

The sick in workhouses, who they are, and how they should be treated : a paper read at the meeting of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science in Dublin, August, 1861 / by Frances Power Cobbe ; with an appendix by Louisa Twining.

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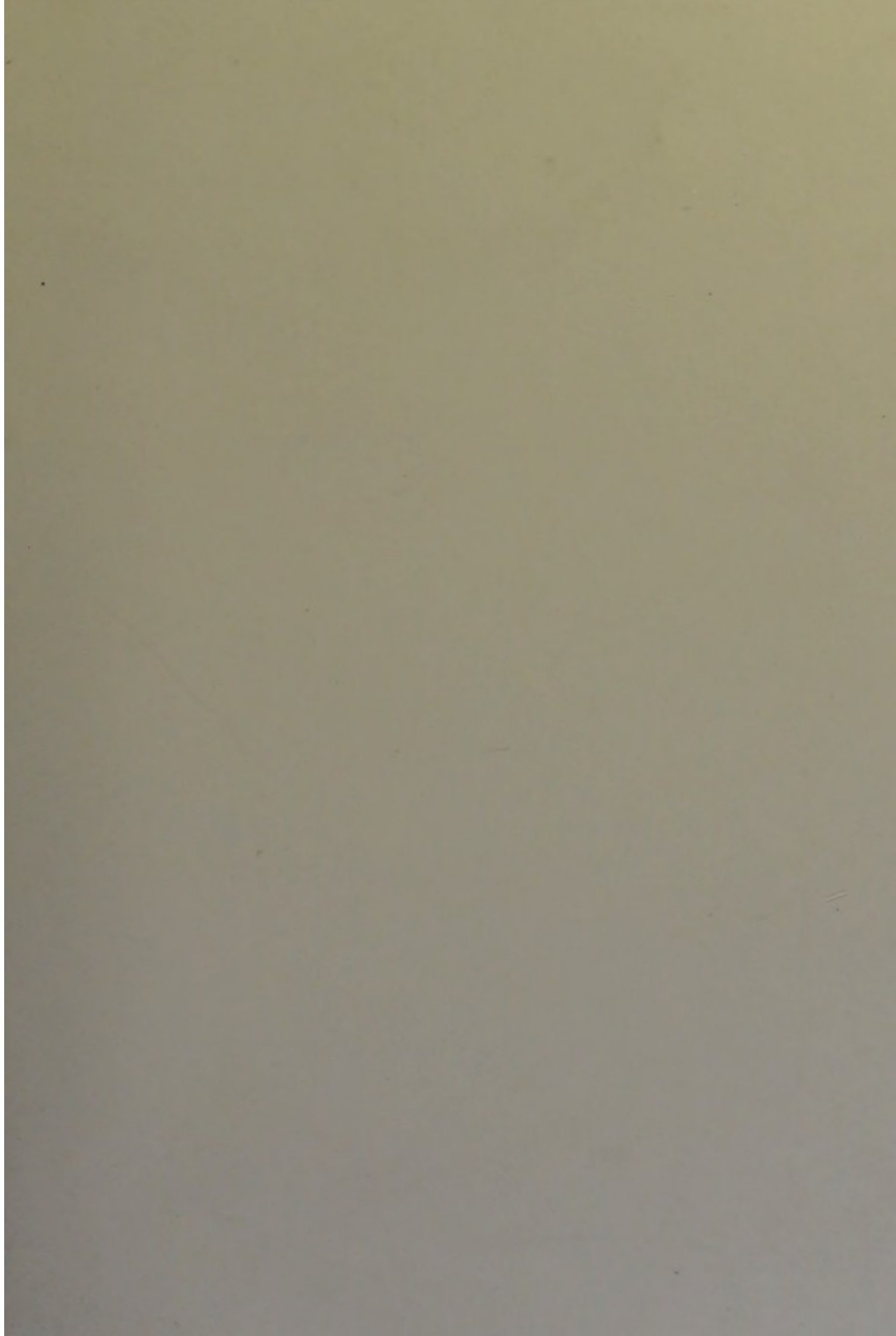
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THE SICK IN WORKHOUSES;

WHO THEY ARE,

AND HOW THEY SHOULD BE TREATED.

*A Paper Read at the Meeting of the National Association for the Promotion
of Social Science in Dublin, August, 1861.*

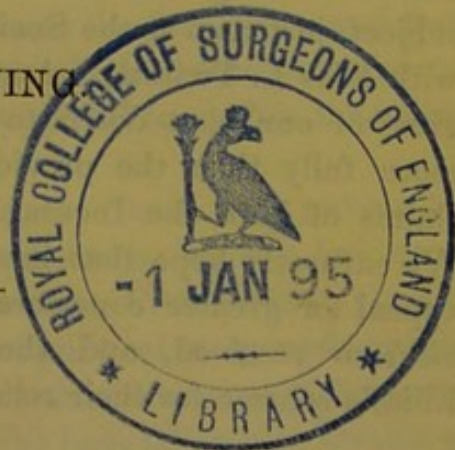
BY

FRANCES POWER COBBE.

WITH AN APPENDIX

BY

LOUISA TWINING



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PREFACE.

A SMALL pamphlet was published last January, entitled "Destitute Incurables in Workhouses: a Paper by Miss Elliot and Miss Cobbe, read at the Social Science Meeting in Glasgow, 1860." It contained a brief account of the condition and numbers of persons of the lower classes who yearly die in England from such diseases as dropsy, cancer, and consumption, and who are excluded from the benefits of the ordinary hospitals of London and the country. A plan was appended, proposing that these sufferers when driven to the Workhouses should be treated there not as ordinary *paupers*, but as *patients*, and placed in wards whereto private charity might be admitted to introduce all possible alleviations of their condition.

This little brochure has excited sufficient interest among compassionate persons to produce a continued demand for it to the present time, when 1,500 copies have been disposed of, and the second edition is exhausted. Instead of reprinting it in the same form, it has been thought desirable to publish a Second Paper on the same subject, just read at the Social Science Meeting in Dublin. Together with Miss L. Twining's Appendix, it brings the accounts of the progress of our plan down to the present moment, and also exposes more fully than the previous pamphlet the actual condition and claims of both the Incurables and other patients in Workhouses. We earnestly hope that it will be found to prove the justice of an appeal for greater consideration for these sufferers than they have hitherto received, and the demonstrated practicability of Miss Elliot's scheme for their relief.

F. P. C.

Belgrave House, Durdham Down, Bristol.
September, 1861.

THE SICK IN WORKHOUSES.

IF a person who has never visited a Workhouse be asked to sympathize with the sufferings of the sick patients therein, it will commonly happen that his reply will betray his impression that the poor souls in question neither need nor deserve any special indulgence. "Such places as the wards you describe" (thus runs the frequent response), "would indeed be wretched for *us* if we were ill, but you must remember these paupers are accustomed to nothing better. God help them! They would not care for other comforts were they even to be bestowed."

To this popular delusion it seems desirable to afford some answer before proceeding to urge what I will venture to call "Justice for the sick in Workhouses." We ought to be able to form some idea of the social and moral status of paupers in the first place, and then endeavour to measure the limits within which antecedent circumstances of wealth or poverty may be supposed to modify the wants of the diseased and dying.

There are numerous philanthropists who seem to consider all paupers as *martyrs*, victims of some unrighteous human law, or of some inscrutable visitation of a mysterious Providence. On the other hand, an equally numerous body of political economists appear to view all persons unable to support themselves as *delinquents*, necessarily idle and vicious reprobates, who have fallen into trouble as the natural consequence of their own faults and misdeeds. It is no easy matter to decide on which side may lie the truth between these opposite opinions. The causes of pauperism are assuredly as multi-form as the thousand ills which flesh is heir to. There is a truth, and a profound one, in the doctrine of the economist, that misery is commonly the result of the infraction of the Divine laws, sanitary, social, or moral. As a general rule, it is true that the Creator has

so arranged the world, that prosperity follows virtue, that health is the result of temperance, wealth of industry, and honour of honesty. The presumption is natural and even pious that we shall "never see the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread." But there is another truth deeper still than that of the economist,—the truth, that disease and disaster serve in the Divine education of man the purposes of trial to the best and dearest of God's children. Not only have we no right to conclude that those on whom the "tower" falls are "sinners above all men," but there is even further a presumption that it is the purest gold which passes through the keenest fire.

Only upon *some* "cross" of pain or woe
 God's son may lie,
 Each soul redeemed from self and sin must know
 It's Calvary."

The first is the secular, the second the spiritual, view of misfortune. The present is no occasion for debating the subjects of profound interest which here suggest themselves. I believe it will be conceded by all practical students of social problems that the secular view holds good as a *general* rule, and the other only in an exceptional (though a *numerously exceptional*) way. Of one hundred men starting with equal advantages in life, if we assume twenty to become rich and twenty to die in poverty, we shall find among the former the most steady and honest, and among the latter the most idle, dissolute, and disreputable. If these things were not so, men might be almost tempted to question the existence of a just Power overruling all things. And again, if there were no exceptions, if all good people acquired a thousand a year, and all bad people died in the Workhouse, virtue would be reduced to a sum in the rule of three, and the basest of all apophthegms, "Honesty is the best policy," would be substituted for the brave motto of all noble souls, "Fais ce que dois, advienne que pourra!"

Practical experience of the actual inmates of our Workhouses has to me corroborated these views. Perhaps it will assist us to form a clearer idea on this subject if we reduce the causes of pauperism to five heads, to one or other of which I believe it may always be traced.

(1) *Vice*. It is needless to point out how dissipation, idleness, and dishonesty, lead to ruin by most obvious and easy paths: "Facile descensus Averni."

(2) *Incapacity*. There is a large and most unhappy class of human beings of whom too little account is made in the usual esti-

mates of mankind. These are the *incapables*, the men and women, who, though far above the mental rank of idiots, yet never succeed in grappling with the problems of worldly thrift and prosperity. Too gentle, too irresolute, or too unpractical, they cannot push their way through the jostling crowds of contending interest in our civilized life. These persons, if born in the wealthier class, may manage perhaps to save some wrecks of inherited property; or, with the help of friends, they are again and again set afloat when they have run aground. We are all acquainted with these "unlucky" gentlemen, and we do not habitually pass very harsh judgments on them. Surely we are bound to extend our indulgence to the hapless incapable, who, being called on to support himself and his family, has inevitably broken down in the (to him) hopeless undertaking.

(3) *Calamity*. Under this head I would class, in the first place natural evils, such as famine, epidemics, floods, long frosts, etc. The effects of these on the poor has its remedy in the sympathy such disasters instantly call out. Actual *pauperism*, after the calamity has passed away, is, however, often a durable result from the breaking up of homes, and also from the engendered habit of looking to charity for support. Secondly, there are the great calamities which arise from the changes of trade. It is a fearful result of our manufacturing system that each new fashion in dress or furniture, each new invention in machinery, inevitably occasions a fluctuation to which multitudes of artizans are unable to adapt themselves at all or at best with sufficient rapidity to escape an interval of dire distress. These men are educated for *special* trades, and special minute departments of special trades,—to sew one part of a shoe to another, or make the head of a pin,—in a way which might have sufficed when trades scarcely varied in a century. Now that each trade undergoes a change, perhaps a revolution, every few years, the incapacity of these poor men to adapt themselves to the shifting labours alone open to them, is a source of wide-spread misery. This very year the distress of the ribbon-weavers has excited our sympathy, but already the sewing machines are opening a far wider prospect of destitution, since of the multitude of trades of which the needle is the implement, we shall henceforth need precisely *two workers* where *twenty* have hitherto found employment. To accustom ourselves to expect that every turn of the ever-rolling wheel of progress is to throw off thousands of our artizans to be left behind us in the dust, is a miserable state of things. The problem for our philanthropists is *not* merely how to tide over this or that period of distress, but how to obviate the recurrence of such disasters by so educating our workmen as that (like those of Birmingham) they may habitually follow

intelligently each new impulse of trade, and find employment in a new course so soon as an old one is found to be closing.

(4) *The peculiar position of women.* Much has been said of late on the claims of women to more lucrative employment, and against the perpetuation of the cruel fallacy that, because society assumes that they ought to be supported by their male relatives, we may conclude that they invariably *are* so. A course of Workhouse visiting tends to fortify all arguments of this kind. If we compare the male and female wards of the same Workhouse we shall usually find among the latter a preponderance of cases of reduced respectability and blameless destitution. There are two or three women who have "seen better days" for one man in the same predicament. And why? *Not*, assuredly, because women are less thrifty than men, less industrious, or less careful of their resources. Quite the reverse. As an experienced friend once remarked to me, such an event as a woman becoming bankrupt through her own fault had never come to his knowledge. Yet women are driven by hundreds from comfortable homes to spend their last days in the Workhouse, because the *men* who are assumed to provide for them, have failed to do so, and because no means are open to them to provide for themselves.

(5) *Disease.* It is obvious that when a lingering disease attacks any one accustomed to support himself by his own labour, his life runs against his savings (if he have any), and if he survive them he must come to the Workhouse, save in the exceptional cases wherein friends are found at once able and willing to support and attend him. It must be admitted that a vast number of diseases are the result of vice, of the intemperance and dissipation of the sufferer, or of his parents, and as such the stern economist may be disposed to regard him with little indulgence. On the other hand, however, I venture to assert, from my own little share of experience, that the *virtues* of the poor are also a prolific source of disease among them. The number of men in the Workhouses are past counting who have persisted in working at unhealthy trades for their families till they break down with painters' disease, rheumatism or paralysis. Of the latter awful affliction, indeed, it is little imagined what an amount of wretchedness is hidden in our Workhouses, whither the miserable half-dead creatures are nearly always driven to spend long years of dismal restlessness, excluded from every other hospital by the hopelessness of their calamity. Nay, among *women* the excess of labour, with often insufficient food, is a cause of paralysis even in early youth, and it ought to be a solemn care to all their employers, lest overtaking their powers they bring on them this affliction worse than death. I once found a young girl of

eighteen in Bristol Workhouse, smitten with paralysis, half her body dead and powerless, "My poor child," I said, "how did it happen to you to be struck so young?" "Oh, ma'am," she answered with a burst of agony, "I was servant in a house where there were twelve lodging together, and I did all the work. One day last week I had this fit, and my mistress sent me here at once, and I shall never get well, never. Oh, I did work while I could! I was always willing to work if God would let me."

Bearing in mind these five sources of pauperism, it seems that neither the philanthropists' "martyrs," nor the economists' "delinquents" can be accepted as true pictures. We must enter the Workhouse prepared to find therein the most opposite types of humanity, the extremes of vicious debasement and of virtuous endurance; souls steeped in pollution, and souls which only wait for death to rise from the pauper's sick bed to the angel's throne. There is only one thing common to all, and that is sadness! Childhood without its bloom, manhood without its hopes, and age without its honour. Saddest of all, however, is sickness without love and care. The question returns on us. Take the heterogeneous population of those sick wards, victims of vice, of incapacity, of calamity, of man's injustice or God's visitation. Ought we to strive to give them good nurses, good beds, good food, all appliances of relief, or are we to conclude that these things, though desirable for *us*, would be superfluous to *them*?

It seems to me that there is a fallacy in the notion that the wants of the rich and poor differ very essentially in *disease*, however much they unquestionably do so in health. I believe that the great leveller, Death, approaches all pretty much alike. In the twilight which precedes that solemn night, all the varied hues of this life fade away one by one. Intellect, artistic taste, worldly ambitions, all are obliterated, and at the same time the sole great realities of existence, the relation of man to God, and his hopes of a life beyond the grave, come out clear and strong alike in rich and poor, wise and ignorant. Human nature in disease and decay has nearly the same wants and craves the same alleviations. The ploughman in a fever thirsts for cooling drinks no less than the gentleman. The poor needlewoman writhing in cancer needs a soft bed as grievously as any lady in the land. The belief in any essential difference would vanish from the mind of any one who tried the experiment of giving a few luxuries to Workhouse patients. I once saw a pauper eating some fine hot-house grapes which a lady had given her. It will be a long time before I forget the expression of that pale, worn face, with its shaven head and hollow cheeks, the

sense it revealed of inexpressible relief and wondering pleasure at the all-unknown flavour of the rich fruit. When she had finished her bunch of grapes she sank back in bed, looking after the lady as she left the ward. She could not raise her voice to speak a word of thanks, but assuredly none was needed beyond that look.

But though paupers may require comforts and be grateful for luxuries, and we may be ready to bestow them upon them, we may yet be told that such charity will be highly mischievous. There may be those who think that the sick in Workhouses should be kept in as low a condition as humanity can endure, lest we "encourage pauperism," and leave the poor with no motive to "provide against a rainy day." To this I answer that, however such principles of economy may apply to the able-bodied and aged paupers (and, I believe, *that* is little enough, for the best of Workhouses will always be prisons), they apply not at all to the case of the sick. The two hundred and seventy splendid free hospitals of England are never supposed to effect any harm in this way, but, on the contrary, vastly to promote the sanitary and social interests of the community. Yet to these free hospitals every poor man naturally looks as his asylum in case of illness, with the hope of obtaining therein comforts his home could never supply. How should the prospective possible contingency of his illness being a cancer instead of a fever, and of his being driven to the Workhouse instead of the hospital, be imagined to influence him in contracting more provident habits? Surely it is sheer and useless cruelty, *on these grounds*, to render his condition in the Workhouse worse than it would be had he succeeded in obtaining admission into the hospital.

There is, however, another objection more cogent. What right have we to take *by enforced rates* from the poor ratepayer anything with which the pauper might dispense, and with which he himself would be obliged to dispense if ill at home? Hospitals, supported by voluntary charity, may be ever so magnificent if the subscribers please, but sick wards, supported by enforced rates, have no claim to compete with them. Only in one way, I believe, can this difficulty be reconciled. Out of the rates should be supplied the *necessaries* of the sick pauper; from voluntary charity should come his *comforts*. The principle of voluntarism is the one thing needful. There are plenty of hearts ready to sympathize, plenty of purses ready to open to supply such comforts to paupers, and without injury to the community or injustice to the ratepayer, to alleviate an almost incredible mass of human suffering. Why, then, may it be asked, have they not long ago been admitted to do their blessed

work? Alas! the jealousy of Workhouse officials, the indifference of Guardians, the dread of introducing a small irregularity rather than that of permitting immense suffering, are causes sufficient. Also, such charities for the sick would fall naturally into the hands of ladies, and here a special prejudice and obstacle awaits us. When women pretend to write books about astronomy or metaphysics, they are occasionally told that they are "travelling out of their sphere;" that, as the Chinese say, "the glory of man is knowledge, but the glory of woman is to renounce knowledge," and that their dominions are exclusively the store-closet, the nursery, and the sick room. "When pain and anguish wring the brow" is the only time when our presence is altogether desirable. But if, fired by these representations of our "mission," we attempt to exercise it *precisely where it is most needed on earth*, we are met at the door by the whole masculine dignity of the Workhouse, and generally refused admittance! "Ladies are *so* injudicious!" Perfectly true, my lords of creation! We plead guilty, and recommend ourselves to mercy. We do give credit to many ridiculous stories, and pity many imaginary grievances, and sometimes we go the length of bestowing unmerited tea, and even indigestible lozenges and Puseyite tracts, upon our protegés. Too true; alas! too true! But, perhaps, if *men* were perfectly judicious, if the gentlemen to whom the guardianship of the poor is exclusively entrusted *never* made blunders from lack of wisdom, or lack of feeling, perhaps the state of our Workhouses would not be precisely what it is at this moment.

The truth is, that voluntary charity, under proper limitations, is a thing not only needed to supply the physical wants of the sick pauper, but desirable in itself for the highest moral reasons. There is a horrible radical incongruity in the idea of *involuntary charity*, and its effects may be seen reacting through every detail of poor-law management. Just and right as it is that the law should in this one instance overstep the province of what the old moralists denominated the "*duties of debt*," and enforce the performance of the "*duty of merit*" of supporting the destitute, yet the very existence of such a law is a reproach to human nature, for if we "loved our neighbour as ourselves" no such destitution could exist. Each man and woman who is thrown on the rates for bread and shelter is dimly conscious, *not* of gratitude to the unknown and perhaps unwilling ratepayer who supplies them, but of painful and degrading dependence on a community whose *individual* members have failed to afford succour. To restore the rightful feeling of man to man, the Workhouse pauper urgently needs to come in contact with personal kindness and voluntary benevolence.

Among all the Workhouse sick patients, there is one class whose claims to our consideration are so great that they may be urged rather as a matter of justice than of charity. The time for reading these papers is so brief that I must confine myself in my few remaining moments to these special sufferers,—premising that when their claims are fulfilled, I should confidently anticipate that the relief obtained first for them, would be extended to all cases having similar though secondary sufferings.

The class to which I allude are the *incurables*, the patients suffering from cancer, dropsy, and consumption, who are excluded from all other hospitals (save one small one in England and one in Ireland), and yet whose case is immeasurably more piteous than that of any other victims of disease. These three types of mortal malady alone destroy 80,000 persons in England every year, and if we add to them paralysis, acute rheumatism, and some fearful cutaneous disorders, we shall have a multitude of sufferers, out of whom, at the lowest calculation, some 40,000 are of a class poor enough to be inevitably thrown on public support under such a visitation. We deny these miserable beings the permission to die in our hospitals that we may make room for hopeful cases. Surely it is a great injustice to exclude them from the voluntary charity of the hospitals, and then to forbid voluntary charity to follow them to the Workhouse! A plan to obviate this injustice, and to alleviate the sufferings of these poor souls, was last year suggested by Miss Elliot of Bristol, and a paper on the subject was read at the Glasgow meeting of this society. I trust it will interest any of those who then heard of it to learn that the scheme has met with much success. After an appeal in its favour made in the *Times* and *Daily News* and some forty other journals, a circular was sent by the Workhouse Visiting Society to every Board of Guardians in England, embodying the substance of the above-mentioned paper, and offering the services of the society in carrying out the plan. During the past half year the suggestion has constantly gained ground, and seems gradually (if I may so express it) infiltrating the not very friable soil of the Guardian mind! In several Unions the proposal met with approbation, and in one in Ireland, and was partially adopted.

A number of Workhouses have also been opened to visitors generally, without such establishment of wards. To assist such visitors a central fund has been opened* to afford grants in aid to local funds: £237 have been already received, and £57 granted, of which £10 was sent to Carrickmacross, the Union in Ireland

* "Fund for Destitute Incurables," at Messrs. Twinings', 215, Strand, London.

which I may say took our plan by *spontaneous combustion*,—no circulars having been sent to that country. Let us hope that Miss Elliot's simple and admirable idea may have still further and wider scope, and that thousands of poor helpless sufferers may be comforted thereby. We hope to obtain, at last, for *all* the 40,000 incurables of England by this unpretending plan, an amount of ease which £1,200,000 per annum would only suffice to procure by the erection of adequate special hospitals for their use. We hope to bring to them good beds, and easy chairs, and soft cushions, and prints and flowers to lighten their dreary rooms, and books to beguile their weary hours, and cooling drinks and fruits to quench their ceaseless thirst. We hope to bring them kindly listeners to their stories and gentle counsellors to help them to faith and patience. And then we hope to touch even the monster evil of the rude, untrained pauper nurses, and provide our incurables with women, paid by our funds, and duly instructed and trained. We hope all this, and to place the whole condition of the sick in Workhouse wards,—furniture, food, nurses, doctors and all,—on a new and better footing; but who will help us in such an undertaking? I answer, every lady present who will offer herself as a visitor at her own Union, and every gentleman who will exert his influence at the Board of Guardians to obtain permission for us to carry out these plans. I do not doubt but many ladies *wish* to help us, but are afraid of repulse. Let me implore such not to be discouraged. We have stood many a repulse, and still survive! Also I am sure many gentlemen (indeed, I believe all *gentlemen*) would wish to introduce more mercy into the Workhouses, but they find it almost impossible to do anything. The democratic constitution of the Boards of Guardians too often leaves the preponderating majority of votes on the side of short-sighted and hard-hearted stolidity. Yet I must believe that even in a board-room the influence of kindness and justice will prevail at length if their advocates will but have firmness and patience in setting them forth. *Oa ira!* Miss Elliot's plan will succeed, and we shall *not* hear Béranger's Chœur de Bourgeois exclaiming,—

“ Une idée a frappé chez nous
Fermons notre porte aux verrous ! ”

Nor *Punch's* Andover Guardians, deaf to all entreaty,—

“ We'll join in one harmonious grunt,
We wun't, we wun't, we wun't, we wun't ! ”

TO THE CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN OF THE BOARD OF
GUARDIANS OF ———.

GENTLEMEN,—Permit us respectfully to call your attention to the peculiar condition of the persons in Workhouses suffering from *incurable disease*; and to solicit your favourable consideration of a proposal we desire to make on their behalf.

It appears from the Registrar-General's Reports that there die every year in England of dropsy, cancer, and consumption 80,000 persons. Of these, 40,000 at least belong to the working classes, and must need an asylum under such visitations. The 270 hospitals we maintain for curable patients reject all such cases, and the one hospital for incurables at Putney receives only 127 patients. Thus between 30,000 and 40,000 persons are annually compelled to seek shelter during the last months of their lives in the Workhouse. The poor laws, however, being properly designed to discourage pauperism, and the regulations of Workhouses being framed principally to meet the case of the idle and improvident pauper, it is obvious that such abodes are necessarily ill-adapted to the needs of these unfortunate sufferers, whose present extreme anguish, and often whose former industry and respectability, give them the highest claims on the compassion of their fellow-creatures. The hard beds, untrained nurses, and general absence of the minor hospital comforts of refreshing drinks, comfortable seats, cushions, etc., which usually characterize the infirm wards of a Workhouse, deprive these patients of many alleviations which their sufferings might receive. Even the usual kindness of Workhouse surgeons and the liberality of many Boards of Guardians, are unable wholly to remedy these defects which inhere in the unfortunate circumstances themselves, whereby persons who are not properly *paupers*, but *patients*, are driven into asylums designed for paupers only. The case is even more exceptional than that of the insane, and appears equally to deserve that exceptional rules be made to meet it.

Permit us respectfully to suggest that some remedy should be sought for an evil of such great magnitude, since it involves the needless aggravation of the dying sufferings of some 30,000 persons annually. We cannot hope that it will be removed by the opening of Hospitals for Incurables adequate to the demand, since this would require a revenue of £900,000 per annum. Neither does it seem altogether just to the ratepayers that they should be compelled to provide for the inmates of Workhouses the comforts of hospitals supported by free charity. We therefore venture to hope that the following plan may approve itself to you from its simplicity and economy, and from the fact that, while relieving the sufferings of the Incurables, it will involve no additional charge whatever on the rates.

Let all persons in the Workhouse suffering from acute and distressing disease, such as dropsy, consumption, cancer, etc., be placed by themselves in wards apart, to be called the Wards for Male and Female Sick and Incurables. In these particular wards let private charity be admitted to introduce whatever may alleviate the condition of the inmates.

On the passing of such rules by any Board of Guardians, it would follow that the members of the Workhouse Visiting Society would raise and employ the moderate subscriptions needful to convert these wards into suitable and comfortable Hospitals for Incurables. Under the sanction and with the co-operation of the surgeon, and in concert with the other officials, they would provide good beds for the bedridden; easy chairs, both for those who cannot lie down and for those who ought for some hours each day to leave their beds; the salaries of trained nurses required; and such other trifles as lemonade, extra tea, books, etc., as may seem desirable.

It is submitted that this little plan possesses the following recommendations.

While relieving much suffering at small cost, it involves no injustice to the ratepayers, as it does not call on them for any expense whatever.

It cannot encourage pauperism, seeing that no person will incur mortal disease to profit by it; and if it be suspected that any patient could be supported by his friends, it would remain in the power of the Board, as at present, to deny him admission after examination by the relieving officer.

In conclusion, as it is undoubtedly in the power of each local Board of Guardians to frame for the regulation of its own Workhouse such bye-laws as are above respectfully suggested, we beg to urge your favourable consideration of them. Should you be willing to accede to the plan, we hereby offer the services of our Society in carrying it into execution in raising and applying the needful subscriptions. In Unions where no Lady Visitors of the Society at present reside, it will no doubt be possible for the Chaplain or Guardians to find other ladies willing to carry out the plan with the sanction and approval of the Board.*

We are, Gentlemen, respectfully yours,

THE MEMBERS OF THE WORKHOUSE VISITING SOCIETY.

(Signed) LOUISA TWINING,
Hon. Sec.

* We have received numerous letters asking for further information and details for carrying out our proposal. It may therefore be useful here briefly to mention the reply we have given to such inquiries.

We recommend that two or three of the Guardians and the medical officer should confer with the lady visitors on the subject of the proposed plan, and that, moreover, a medical man, *unconnected with the Workhouse*, should be invited to visit the ward, and suggest the additions that may be considered desirable. These being decided upon, it is further suggested that one of the lady visitors should be appointed to receive either subscriptions or articles for the sick; and that such should be distributed by her to the other visitors. It would be but a trifling addition to the labours of the medical man, in ordering the diet for the sick, to mention any further alleviations that might be required, a list of which might be made. A store of such might then either be kept at the Workhouse, or at the house of the lady visitor who undertook to superintend the plan; or each lady might provide what she herself distributed, the cost being defrayed by the local fund for the sick.

APPENDIX.

WITHOUT wishing to exaggerate the present state of things as regards the sick in Workhouses, or imputing blame to those who as Guardians have the responsibility of providing for them, we think it must be admitted by all that the general condition of patients in these institutions is greatly inferior to that of the inmates of hospitals; and considering that the class whom we have specified as "Destitute Incurables" frequently spend not weeks or months only, but years of pain and suffering in Workhouses, we think that their condition is a subject worthy of the consideration of all humane persons.

In order, therefore, to strengthen the support which the suggestion received from public sympathy, we determined to send a statement relating to it to the principal hospitals in London, that it might receive the approval and sanction of their medical officers. The following is the statement, which was signed by one hundred physicians and surgeons of nine metropolitan hospitals:—

"We the undersigned Physicians and Surgeons of the Metropolitan Hospitals, having had our attention called to the condition of Destitute Incurables, can bear testimony, from our position and experience, to the fact that there is a very large number of persons afflicted with incurable disease, who are not proper objects for admission into the general hospitals, and who have no other alternative than to become inmates of a Workhouse.

"We witness almost daily the pitiable and helpless condition of persons so situated, and are often obliged to refuse them admission, in consequence of the regulations of the institutions to which we are respectively attached. These regulations are absolutely necessary, for the reason that the general hospitals (except in some rare cases, as with the Middlesex Hospital with respect to cancer) were established for the treatment of curable diseases, and not as abodes for those who are permanently and incurably disabled.

"The persons who are so disabled, whether from advanced consumption, or from cancer, or other causes, require, and ought to have, more care and attention, and more so-called comforts, than the general inmates of a Workhouse; and we are decidedly of opinion that they should be placed in wards exclusively appropriated to them, in which, under proper regulations, and with the sanction of the Guardians, they might receive such extra comforts as private benevolence might bestow."

On the evening of February 27th, a meeting was held in Waterloo-place, at which the Earl of Shaftesbury presided, and which was attended by many members of the medical profession, besides several ladies and gentlemen of the Committee of the Workhouse Visiting Society. At this meeting the condition of the sick, and especially of incurables, in Workhouses, was considered, and several questions were proposed for discussion. The following speakers expressed their opinions:—Lord Shaftesbury, Dr. Goodfellow, Dr. Ogle, Dr. Stewart, Dr. Buchanan, Rev. G. H. M'Gill, J. M. Corrie, Esq., J. Maberly, Esq.,

H. C. Tucker, Esq., and J. H. Allen, Esq., all of whom were more or less acquainted with the condition of the sick in Workhouses, and well knew the numbers of "incurables" who are continually dismissed from hospitals.

(1) The desirableness of establishing separate wards for incurables, where private benevolence may be admitted to them.—This was unanimously agreed to.

(2) Is this the best suggestion that can be made with regard to the treatment of the sick generally in Workhouses, or is the following proposal, made by one of the London Boards of Guardians, worthy of consideration, namely, that the crowded state of some of the Metropolitan Workhouses renders it advisable to remove some of the worst cases to a separate institution, which might be arranged expressly as a hospital?—This was considered to involve too great an expenditure, and to be too gigantic an undertaking, but it was thought that if any Workhouses are over crowded, it would be in the power of the Guardians to take other premises, and draft off into them some of their sick cases.

(3) Are the defects we seek to remedy to be traced to the law itself or to the administration of it? and if the former, can any recommendations or suggestions be made to the committee appointed to consider the poor laws?—It was considered that the defects were entirely in the administration and not in the law itself.

(4) Is it desirable that the employment of at least one paid and trained nurse in every Workhouse should be made compulsory, in order to do away with one of the greatest evils with regard to the sick, the services of pauper nurses?—The sole employment of pauper women as nurses was strongly condemned, and many facts stated as to their unfitness and incompetency.

(5) Is it desirable that the inspection and visitation of honorary medical men should be introduced into Workhouses, either constantly or periodically?—This suggestion was decidedly and unanimously supported by all present.

And it was further suggested, that if Workhouses were made fitter abodes for permanent and chronic cases of sickness, hospitals might relieve those of the more acute and temporary cases which could be better treated in them, and that thus a relation might be established between the two institutions which would be mutually advantageous. This proposal received the warm approval of all the medical men present.

As much doubt had been expressed as to the numbers of the class alluded to in Workhouses, inquiries were made at four of the metropolitan institutions, and the medical men returned these answers:—In one Union, containing 600 inmates, at least 60 were considered to be incurable from disease; in another, with 400 inmates, 30; in another, with 650, 70 or 80 were of this class, which, it must be remembered, does not include the bed-ridden from old age alone. Statistics collected a few years ago showed that 50,000 sick persons passed through the metropolitan workhouses in one year, but how many of these cases were of permanent or continued sickness we have no means of ascertaining.

In answer to our circular letter to Boards of Guardians, we have been told repeatedly that nothing was wanting, because no suggestion or order of the medical officer had ever been refused. But this is far from being a satisfactory reply. Few, if indeed any, medical men in such situations would attempt to assert the necessity of changes which would involve a new class of nurses, enlarged space, better ventilation, and more expensive comforts and furniture.

To the objection that has been made, that this plan would lead many more persons to go into Workhouses, it was replied that some discrimination is at

present exercised by Guardians as to the admission of inmates, some who are able being compelled to pay towards their maintenance; though such persons do not receive greater comforts than the utterly destitute. It is therefore obvious that the same power might still be exercised.

To another objection, that it would be depressing and dangerous to the patients to be doomed as "incurables" and placed together in wards, it was replied that no such result is experienced in the Hospital for Incurables at Putney, where not only the greatest cheerfulness prevails, but where hundreds of patients are longing and waiting for admission.

It has been mentioned that a fund has been opened for the purpose of assisting local efforts in providing better beds and chairs, and thus starting the plan, which can afterwards be maintained by the visitors. To this fund the following sums have been contributed, and the following grants have been made:—

	£	s.	d.
Charles Hood, Esq.	100	0	0
Miss Sturch	20	0	0
A Lady, per Dr. Boyd	5	5	0
Lady Kay Shuttleworth	5	0	0
F.	1	0	0
Mrs. H. Russell	5	0	0
Mrs. Elizabeth Jacobs	5	0	0
Rev. Frederick W. Gray	10	0	0
Mrs. Gwilt (a)	1	1	0
Mrs. John Hare	2	0	0
Lady Adam	5	0	0
C. S. S. W.	5	0	0
M. D.	1	0	0
Mrs. May	0	10	0
Mrs. Fripp	0	10	0
Miss de Soyres	0	10	0
G. W. Hastings, Esq.	5	0	0
R. Twining, Esq.	5	0	0
George Monklands, Esq.	1	0	0
Hon. Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay Antrobus	5	0	0
Mrs. Nightingale	1	0	0
H. M.	0	10	0
Miss Julia Smith	1	0	0
A Lady	0	10	0
Miss Cope	10	10	0
A Friend	10	0	0
Hon. Mrs. Vernon	5	0	0
Col. Oldfield	5	0	0
Mrs. Russell	0	10	0
Mr. and Mrs. Partridge	5	0	0
Lady Bethel (a)	1	1	0
Rev. J. Wodehouse	1	0	0
F. W. Newman, Esq.	3	0	0
A Lady	0	10	0
Rev. Rawdon Greene	10	0	0
GRANTS.			
Stockton-on-Tees	10	0	0
Bradford	10	0	0
Carrickmacross	10	0	0
Bristol	15	0	0
Horsham	8	0	0
Neath	4	10	0
Worcester	10	0	0

