cattle taken in to gist, the receipts from which will exceed, at the end of the season, the year's rent of the whole fifty acres. The main force is still employed in clearing the land, every small portion of which, as soon as prepared, is at once made available for produce.

"The hours of labour are from half-past seven in the morning to six in the evening, deducting the usual meal-times. The week's operations are brought to a close at noon on Saturday, when each man, after partaking of dinner, returns to his family and friends, with whom he is at liberty to spend the Sabbath, but he must return to the farm by Monday at mid-day. When we visited the farm, last Saturday afternoon, the men had left off work; we had not, therefore, the advantage of observing whether or not they appeared cheerful and contented. Of this, however, we were assured, that while compelled to remain dependent on the parish, they greatly prefer being at the farm. More than this is not desirable. The active labour and corresponding feed suit well their habits and constitution; and almost every man when sent to the farm speedily becomes healthy and robust. The superior treatment here administered, has the good effect in most instances of effecting a *reform in the character* of these stubborn spirits, who, while in the workhouse, were refractory and ill-behaved; and many who, while remaining in the workhouse or at the flour-mill, found it impossible to obtain employment at their trade, become so far improved in character after a short residence at the farm, that they experience but little difficulty in gaining the sort of employment which previously they had solicited in vain. In this manner their withdrawal from the farm makes room for others.

"The recent improvement in the staple trades of Sheffield has rapidly led to the absorption of a large portion of the able-bodied paupers into the ranks of the employed artisans, and on this account there were last week only about forty men remaining at the farm.* The fluctuation in the number of labourers, however, creates very little if any inconvenience in respect to the systematic progress of the operations, inasmuch as the chief work is the reclaiming of the land, a process which can be easily suspended or recommenced at any time.

"The attempt to bring under cultivation a tract of waste land by means of surplus pauper labour has, we can state from personal observation, been completely successful. It now remains to be seen whether, as respects pecuniary considerations, the result is such as to warrant an extension of the plan. WITHOUT ENTERING INTO DETAILS, WE ARE ENABLED TO STATE ON THE BEST AUTHORITY,

* This week, we understand, that reduced number has been considerably diminished.

THAT THE EXPERIMENT PROVES THAT, IN ADDITION TO SUPPORTING THE LABOURERS EMPLOYED AT THE FARM—AND THIS OF ITSELF IS NO MEAN CONSIDERATION—THE RETURN YIELDED BY THE VARIOUS SOURCES OF INCOME WILL FULLY BALANCE THE INTEREST OF THE CAPITAL EXPENDED. This fact, we apprehend, can scarcely be otherwise than satisfactory; because, even leaving out of view the important moral results involved, the scheme provides an outlet for almost any amount of unproductive labour, and, by its pecuniary operation, greatly mitigates the severity of the infliction resulting from an extensive and protracted depression of trade.

“For the success of this important and somewhat novel improvement in the application of pauper labour, the public of Sheffield are indebted in a very great degree to the enlightened intelligence and unwearied perseverance of Mr Watkinson. We believe that the realization of the plan, involving the surmounting of numerous difficulties, has cost that functionary an immensity of labour beyond what pertains strictly to the duties of his office; but he appears to enjoy an ample reward in contemplating the satisfactory result which, happily, has crowned his praiseworthy efforts. It is gratifying to be able to state, too, that the members of the Board of Guardians are decidedly favourable to the scheme, and are endeavouring by earnest co-operation to perpetuate its successful working.

“We trust that this notice will be the means of inducing a considerable number of our townsmen and others to visit the locality in question. We can promise them a degree of pleasurable interest that will fully repay them for their trouble. If they have not the advantage of being accompanied by one of the guardians or by the union clerk, they will find the resident superintendent quite willing to afford them an opportunity for personal inspection, and ready to furnish all the information in his power.”

We shall not weaken this demonstrative argument by making any comment.

In reference to eviction and other causes which drive agriculturists into the towns, we shall say little; for we believe that the whole question concerning the management of property will soon be thoroughly examined by the parties primarily interested—namely, the proprietors. We hope that they, and especially the vice-kings in the Highlands, will consider it with a more steady, intelligent, generous, and withal economic eye, than they have hitherto cast upon it. We hope that, while thinking of the tenant and the peasant, they will remember that “it is the magic of property which converts sand into gold,” and that a man must be inspired by hope in order to his prosperity. Under the present *regime* the peasant cannot rise; he is uninspired by *hope*, which is the animator and the life of ambition. They must discard the dim distorting lanterns of factors, and look at the subject by the light of heaven. This clear light will reveal to them the great economic principles which ought to guide them. These principles are a combination of righteousness and justice—principles which assert the right of men to live in and on the land which gave them birth.

We cannot trust ourselves to write what we think about evic-

tion; but this we must say, that we admire, while we sorrow for the men of Solas. We admire them for their virtue and their courage; we sorrow for them for the same reason that the law which condemned them blushed.

The excuses—for they are not reasons—why eviction in the Highlands is practised, and emigration from them energetically promoted, are various. Among others, it is said that the people are lazy;—they are Celts, and are incapable of advancement by industry. But they have never been allowed to have that kind of interest in the soil which is essential to their prosperity. The few whose lot it was to be differently situated have thriven. If the people are incapable of thriving at home, how are they to thrive abroad? Does emigration change the nature of a man? The most it can do is to give his nature an opportunity of being developed. That opportunity can be given at home. It is unwise as well as cruel to expatriate the virtue, the thews and the sinews of an under-populated country. The scoundrels and the vile could be spared; but the good men, let us keep them. Again it is said, that if they would work the ground would not support them. The ground never said so.* We have seen well-stocked kailyards and patches of corn surrounding the huts of shepherds up among the Grampians. Again it is said, the climate is inimical to husbandry. Gooseberries ripen in the highest Highlands. Did it never occur to landlords to inquire, whether the reason why the Highlanders do not thrive, may not be one which they, the landlords, can remove? Mr Matheson is working out a proof to this effect: the tenants in Lewis are thriving. In Inverness-shire a similar proof is being led: the tenants under the protection of Grant of Ballindalloch will prosper. These men are administering

* The "allotments" of the victims of the great Sutherland clearance who would not leave the country, were generally situated on the sea-coast. These allotments "could not be called land, being composed of various stripes, promontories, cliffs, and precipices, rocks and deep crevices, interspersed with bogs and morasses." . . . "In many places the spots the poor people endeavoured to cultivate were so steep, that while one was delving, another had to hold up the soil with his hands, lest it should roll into the sea, and, from its constant tendency to slide downwards, they had frequently to carry it up again every spring, and spread it upon the higher parts." Well may the author of these sentences (an intelligent writer in the *Weekly Chronicle*) say, that "none but a hardy, patient, and moral race, with an ardent attachment to their country, would have quietly submitted" to these circumstances. Necessity caused these good men to demonstrate an important truth. But hope is at once as sure and a better stimulus than necessity. Pressed by the latter, men can live—urged by the former, they will thrive.

property in the spirit which should always regulate the laws of right.

To conclude this part of our subject, we shall just add, that no fact has been more largely demonstrated every where and at all times, than that the soil will yield much more than is necessary for the maintenance of those who cultivate it. This is as true of Scotland as it is of Norway, Belgium, Switzerland, and France. Give the Scottish peasant encouragement to labour—then he, and with him the country, will thrive. We won't find him in Edinburgh in the capacity of a pauper.* *Sublata causa tollitur effectus*. Remove this cause of misery, and although all the evil that has already been produced by it will not be immediately remedied, yet, the spring being cut off, the channel of the current will soon become dry. In order to clean out a mill-dam, the sluice of the "mill-lead" must first of all be shut.

Vice, like idleness, is a prime cause of pauperism. The one is the workshop of hell, and the other is the foreman of the great adversary of man. If drunkenness is the vice *par excellence* of Great Britain, it is to an intense degree the vice of Scotland. The Scotch are *one-third* more drunken than the English, and *one-half* more drunken than the Irish. Many people wonder where the tattered, loathsome creatures, who stagger through the streets, get the means to procure the intoxicating agent. It certainly is a puzzling, as well as an awful, sight—a drunk beggar. Some of them get it from the parochial board. "A spirit-dealer in the High Street of Glasgow," informed a correspondent of the *Scotsman*, "that he draws £10 more on the pay-days of the poor than on any other day of the week." Another spirit-dealer says, "that the paupers regularly come to him and spend in drink what they receive." Very many of the pauper class, when they get food instead of money, sell or barter the food for drink; and a very large proportion of the beggars who infest our streets and meet with so much commiseration, dispose of the bread and meat which they get in the same way. There are places in Edinburgh where drams are exchanged for broken bread, and this bread is sold afterwards at a profit.† These facts are notorious, but benevolence won't

* We have been credibly informed that *seven-eighths* of the Highland paupers in Edinburgh were the victims of eviction.

† There are fifty-four low eating-houses in Edinburgh in which whisky is sold. These eating-houses are not licensed, and are resorted to because food and drink can be got for a little more than food can be got at a victualler's. It is not the interest

attend to them. The same beggars are regularly supplied by the same parties with the means of exercising their vice. This unwise and indiscriminating benevolence fosters vice; it seduces boys and girls away from the Ragged Schools,* and fifty things besides.

Only a small moiety of legalized and voluntary charity reaches the victualler; the large moiety goes into the till of the spirit-dealer. The direct effect of its expenditure is further to degrade the already base, and the indirect effect is to multiply his kind. Contrary to what obtains in the case of almost every other commodity, the demand for whisky does not regulate the supply, but the supply, to a great extent, creates the demand. In March last, we addressed a letter to the editor of the *Witness*, which we may here quote:—

“MY DEAR SIR,—I had occasion to be in several parts of the Old Town last Sabbath night. On passing by the Lawn-market, my attention was arrested by two preachers, who were addressing two shifting congregations. I listened for a few minutes to one of them—that estimable man, Mr Flockhart, I believe—who was beseeching his hearers with much earnestness to learn wisdom.

“I passed on, and had not gone many paces before I was again arrested in my progress, not by a preacher of righteousness, but by four grown lads, who were wrestling with each other by way of amusement, and the while roaring out the most shocking obscenities and most fearful blasphemies. The moral outrage was horrible; and while I was meditating what to do—whether to arrest one of these miscreants myself, or give them all in charge to the police—my eye caught the light shed by the lamp of a low spirit-shop, and the whole history of these unhappy youths flashed across my mind. I passed on; and, as I proceeded down the High Street, my ears were shocked at of the excise to discover and prosecute these parties; neither is it the duty of the police to do so; and thus they both break the law and poison the poor unchallenged. Here we have another manifestation of the unsoundness of the law regulating the sale of intoxicating liquors.

* We have caught many truants from the Ragged School laden with provisions given to them by the pitying cooks of benevolent ladies and gentlemen. A large proportion of these boys and girls would not be truants, were it not for this source of living. We have often wished that the “broken meat,” a portion of which is thus mischievously disposed of, would find its way to the kitchen of the Original Ragged School, Ramsay Lane. We are told by economical cooks—and they are the best cooks—that roast beef bones are an excellent addition to pea-soup. We don’t mean *bare bones*!

every step by similar language, and my eye as often detected the infamous cause of this horrible depravity. I felt that I had no right to interfere with these half-drunken youths; and I perceived that there was great meaning in the observation made by a very civil and intelligent policeman, who seemed to be as much shocked by what he saw and heard as I was myself. On asking him if these fellows ought not to be taken to the Police-office? he said, 'It is of no use.' In point of fact, the Police-office could not hold them all; and if it could, it would be unjust to take them there, for the magistrate could not in justice punish them, neither could he with propriety counsel them to 'avoid the dram-shop.' Avoid the dram-shop, indeed! *Why, Sir, it is a difficult matter for a man who abominates drams to avoid getting into a dram-shop, especially on a Sabbath night, if, unfortunately for himself, duty calls him to the Old Town. At every step he incurs the risk of being shoved into one of these manufactories of criminals and paupers by some reeling receiver of parochial money, or some unfortunate apprentice who is being educated in the monster public school of infamy.*

"It is impossible adequately to describe the scenes in the High Street and closes which open into it on either side. The eye can refract them, but the mind refuses to absorb them. A very little is more than enough to constitute the subject of the gravest and most painful reflection. To see the mouth of a close choked up by a few of the corrupt female inhabitants thereof, all half drunk, and making the walls of the dismal access to their infernal homes shake with their hyena-like laughter and oath-impregnated voice of rage—to see this, I say, gives origin to a flood of gloomy reflections which trouble the mind. They haunt the chamber of thought. It is a relief when indignation is excited, and one asks himself why is this demoralizing, this pauper-manufacturing, this pestilence-creating, this crime-causing, this twice doubly-damning system tolerated? Why is it tolerated? Every good man asks himself and his neighbours this question twice every day of every year, and it is never answered, &c., &c.

"G. B."

We may well ask this question, when we see, as we often see on the large scale, the victims of this degrading vice. These victims are the fathers and mothers of ragged children, the corrupted daughters of debauched artisans, the present, and

we may add the next, generation of paupers, beggars, and criminals, not to mention the horde of brutalized immigrants, Irish and Scotch, who infest and super-contaminate the low districts of our city.

A few missionaries are at work, but can they hopefully contend with an epidemic of spirit-dealers? Schoolmasters are about to be sown broadcast over the country, but what will they be able to do to counteract the kind of idleness that prevails?

It is difficult to brighten what is tarnished, and the difficulty is extreme when the causes of tarnish are for ever being lavishly applied. A time arrives when corrosion sets in, and then the material loses the capability of being burnished. Let the cause of tarnish to which we now refer be removed, or at least ameliorated; let the law which regulates the sale of intoxicating agents be amended; let it be so amended, that when the administrator of law counsels the drunkard to exercise sobriety, the drunkard may not have a title to retort—"The lawgiver bribes me to be vicious."

The evil is monstrous in whatever light we regard it. To our mind the most afflicting aspect of the case is, that advantage is taken of the natural tendency of man to evil. Almost all the whisky-shops are in the localities where the poor reside. They create drunkards as banks create bankrupts. The poorer the district, the more numerous the dram-sellers. They are like Jesuits: they settle themselves wherever they can find men to destroy. None of the sections which compose the plebeian class escape. Even the hackney coachmen cannot escape from these human spiders. No sooner is a new hackney coach-stand established, than straightway their pimpled and speckled enemy establishes a trap. He catches the poor fellows, and without ceremony makes drunkards of them, and pauperizes their families. But the dram-shops are not only hyper-extravagantly numerous,* they are likewise for ever open. They are open before sunrise, and they remain open till an hour short of midnight. They are nice-looking places (so is many a tomb); they are full of light, and all the polished tankards and pewters are burnished, and the warm-looking master of the infernal place—there he is, rubi-

* In the Castle Hill, on a surface containing about 1520 square yards, there are eighteen spirit-shops. This is over and above the low eating-houses in that locality. The whisky-selling trade is a profitable one there, as elsewhere. We understand that one man pays £90 of rent for the cellar which he occupies. It is a profitable trade; one firm has *seven* establishments in Edinburgh.

cund, fat, jolly, with his white apron standing behind his counter. He looks as mild as his ale, but he is as fiery as his spirits. How rejoiced he looks ! for there is a pale-faced, hard-wrought mechanic, on his way to his work. He has passed one hundred of these traps ; and he stands at the door of this one. An infernal spirit whispers to him, " Go in "—he dives, and he swallows a morning dram. With this act commences the degradation of the mechanic, and the starvation of his family. He becomes a drunkard ; he soon ceases to possess furniture ; his home, once cheerful, is now the scene of misery, perhaps of violence ; he grows into a public pest, and his family become parasites on society. This is an epitome of the history of many a man who was in the enviable position of being employed. How do the dram-shops operate on those out of employment ? Behold a small sample of the product in the Ragged Schools, or read the police reports, or examine the jail returns. We have elsewhere given the following short extracts from the admirable statistics by Mr Smith, governor of the Edinburgh prison :—

" The statistics of the Edinburgh jail show that fifty-four per cent. of the offences for which individuals are committed to prison, are the direct effects of drunkenness.

" Seventy-three per cent. of the crimes are committed in the localities where sixty per cent. of the drinking-houses, properly so called, are situated, and fifty per cent. of the spirit-licenses are held. Further, seventy-three per cent. of the crimes committed in Edinburgh and the suburbs, are committed by persons residing in the localities where the crimes are perpetrated.

" These are memoranda from prison statistics, and they suggest very gloomy thoughts to the reflecting ; but they don't tell half of the truth. In a note by Mr Smith it is observed : ' The number taken to the police-office in the three years ending December 1843, for drunkenness, was 13,858—a number equal to about one-sixteenth of the population. Probably, at least, two-thirds of *all other* cases are caused indirectly by drunkenness. This will be more apparent when it is considered how many lose their character and employment from drunkenness, and are thus turned idle upon the public, with no other alternative than to beg or steal, for either of which offences they are sent to prison. Many of those who are too young to have become addicted to the vice, are the offspring of dissipated parents, and are very often left destitute, either by the desertion and neglect, or death,

of those whose duty it was to provide for them. Again, some are compelled by dissipated parents to beg or steal, and the proceeds are expended in liquor." This note, when we consider who wrote it, and upon what an amount of experience it is based, is invaluable. The children alluded to by Mr Smith are 'ragged boys and girls.' *

With all this, and ten thousand times as much, staring men in the face—in spite of the positive conviction (based on positive knowledge) in the minds of all men, from the prime-minister and archbishop down through every grade, to the operative himself, that a very large proportion of the squalor, misery, disease, and crime, which are rife in our towns, are directly dependent on drunkenness, no rational or virtuous attempt has, as yet, been made to stem the tide that threatens to engulf society! Is the revenue derived from the retail of a few gallons of bad whisky of more value to the country than the virtue of a man, the purity of a woman, and the innocence of a child? If not, why is the accursed system, universally complained of, tolerated? nay, why is it fostered? Can it not be remedied? Is this very humble and most humiliating confession made? A single fiat of the Government would go far to moderate the destroying traffic.†

It is the duty of the legislature to look the enemy of the country sternly in the face, and not to wink at it. It would be no infringement of civil liberty to attack it; it would be no contradiction of any of the dogmas, or so-called principles, on which free trade is based; it would not be doing evil that good may come: it would simply be doing something to heal a foul, and hateful, and slaying leprosy. Lord Melgund is about to assail ignorance;‡ and we trust another patriot will arise and

* "Second Plea for Ragged Schools." By Thomas Guthrie, D.D. Appendix, p. 54.

† The profits on dram-selling are so enormous, that one dram-seller in Edinburgh could afford to give away in one year, in presents, £400 worth of gingerbread and lozenges to those who took drams from him. Every man or woman who bought a dram got a lozenge or "snap," as a bribe to come back again.

‡ We rejoice to think that the subject of education is about to be taken up in right good earnest, and with a determination that it shall be offered to the entire population. Ignorance has had a long reign, and has amply proven that, though in itself a negative, it generates a positive—even mischief.

But will the entire population accept the offer made? Will the migratory and itinerant class? Will the class about which we are writing accept it? We think that they won't; and this partly from unwillingness, but chiefly because their position is a bar to their doing so. The providing of education must be backed by other legislation, directed towards the amelioration of the condition of the poor, if it is to *work its work thoroughly*.

assail vice. Let whoever undertakes to act the part of David, and go forth against this Goliath—let him, we say, remember, that when the human will is animated by the spirit of rectitude and justice, nothing can permanently resist it; for then it is an instrument in the hand of the Almighty, and his energy will cause it to prevail. Let him likewise remember, that he will be backed by all the sober, and by at least half of the drunken men in the country; for these latter acknowledge that temptation is the cause of their persistence in vice, and earnestly desire the temptation to be abated or removed. Every commandment in the Decalogue is indirectly infringed by the law which at present regulates the sale of intoxicating agents; for on this law is dependent much of the drunkenness, and, by consequence, much of the profligacy and crime which make innumerable places in the island so many pandemoniums. The law is in the teeth of the truth. It negatively proves the genuineness of this great principle—that nothing which is inconsistent with the truth is true—and that no legislation which is at variance with such truth, can issue in aught but complexity and mischief. It is difficult to convince men of this, because men are as little habituated to regard legislation as they are to regard science and philosophy by the light of revelation. They must do both, however, if they would walk firmly, steadily, and straight.

Although idleness and vice are the two prime causes of the social evil which is gnawing at the vitals of this country, there are secondary causes which fret and aggravate the sore. The most skilful surgeon, with the best appliances at his command, cannot be the means of curing a sore, if the subject of the sore is in an hospital haunted by erysipelas. Do what he will, the sore won't heal, but, on the contrary, fret, get angry, and extend. In like manner, the condition of the habitations of the poor is a bar to the effectual application of a moral remedy to the moral and social malady which prevails in this class of society. The good, bad, and worst of the plebeian classes are all hashed up together, in fetid localities and intensely miserable dwellings. Paupers, beggars, vagrants, harlots, drunkards, criminals, and other parasites, the refuse of society, constitute a kind of heated "midden," in contact with which the virtuous and industrious poor must dwell. Any one who visits, and carefully examines, and intelligently considers the condition of the habitations of the poor, will understand how the people become obnoxious to

disease—why contagious maladies are not only bred and extend, but likewise why they cling to these places. Such a visitor will also perceive why it is impossible for the physician to minister in them with any degree of satisfaction or success. The drainage is bad, the ventilation is worse, and the light of heaven is almost excluded from the dwellings of the poor. Nature attempts to do part of that which sanitary reformers recommend; she attempts to reduce the number of inhabitants by commissioning fever, scrofula, and other diseases to slay them. To the physical evils which are produced by these causes, a moral ill is appended. The people cannot observe the decencies of life; and the neglect of these debases the mind. A mind thus contaminated, is a soil prepared to receive and quicken the seeds of positive evil. Evil example is not offensive to such a mind, but, like a vortex, it attracts and sucks its victims in. They sail merrily enough on the peripheric waves, but the circles become smaller; by and by the whirling tide becomes rapid, and at last they are engulfed. It is the little boat or skiff that is chiefly exposed—it is the children of our city, the rising generation, that are in danger. Education may be compared to a life-boat; but it cannot reach these sufferers—it cannot live on these waters.

The following memoranda of the last midnight journey that we made through the Wynds of Edinburgh, will perhaps illustrate what we wish to convey by the foregoing sentences. On this occasion we were accompanied by Lord ———, and Professors Simpson and Goodsir. Under the guidance of a very intelligent criminal officer, we visited a great variety of places, our object being to see the people when they are together. This can only be seen at night, when they are all housed. We saw large samples of every section of the plebeian class, from the base, abject, apathetic Irish beggar, up to the virtuous and industrious Lowland Scotch mechanic. We had often wondered how the latter retained his virtue and his courage, when so many malign influences are at work whose tendency is to destroy both. Now, as before, we saw him maintaining a defensive war against adversity of every kind; against a compound adversity, which we cannot understand his resisting for a month. We saw him exemplify the most encouraging truth, that when virtue and courage dwell in the breast of a man, even the poor-law finds it to be a hard task to pauperize him. It amazes us to see men toil as we have seen them toil—half-fed, breathing an almost

pestilential atmosphere, uncheered by the light of the sun, and unhelpful of aught saving escape from the poisonous touch of the poor-law. But to our memoranda.

We reached Leith Wynd about half-past eleven o'clock P.M., and visited a tenement, called by its wretched inhabitants the "Happy Land," in bitter and profane mockery. The first room we went into was occupied by females. How many constituted the domestic circle we could not learn, but four of them were at home. One, a savage and dangerous-looking woman, was seated on a low stool, scraping potatoes. The second, youthful, powerful, and unscrupulous, was pacing the irregular and creaking floor; her voice was like a man's voice—and there was menace in her bearing—and her language was blasphemy and obscenity. Altogether she was a subject for Eugene Sue to paint. The third was lying on the floor drunk. She gave occasional utterance to loud screams, and rolled about as if in pain. She was in a fit of drunken hysterics. The fourth, a young girl, twelve years of age, was seated on the ground before the fire. She was a stout, good-looking, intelligent child, and was being trained to vice and wickedness. Her father and mother died some time ago; and she is the hired servant of these women. Her duty is to do their bidding; and her wages are, board and lodging. When we were about to leave the chamber, a man, like a mechanic, came in, accompanied by two policemen. He said that he had been robbed in this chamber, half an hour before, of his watch, money, and tobacco-pipe, by the blaspheming amazon to whom we have alluded. She of course denied the charge (in "Happy Land" language), but, nevertheless, was taken to the Police-Office—to be discharged next morning. The poor fellow had been tempted by one of the thousand glittering dram-shops in the neighbourhood, and, after being half-poisoned with bad whisky, was waylaid and inveigled into this den of infamy and crime. The stolen property could not be found. The little girl had her bonnet on, and, doubtless, had conveyed it to a safe place, most likely to a dram-shop hard by; for it is well known that a number of those who nourish vice conceal plunder. At a later period of the night, another man was robbed in the same room. He had been (to use his own phrase) "making merry with a few friends," and on his way home was accosted, in the north side of the town, by one of the inhabitants of this chamber.

He, too, was inveigled, but was hardly in the place before he was pinioned by two powerful women, and robbed of his watch and money by a third. He was then suffered to depart, which he did amidst the curses of the demoniacs. Of course his property was taken good care of likewise. It was most probably in a safe place before he left the house.

We passed from this room into the one next it. What we had seen horrified, and what we now beheld saddened, us. We had seen the abandoned and the robber—we had seen the dram-seller's prey and the robber's victim—and, in the person of the little girl, we had seen the process of corruption going on—a criminal being manufactured. We now beheld virtue and courage struggling with the direst adversity. The chamber, which was about twelve feet long, by seven or eight feet broad, was occupied by seven human beings—two men, two women, and three children. The men, father-in-law and son-in-law, were seated together working at their craft. They were shoemakers. The wife of the old man was seated on the ground, binding a shoe. One small candle gave light to the three. The wife of the young man sat at the fire suckling an infant; and two children, about two and four years of age respectively, sat on the ground at her feet. We interrogated the men, and found that neither of them was in regular employment; they could not get it, and therefore they worked on their own account, that is, when they could afford to buy leather. The profit upon their labour was so small, that under all circumstances they were obliged to work fifteen hours a day in order to sustain themselves. They seldom or never went out of doors, and their diet was of a most meagre description. We doubt if they could consume a substantial diet, depressed as they are by excessive toil and a semi-pestilential atmosphere, and by the lack of hope of bettering their condition. Their effort was to maintain themselves in their present truly wretched condition, from which every thing was dragging them down; but a virtuous horror of the poor-law spurred them, and, strong swimmers both, they kept their heads above water. Here we have an illustration of the fact, that virtue and a desire to be independent do still exist in the class to which these people belong. But the plant is beset by numerous noxious influences, and is ready to perish. It survives in virtue of its own inherent power of living; but the certainty is, that unless a kindly culture is bestowed upon it, it will die, and

be added to the corruption in which it is at present imbedded. Suppose these men were to die, then the widows and orphans would become paupers; the children would grow up in ignorance of every thing but vice, for they are in a hotbed of infamy, and could not escape unscorched. Had the cholera carried off the shoemakers, perhaps we would have found the women and children in the cellar lodging-house in North Gray's Close, which we visited at a later period of the night. In this underground sty we found a heterogeneous mass of mortals fermenting. We shudder when we think of it. The keeper of the place (the landlady!) was a low dirt-enveloped Irishwoman. She had been in the place for a number of weeks; she paid half-a-crown a week for the sty; she sub-let it to as many as could cram into it; and she intended to remain as long as she could pay the rent. Her husband lived with her, but he did nothing. We presume that the wife's ability to pay the rent depended on his sobriety.

As we passed up the close, we heard the sound of a fiddle and the noise of the measured tread of feet aloft. We went up a stair, and as we ascended the sound became louder, and to that made by the fiddle and feet was added the murmur of numerous voices. We knocked at a door, which was cautiously opened by a stout fellow in his shirt sleeves, who asked what we wanted. The talismanic words, "The police!" were pronounced by the criminal officer; we were immediately admitted, and the door was shut. There, in a large room, tolerably well lighted, we saw fifty-one men and women dancing round in a circle. During the savage dance there was a continuous current of oaths, obscenities, menaces, laughter, screams, &c.; so that we were reminded of the scene in Alloway Kirk which astonished Tam o' Shanter. There were infants, children, boys, and youthful persons of both sexes present. The fiddle was scraped by a blind man whom we had often seen in the closes and *culs-de-sac* in the High Street. All the adults, and most of the juveniles, were well known to the criminal officer, who informed us that they were the *élite* of the thieves of Edinburgh. A woman retired almost immediately after we entered. We learned that she gave the entertainment. A person had been robbed of £80 in her house a few nights before; and it was known that she committed the robbery, but the evidence was deficient. However, she did not like the society of the criminal officer, and she de-

parted without taking leave of her guests. Here is a school for neglected youth ! Here is a roomful of the essence of vice, and children soaking in it !

We visited a considerable number of lodging-houses on the occasion to which we now refer, with a view to observe the grades. We have already alluded to one class—the lowest—in which there is no furniture ; in the second class there is straw ; and in the third, there are what are called beds, but they are not beds. With few exceptions, filth, feter, and general wretchedness equally characterised the whole of them. The bedded places are perhaps the most fetid of the lot ; but in these we find a sprinkling of people who earn a living by honest labour. For instance, in one such, situated behind the Grassmarket and called “ the ark,” we found a Grassmarket porter, a tailor, a man who plays the organ, together with a number of beggars. Some of these were married. There is still a fourth class, represented by one situated at the bottom of the West Port. This place, which is very extensive, is conducted somewhat on the principle of a hotel. The worst characters lodge there ; but this does not signify to the man who keeps it, so long as they pay him. From four to eight or ten persons can be accommodated in each apartment, which is locked, and the key kept by the landlord. An incalculable amount of evil results from the existence of places, of which this one is the type. Men may be inclined to say that it is impossible to remedy the great and complex evil to which the preceding observations and memoranda refer. Every thing is bad, and every thing needs to be reformed. The task is a formidable one, there is no doubt of that ; but we presume to think that it is not an impossible one. We are quite certain, however, that it won’t be done by any one who won’t try to do it. Impossibility is not an *à priori* argument that can be recognised in the nineteenth century. The task is formidable because it is complex—one great action won’t accomplish it, but a combination of great actions will. Education cannot possibly drain the closes in and about the Grassmarket ; neither can religious instruction fill the stomachs of the starved inhabitants of the Cowgate. Doubling the size of the jail will not diminish crime ; neither will quadrupling the police-office moderate the number of dram-sellers and drunkards. Multiplying workhouses and rates won’t diminish the number of paupers ; neither will abolishing the annuity-tax improve the

dwellings of the poor. In a word, and to borrow a phrase from Dickens, no "dodge" will effect what is essential in order to the relief of the city of Edinburgh. Something substantial must be done; something evidencing enlightenment and common sense, instead of a rancid mite-eaten economy. Little corporation arrangements, small parochial schemes, slight sanitary attempts, crumbs of education, morsels of religion, nothing detached and of the pigmy kind, will tell upon the social and moral condition of the people. A little water strengthens the fire, because it is decomposed so soon as it is cast in. Its gases burn as bright as those given forth by the fuel, and they add vapour to the smoke. Just so is it with dribbles of education, sanitary reform, &c.; they don't mend, they make matters worse.

Something substantial must be done, and we shall conclude by briefly indicating what we think this substantiality should be.

I. Let it be enacted that the dogma, "A man may do what he likes with his own," shall bear its true signification; and that it shall *not* mean, that a man has a right to perpetrate "eviction," or to expatriate his countrymen.

II. Let waste land and waste men be brought in contact. The result of the union will be the fertilizing of the one, and the humanizing of the other. Let Scotland be colonized by Scotchmen.

III. Let the system of legalized charity be done away with, and let us fall back upon the charity which has been provided by nature. Chalmers would say—*Destroy* pauperism, and don't *provide* for it.

IV. Let the dwellings of the poor be improved, and don't let the work be done by a reluctant hand. The Dean of Guild will do a great part of the work at once—he will condemn the existing ruins. Acres of building should be levelled at once, and temporary shelter provided for those who are unhoused, by the erection of wooden buildings in the suburbs. Wooden buildings were erected for fever patients two years ago, and they are still used as wards for the sick. The funds necessary for the carrying out of this essential proceeding would be forthcoming. The

public would bear a large proportion of the cost ; for their money would not be sunk, as it was when they built a jail, police-office, &c.

V. Let the law which regulates the retail of excisable liquors be amended.

1. In addition to the retailer being licensed, his shop should be licensed also.

2. No retailer should be allowed to have more than one shop. This would do something towards lessening the prostitution of capital.

3. No person of doubtful character should be permitted to dispense such a powerful agent as whisky. There are quacks in this business as well as in medicine. And no dram-shop should be licensed unless the necessity of the locality can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the licensing body, of which the police magistrate should be a member. From this court there should be no appeal. The law should never be placed in the false position of vindicating dram-selling.

4. No one who deals in any other article should be licensed to retail excisable liquors. An extensive sugar merchant informed us, that he cannot retail sugar at the price at which certain grocers retail it. The latter make their profit on whisky. The cheap sugar is a decoy. In the same way victuallers are undersold.

VI. Let drunkenness be made, not nominally, but in reality, a punishable offence, and let the debaucher as well as the debauched be fined. The police can always discover where his drunken charge got the stuff that deprived him of his money, sense, and character. To give liquor to a drunken man should be punished by imprisonment and forfeiture of license.

N.B.—The best men that can be got should be employed as police-officers. This involves better pay than these most important functionaries at present receive. A cheap article is generally inferior ; and a cheap man is commonly a bad man. Let us have good, well-paid men ; and, under the able superintendence of Mr Moxey, we will have an effective, trustworthy police.

VII. Let the existing lodging-house system be at once and for ever destroyed.

We understand that the Police Commissioners contemplate the enactment of a series of by-laws, by the strict, uncompromising execution of which much that is desired may be effected. But, in addition to these by-laws, there should be one to the effect, that no one shall have a license to let lodgings whose character does not fit him or her to occupy such an important situation as that of being the head of an establishment.

N.B.—Is a brothel a lodging-house? If so, we think it is in the power of the Police Commissioners to render the infamous keepers of these abodes of all that is infamous, vicious, criminal, and corrupt, so intolerably uncomfortable, that many of them would give up the body and soul-destroying trade.

But, however stringent the by-laws of the police may be, the existing evil will not be adequately met in the absence of a strong and comprehensive sanitary enactment. Such a measure must be a legal Hercules, armed with a besom suited for the work he must perform—even the sweeping away, at once and for ever, the mountains of disgusting, disgraceful, fetid, pestilential evidence collected by the Health of Towns Commissioners. So long as there are holes, they will be occupied by rats; and so long as there are garrets, they will be the retreat of cats. So long as there are cellars, they will be filled with the base of human kind; and so long as there are “arks,” they will be tenanted by the like.

Every thing yet requires to be done; and the sooner the business of *doing* is set about the better.

We trust that, if the Government determines to confer a sanitary law on the country, it won't pay *too much* attention to this, that, and t'other corporate body—but act with a degree of despotism; and, in the teeth of all opposition, legislate according to the evidence with which they have been so liberally supplied. Horror-inspiring as that evidence is, it falls very far short of the truth; and this, because the truth is so very horrible that it cannot be conveyed by words.

THE END.