

**Rich and poor : y Mrs. Bernard Bosanquet.**

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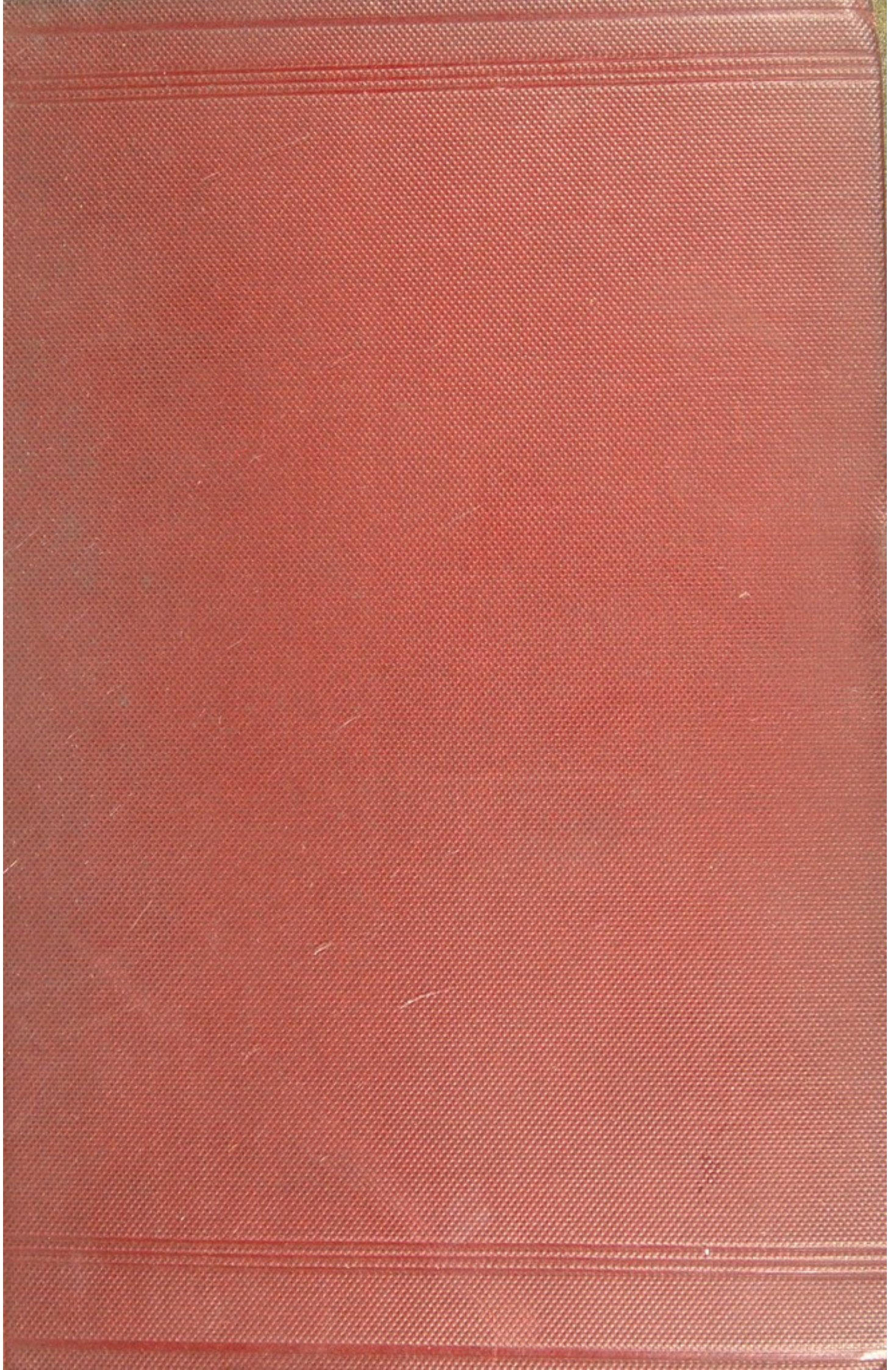
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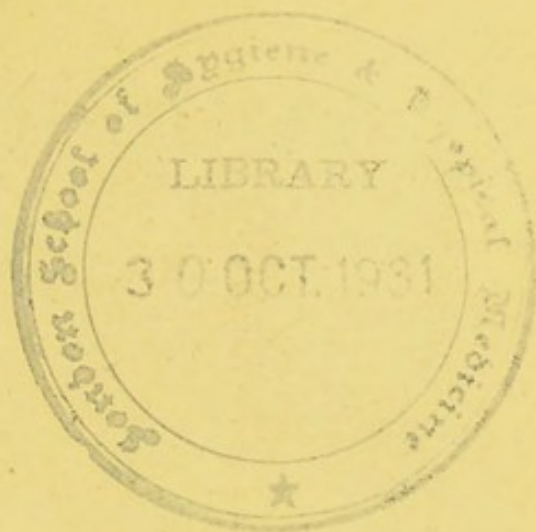
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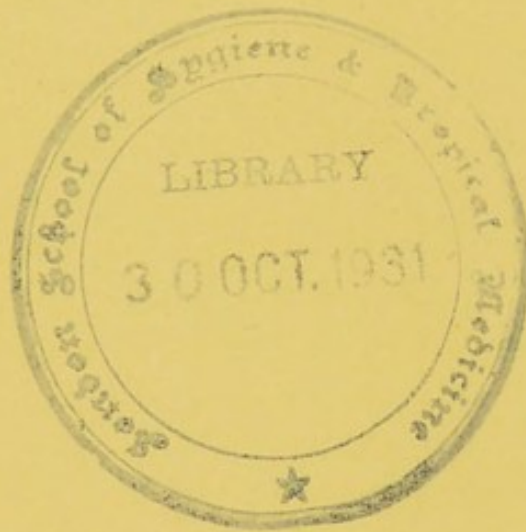
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RICH AND POOR



# RICH AND POOR



BY

MRS. BERNARD BOSANQUET

London

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED

NEW YORK : THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1899

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## PREFACE

IN offering this little book to its readers, I wish to explain certain omissions which might otherwise be regarded as deficiencies.

In the first place, I have purposely avoided overloading it with technical details, which can always be obtained from special handbooks. To some of these I have referred in the list at the end. My object was not to supersede any existing book, but rather to interest new workers and encourage old ones by insisting upon the underlying unities and principles which are capable of bringing order and a higher life into an apparent chaos.

In the second place I have avoided all approach to economic controversy, as being more appropriately carried on elsewhere. Economic convictions, indeed, I have been unable to dispense with, and as one of these has lately been disputed I will state it clearly here. It is the conviction that character is one

amongst other economic causes, and as such cannot fail to have an economic effect. In other words, I maintain that if you can make man or woman more honest, sober, and efficient than before, he will not only be more likely to find an opportunity of rendering services to the community (*i. e.* to find work), but will also by his higher range of wants increase the opportunities of other people (*i. e.* increase the amount of remunerative employment).

Finally, I regret that there are many branches of philanthropic work to which I have been unable to refer. Those which I have selected are, however, more or less typical of others, and it is obvious that any book short of a Charities Register can only work by dealing with typical instances.

7, CHEYNE GARDENS,  
October 2, 1896.

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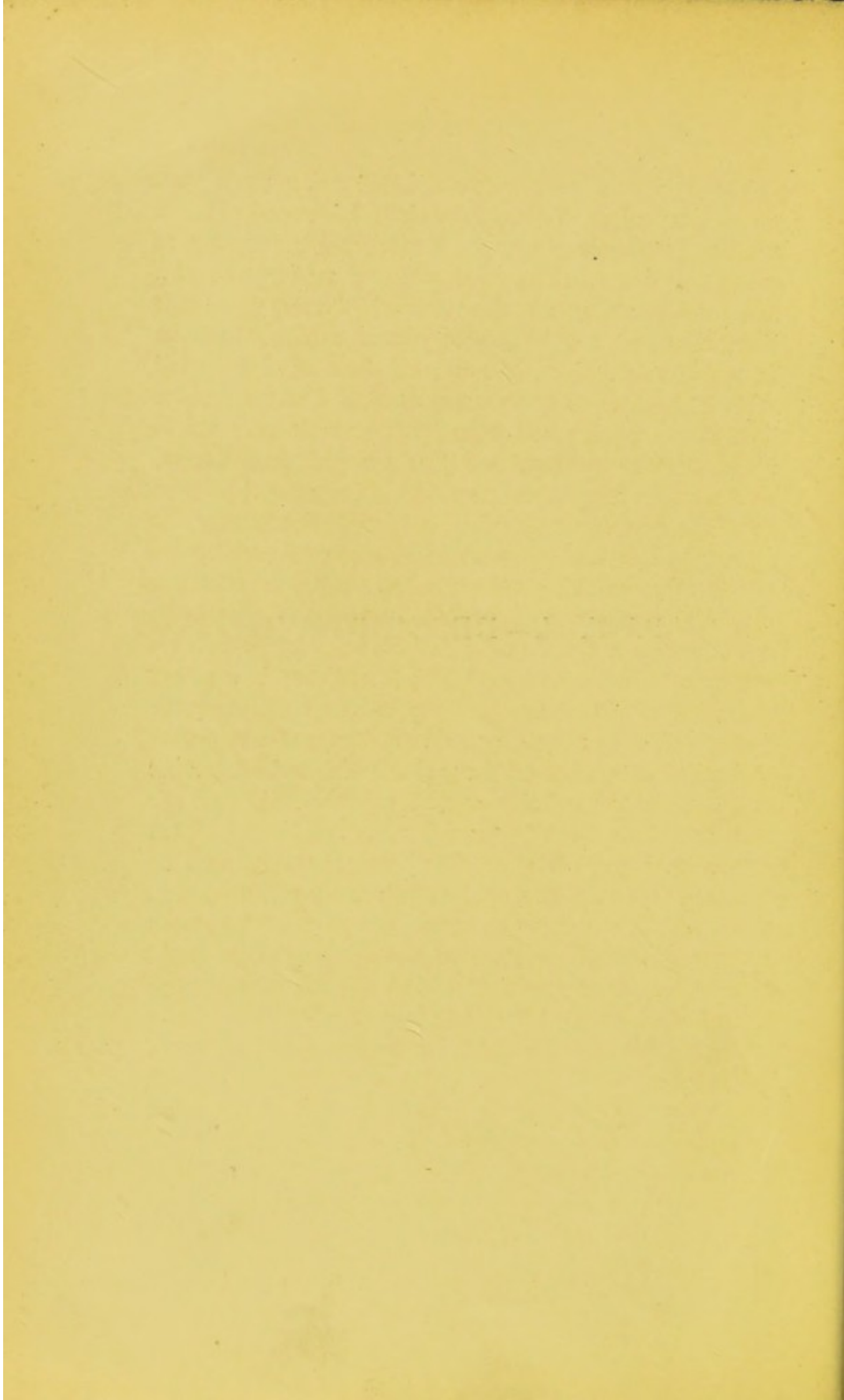
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PART I.—DESCRIPTIVE

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# RICH AND POOR

## INTRODUCTORY

THE separation between rich and poor in our large towns, and more especially in London, has often been pointed out as one of the most characteristic and threatening signs of the times. On the one hand, it is said, we have a large number of wealthy people, living an idle, luxurious life in their own quarter, and knowing or caring little about anything outside; on the other hand, we have a much larger number of poverty-stricken people herded together at the opposite extreme of the town, with all their energies exhausted in the futile endeavour to secure a tolerable existence. The contrast is a striking one, so long as we look only at the extremes. But to look only at extremes gives us no true picture of society as a whole, and tends rather to hide the very real resemblances and relations between rich and poor. If the different classes in society really were cut off from each other in this way, it would be vain to hope for the time when the gulf should be bridged over, and they should feel their real brotherhood as members of one community. But in

imagining such a division we ignore the infinite gradations in the social scale which make it impossible, or at any rate an entirely arbitrary proceeding, to draw a line anywhere, and say, "Here are the few rich, there the many poor." In older types of society there was no doubt a far nearer approach to an absolute division between high and low; but then in older types of society we find little to correspond to our middle class of modern times. Nay, even the middle class itself is now breaking up, and we have upper and lower middle classes, with any number of gradations within them to which those immediately concerned are very sensitive. The term has become quite indefinite, varying in meaning according to the point of view of the speaker. The artisan will speak of tradespeople and small shopkeepers as "middle class," meaning "not ladies and gentlemen;" while, I suppose, the aristocracy would speak of professional people in the same way—whether with the same implication I am not sure. And within the large class massed together by the outsider as "working people" there is the same manifold gradation in the social scale as that which exists at the upper end; there is the same sensitiveness to class distinctions which are invisible to all but themselves, and the same resentment felt at any intrusion of one grade into another. I have known an engine-driver's daughter cut off from all intercourse with her family because she had demeaned herself by marrying a skilled mechanic, and a shoe-maker's daughter refuse a steady young fellow to whom she was much attached solely because, being a soldier, he was below her in social standing.

It is very largely this tendency to mass together all who do not share our own wealth or position as "the

poor" or "the working class," which makes it so impossible for us to understand their needs, or to help them wisely, either by legislation or by charity. Very much the same crude ideas prevail again with reference to culture and happiness. The forms which these may take are many, and are not limited to any one section of the community; but they are so different in kind and manifestation that the pleasures and refinements of one class may fail to be recognised as such by members of another. There is perhaps no mistake so common as to suppose that because certain people do not share our tastes and interests their own must be worthless. It is a misunderstanding which has largely contributed to the exaggerated feeling about rich and poor. The East End orator excites his audience to contempt and even hatred by describing the wealthy capitalist or landowner as given over to sensuous pleasures and revelling in effeminate luxuries; while the West End has its pity or disgust aroused by descriptions of the poor as living in scenes of hopeless and sordid poverty varied only by drunkenness and vice. "Do show me some cases of unmitigated misery," is a request said to have been made by a young lady in search of sensation. Thank God, the thing does not exist. The one picture is not less untrue and absurd than the other; but both are largely accepted, and are very detrimental to sympathetic intercourse between people who have much to learn from each other.

But there is, I believe, on both sides an increasing desire for a better understanding, which may make the intercourse between different classes more vital, and their sympathy more real. One way in which this shows itself is in the growing appreciation of the

fact that the mere giving of alms is a very barren way of trying to help our neighbours. There must be many men and women of culture and refinement anxious to share the good things of their life with their less fortunate neighbours, but knowing that this is a far more difficult matter than sharing the contents of their purse, and standing aloof simply because they are uncertain how to begin. Others, again, have never had brought home to them the possibility that it may rest with them to make many lives brighter and nobler by their influence, and to lighten many a burden by their care. My aim in this little book is simply to help some of these to find their way through the labyrinth of "Social Work," to indicate some of the points where they may usefully apply their energies, and to promote, in however small a degree, a better understanding of what life in a poor neighbourhood really is.

Nothing but an intimate knowledge of the conditions under which our poorer neighbours live, can give us true sympathy with their lives and enable us to divine where their real difficulties lie; and one, if not the only, way, of getting this knowledge and wide sympathy is to set ourselves to a careful study of the district in which we desire to work—a study, not only of the people themselves, but also of the local institutions and customs which do so much to make the people what they are, and to which it is due that a district can be worked, not as a chaotic agglomeration of atoms, but as an organic whole. I suppose it will not be denied that to the great majority of leisured people the poorer quarter—the "East End"—of any large town, still remains practically an unknown region. They think of it as a chaos of poverty

and toil, of men and women all more or less degraded, of children to be saved from unfortunate surroundings, of dirt and disease, and of endless acres of squalid streets, relieved only by the flaring brilliance of the public-house ; and their occasional erratic excursions into it do little to reduce the confusion. Like all unexplored regions it becomes the field for many strange adventures, and much noble though too often misguided chivalry. It is here that the modern knight-errant looks to win his spurs, to challenge all oppressors and wrong-doers, and to defy the dragons of poverty and disease. Here too many less noble adventurers look to make their name, and perhaps their fortune, by trading upon the credulity or misery of an outcast people ; and it is perhaps hard to say at whose hands their victims suffer the greatest evil.

Some, no doubt, will make a special study of the one special evil they are combating, but without knowing much, if anything, of the people as a whole. They will be able to tell you the exact number of public-houses in a district, and the amount of intoxicating liquor consumed every day per head of the population, while they remain absolutely ignorant of the nature of the organic life upon which the drink evil is but an ugly excrescence ; or they will quote how many cases of starvation have taken place last winter, and know nothing of the causes of the starvation, or of the working of the agencies specially designed to relieve destitution. Others, again, have invaded some district during election week, and called at every house in their allotted number of streets, but have never penetrated further than the door-step or front parlour ; while some have spent years in visiting some half-dozen streets, and know every family within

their particular beat, but are as ignorant as those families themselves of the actual conditions under which they are living. To many a devoted "visiting-lady," as she is called, the limits of the parish in which she is at work, the difference between church parish and civil parish, the functions of the Relieving Officer, the Board of Guardians and the Vestry, remain to the end of her philanthropic career entirely unknown quantities; the whole system of social organisation which is moulding the lives of the people she has taken under her care, is practically non-existent so far as her knowledge and action are concerned.

It is perhaps little wonder that intelligent people who are anxious to take up social work should feel at first bewildered and helpless. In their ignorance of what has already been done they are oppressed by the magnitude of the evils they wish to combat, and see no point in the chaos at which to make their influence felt. Nor can they see clearly, where all is confusion, what that influence is likely to be; and unless they are of the short-sighted and self-confident who hold that good intentions are a sufficient guide through the worst of social tangles, they are likely to hesitate. "How *is* one to find out about all these things?" I am sometimes asked by despairing novices; and the best advice I can give them is that they should always be asking questions, and following up any clue to knowledge which may seem likely to throw light upon the work they have in hand.

In the following study of a London parish I have attempted to present a concrete idea of the conditions under which social work must be carried on, and especially of those institutions and forces which—for good

or for evil—have most influence upon the lives of the people. In other parishes the people and conditions may both be different, and every worker must make his own study of his own subject. But in their main outlines they will be much the same, and if my sketch is useful as a guide to other students in the same field it will have served its purpose.

## CHAPTER I

### THE PARISH AND ITS INSTITUTIONS

#### § I. *Our Inheritance from the Past*

THE particular parish which I shall describe is one of the seven which together constitute East London. It is large and straggling, and while it runs down almost into the heart of the City at one end, the other is so far off as to be semi-suburban in character. Its population is that of a fair-sized town, for it contains no fewer than 122,000 inhabitants, and consists of about 380 streets, which gives an average of 36 houses and 321 inhabitants to each street.<sup>1</sup> In reality the number of inhabitants to a street is much greater, for towards the City many of the streets are mainly occupied with business premises of one kind and another, and contain comparatively few residents. For the most part the streets are wide and straight, and the houses externally of an eminently respectable appearance, suggestive of the £30 and £40 householder of comfortable income. The suggestion is a false one, but it may pass for the present. Here and

<sup>1</sup> The average number of persons to a house all over London is between seven and eight, while all over England it is between five and six.

there are groups of streets which present a startling contrast, and make us a little suspicious of the respectability which can endure such neighbours; and hidden away in dark corners the few who really know the neighbourhood will show you courts and alleys which look like relics of the times when no one thought or cared how the poor were housed. Only the diligent explorer will discover some of these nooks. To one the entrance is beneath a house in the main street, and you may pass the flight of steps leading down to it a hundred times without discovering that they lead to anything more than a cellar; and many are only to be approached by a low-arched passage which easily eludes observation. For the most part these obscure corners are much alike in their general appearance; one or two rows of rickety, grimy cottages, falling into decay and ruin, with sooty hard patches of ground in front, dimly recalling by their shape the idea of a garden, and looking quite misplaced and useless—no one whose self-respect was not reduced to a minimum *could* live in such a place. But just now and again a delightful surprise awaits you, reluctantly turning down one of these passages. Where there is a good landlord, who has known how to keep together good tenants, one of these secluded spots becomes a little oasis, a haven of refuge. There is always a demand for these old-fashioned cottages; disreputable people like them because they are well off the policeman's beat, and rowdyism can reach a high pitch before law and order will venture in to quell it; and respectable people cling to them because they are small, often consisting only of two rooms, and in them they can afford that unwonted luxury—a house to themselves. In some of them the tenants

have been there for thirty or forty years ; and in these cases it is characteristic for the gardens to preserve their proper function, and be gay with creeping jenny, geranium, and fuchsia.

Generally speaking, of course, gardening in any recognised sense of the term is an impossibility in the newer quarters, where the houses are built right on to the street ; but here and there is found a very pretty substitute for it. Every now and again some ingenious lover of flowers will cover the front of his house, or of his stratum of the house, with hanging flower-pots ; the fashion quickly spreads from neighbour to neighbour, and in a few weeks the sunny side of the street will be glowing with patches of colour, reflected less brightly from the opposite and shady side. Many of the houses have indeed spaces behind, but for the most part these are now built over with workshops or used for storing timber, or serve some other economic function ; it is not often that the tenant can afford to reserve it for his recreation.

Dreariest and most depressing of all the streets are those in which the misnamed "model dwelling" has been introduced. As space becomes more and more valuable, the small houses are rapidly being swept away to make room for huge gloomy blocks of dwellings, looking from outside like great barracks, or the factories of the north country, and inside like nothing so much as rabbit-warrens. Often set so close together that no gleam of sunshine can penetrate to the thoroughfare between, it is like being in a well to live in any of the lower rooms, and the gain in rents to the landlord is but ill-compensated for by the loss in fresh air and light to the large families of little children herded together in them. In good hands, no

doubt, the system is capable of good results ; witness the report of the Peabody Trust. But in bad or indifferent hands it is beyond question that all the physical and moral evils of East London are intensified by life in "the models" ; and the evident tendency to multiply them, not only in London but also in provincial towns, seems much to be regretted.

Such are the dwellings of the parish. Fourteen thousand houses, cottages, and "models," scattered apparently at random and without any regard to symmetry or classification, in streets, courts, squares, and alleys, and receiving within their walls each night the many thousands of human beings for whose sake we are interested in them. Rising above the wilderness of roofs are the spires of the twenty-one churches which from time to time have been built to meet the spiritual needs of the increasing population ; and hardly less impressive, the massive buildings of the Board Schools mark the centres where busy swarms of children cluster buzzing through their daily tasks.

Of natural features the parish has none ; all have been swept away before the levelling hand of the builder. The nearest approach to such is the canal which runs through the northern part of the district, and marks an unaccountable but very noticeable distinction in gentility between the streets lying north and south of it. The canal itself has no claims to gentility. Further west indeed it becomes neat and even elegant in appearance ; but here in the east it pretends to be nothing more than what it is—a muddy groove with muddy water in it, which affords a convenient passage for boats, and a handy repository for worn-out utensils and superfluous animals. Occasionally, indeed, it is dignified by becoming the

instrument of a human tragedy; and throughout the summer it affords unending delight to the boys, who love to paddle and bathe in its dusky waters. But its main purpose is to convey the forests of Norway to the firesides and workshops of London; and the large timber-yards along its banks, with their great stacks of wood towering above the houses in summer, and dwindling down to the ground as winter advances, give employment to many of the poorer families round about. Very striking in appearance are these great wood-yards, especially when, as not infrequently happens, a fire breaks out and the great stacks of wood are burned out, to the dismay of the wood-choppers who were counting upon many weeks of work.

Of open spaces the parish boasts nothing larger than its graveyards. Here and in the streets the children make their playgrounds; for the gloomy asphalted yards attached to the schools are unattractive and not worthy of the schools themselves. Here and there a confluence of streets will cause an opening to be left, large enough for an open-air meeting in summer, or for the snow to be piled in during the winter months; and two or three old squares which have lingered on from by-gone days preserve sooty little enclosures to the indignation of the excluded rate-payers. But for the main part every acre of the 648 acres in the parish is laid out in streets and buildings.

This then, in its broad outlines, is the outer shell within which the life of the parish is carried on, and which of course has very much to do with what that life is like. As we now see it, it is almost entirely of modern growth; but we can trace within it relics of very

much older days which have left their mark indelibly upon the course of its development. The very boundary line has come down with hardly a deviation from the times when it traced the division between different manors; and its eccentric and apparently perverse windings, in which it takes no regard of streets, and in one instance at least cuts right through a house, find full explanation when we see it on old maps following the outlines of fields, and guided in its course by brooks and ditches. An important line this, which we have received from our ancestors; for according as a man lives within it or without, will his rates be higher or lower, his streets well paved and lighted or the reverse, and his widow receive much or little "out-relief" after his death.

The queer little courts and old-fashioned houses, again, which seem so out of place in the midst of modern streets, also find their explanation as survivals from the time when they were little hamlets or gentlemen's residences, scattered about the country side. Only 150 years ago all the northern part of the parish, about three-quarters of the whole, was still laid out in fields, traversed by a few lanes and country roads. The "streets" were at that time all crowded down into the southern extremity near the City; there were 134 of them, but as altogether they contained only 2,302 houses, an average of 18 to a street, we must not think of them as approaching our streets of to-day in size or dignity. In fact they were nearly all little courts, yards, and alleys, many of which have handed on their names, and some at least the actual houses, to the present day. The workhouse—built by voluntary contributions, and twice rebuilt since—stood on the same site, known then as now by what

seems to us the pathetically unsuitable name of "Land of Promise." Perhaps it points to the time when the philanthropist thought all social troubles were to be cured by providing a house of work for the unemployed. But a name clings longer than the cause for which it is given; "Dirty Lane" is still known as such to old inhabitants, though it has long since been dignified officially by a less descriptive title. Relics of still more ancient days may be traced in a very modern-looking drinking fountain in one of the main thoroughfares (once a Roman road), which marks the site of an ancient well of great renown, St. Agnes le Clere, in the waters of which fashionable invalids would at one time seek a cure for rheumatic pains and headaches; and in St. John's Court, where, in the last century, there were still to be seen the remains of a Priory founded for Black Nuns, whose possessions were confirmed to them by King Richard in 1195.

To suggest that a "gentleman" should go to live in the parish now would be regarded as a joke or an impertinence; but at the beginning of the century it was a fashionable, if not indeed an aristocratic quarter. Many of the streets bear the names of the distinguished knights and worthies who dwelt there on their estates, or in comfortable residences; and now and again the explorer may still come across a dilapidated old house, let out room by room and swarming with unkempt children, but bearing witness in carved staircase and handsome mouldings to times of past prosperity. And even within the memory of men the neighbourhood had kept much of its rural appearance; one aged woman remembers going to church through fields and stiles, while another talks

of seeing deer in a gentleman's garden on a spot now covered by one of our worst slums.

The process by which the change has taken place, by which the quaint old parish with its relics and traditions and green fields, has been covered with its densely packed population of to-day, is a comparatively recent one, and can easily be traced. It has been a process of gradual but constant pressure from the City outwards, which is still going on, and may in the course of another fifty years again transform the external appearance of the parish almost beyond recognition. As the means of conveyance become more and more accessible to all, and as the working classes have multiplied and increased, they have spread like a swarm over the face of the parish. The green fields have disappeared before them, and rows upon rows of dwellings have sprung up to shelter them, hiding away the old landmarks until they are invisible to the casual observer. But still the parish preserves its unity; its boundary, its old traditions, its government, its ancient names and institutions survive the short-lived generations of men, and mould and shape their lives while they exist.

At first it was the wealthy City merchants who left their business, and came to live outside in quiet old squares and country houses. Then came the less wealthy but comfortable professional and "middle" classes, crowding out the rich, and being in their turn crowded out by the well-to-do clerks and shopkeepers or business men. Then it was that the main part of the building as we now see it was done: and that the interminable rows of monotonous but comfortable houses were built to accommodate interminable families of monotonous but comfortable people.

This must have been a prosperous time for the parish, and to judge from the size of the churches built to accommodate it, the generation was a godly and sober one, very different from its present stiff-necked and froward successor. Its children had good gardens to play in, were within reach of country walks, and were educated in the endowed schools of the City and neighbourhood. But these children have in their turn moved on further into the northern suburbs, and made way for the miscellaneous hordes which have seized upon the parish. The houses no longer represent each its own family ; but are let off in rooms ; and every house contains its two, three, or four families, with some lonely old maid or widow in the garret who can hardly claim the title of family. The gardens are converted into workshops, store-houses, or rubbish-yards ; and the children are turned out at the front door instead of the back for their play-time.

Our old ancestors who have bequeathed their names to so many of our streets, have left their record and their influence in other ways as well. Gifts and almshouses and quaint endowments, "benefactions" of every kind, still attest the kindly feeling of the wealthy to the poor around their doors. Perhaps it was not altogether benevolence by which they were actuated. The vision of the time when poverty should no longer exist was not before them, and their faith that the poor should always be with us was so firm that they relied on the perpetuity of poverty for that earthly immortality which so many covet and so few attain. "For ever" is the simple instruction accompanying most of the numerous bequests, with a naïve disregard of all the accidents of Time ; nevertheless of many

only the record is left, the gift itself has disappeared and cannot be traced. Some no doubt have been appropriated by dishonest trustees, others may have lapsed through bad investments; in some cases old almshouses have literally crumbled away with age (of one we read that "the floor fell in and carried the old lady with it"); and so "for ever" has contracted to a few brief centuries so far as the fame of the donors is concerned.

Still there are many left; the earlier ones dating from the seventeenth century, a time when the State was endeavouring to stimulate private benevolence to make that provision for the poor which it ultimately took upon itself. The wealthier donors erected almshouses, peaceful refuges for worn-out toilers, where generation after generation finds a haven and a brief period of calm. Often these were designed for the followers of some particular calling, for frame-knitters, weavers, ironmongers, and their widows; and in so far as some of these callings have ceased to exist the donors' intentions have necessarily failed of their end. Others have made their benefactions on a smaller scale, though they have aimed no less at perpetuity in their gifts. For the most part it is some material need which they propose to meet; "two shillings a week to be spent in bread, and given to the poor of the said parish, always on Wednesday in every week for ever," was a legacy left by Henry Hodges in 1632; and before that in 1593 Thomas Russell had left £2 12s. per annum for ever to be distributed by the churchwarden on every Sunday "in Twelve-penny worth of Bread, counting thirteen to the dozen." Bread and fuel are still among the necessaries in universal demand, but more difficult to carry out are the instructions of

John Wild, who in 1662 instructed his trustees that they should "for ever" on or about the feast of Bartholomew "buy and provide for six poor women four yards and a half of good northern kerseys a-piece, for each of the same poor women, of the value and price of three shillings and fourpence by the yard, or thereabouts, therewith to make waistcoats and petty-coats for the same poor women." Evidently John Wild was not gifted with foresight, and thought not that prices and fashions might change, or old women cease to wear waistcoats. Nor did he foresee that the value of the property he left would increase threefold to the embarrassment of the trustees, who hesitated to spend more than the prescribed amount in waistcoats and petty-coats.

Spiritual needs were also an object of care to "pious donors"; sermons on special days are provided for to the amount of £6 10s. per annum, the price for a sermon varying from 10s. to 15s. or 20s. The subject is generally left open; but one John Noble, citizen and tallow-chandler, gave certain moneys in 1633 for two sermons yearly for ever "against excessive gaming"; while a century later Thomas Fairchild provided for an annual sermon on the more ambitious subject of "The wonderful work of God in the Creation," or "on the certainty of the resurrection of the dead, proved by the certain changes of the animal and vegetable parts of the creation." It is pleasant to find that Thomas Fairchild was a gardener, and so to realise that his gift was an attempt to perpetuate delights which he himself had found in his daily work.

But though the pious donors mostly leave the preacher free to choose his subject, they are careful to provide him with an audience. One Joan Smales in

1628 left the lease of a house for a thousand years at the rent of a peppercorn to provide four sermons annually, and while she stipulates for "pains to be taken therein," she also ensures that such pains shall not be altogether in vain by decreeing that the surplus after paying 10s. for the sermon shall be divided amongst the "poore, weake, aged or decayed inhabitants of the parish that shall be present at the hearing of the said sermons." This surplus, which was originally 20s., has by the lapse of time increased one hundredfold, for the site of the house which was held at a peppercorn's rental is now let to a prosperous bank for £105; and great expectations are said to be aroused amongst such of the parishioners as are both decayed and devout as the date of the sermon comes round.

The gift of Mr. Gorsuch in 1820, illustrates the greater complexity of the motives by which more modern minds are swayed; for his legacy of £9 per annum is primarily to provide for the maintenance and repair of his tombstone and that of a friend, while the surplus is to be given "on or near the place of interment" in sums not less than 10s. to those poor parishioners most regular in attendance on Divine service, and most deserving objects of charity. To this day a solemn function takes place on the appointed date, when the Vicar or churchwarden deposits ten shillings on the tomb of Mr. Gorsuch, thence to be taken by the selected recipient.

The following is a diary, dated 1835, of the charities to be disbursed in December every year:—

Bread every Sunday.

Mr. Cooke's Gift of Money, every week (£31 10s. per annum).

Mr. Cooke's other Gift of Money, every week (£63 per annum).

Judge Fuller's Gift every week, in Money (£50 per annum).  
 First Friday, Saunders' Gift of Bread.  
 Every Wednesday, Mr. Hodge's Gift of Bread.  
 Once in this month, Mr Savage's Gift of Money.  
 21st.—Mr. Burton's Gift of Money.  
 21st.—Mr. Brainsforth's Gift of Money.  
 21st.—Mr. Nevitt's Gift of Money.  
 24th.—Mr. Jervie's Gift of Clothing.  
 25th.—Sermon ; Mr. Rawlin's Gift.  
 25th.—Mr. Rawlin's Gift of Money.  
 25th.—Sir John Fenner's Gift of Money.  
 25th.—Sermon ; Mr. Brainsforth's Gift.  
 25th.—Mr. Marshall's Gift of Bread or Money.  
 26th.—Sermon ; Mrs. Smale's Gift.  
 26th.—Mrs. Smale's Gift of Money.  
 26th.—Chaldron of Coals, Fuller's Alms Houses.  
 27th.—Sermon ; Gift of Mr. Noble.  
 Coals, the Gift of Mr. Rogers and Mrs. Tree.

December is a rather busier month than the others because of Christmas ; but much the same sort of thing goes on all the year round, and although some of the charities mentioned have been "lost" since 1835, there are enough left to be of considerable importance : £68 are available for bread, £44 for coal, £60 to £80 for clothing, and between £400 and £500 for doles, in addition to thirty almshouses and the stipends paid to their inmates. Resources such as these may be found in all London parishes, and I suppose most provincial ones also ; unfortunately, the legacies of the past have proved rather a bane than a boon, owing partly to carelessness of administration, partly to the hampering restrictions by which they are accompanied. In 1888 an enquiry was instituted into the working of these charities in our parish, and the report of the Committee bears strong witness to their mischievous influence . . . . "the indiscriminate doling

out of dead men's sixpences or half-quartern loaves to those who can shout the loudest, struggle the hardest, or wail the most piteously, does not carry with it a power to bless, but the reverse. It finds the necessitous and poor 'down,' and simply keeps them, almost irremediably, where they are. Indeed it is to be feared that the charity 'doles' have helped to rivet mendicant and pauper habits upon many in our midst, who except for the demoralising influence exercised thereby would have struggled to maintain a commendable and honourable independence."

The same demoralising influence goes on more or less all over the country; although the same funds wisely administered would go very far towards stamping out real distress. Here is a wide field for the work of the philanthropist; every one belongs to some parish, and now has a voice in determining how its charities shall be administered, and every one might at least do his share towards influencing public opinion in the direction of right administration. Hardly anything could be more important to the welfare of any district than an awakened sense of responsibility on the part of its inhabitants with respect to the endowments which they have received from the past, and which they are allowing to run to waste. Let those who are interested in the question of old age pensions realise the fact that there is in England a sum of £1,025,000 per annum actually in their hands and available for the purpose, which is now to a large extent being frittered away in meaningless doles of bread and clothing and half-crowns, which serve no purpose but to create greedy expectations and discontent.

Even more important to a parish than its buildings

and endowments, are the institutions which our ancestors have handed down to us for its preservation and regulation. Our whole system of local government is the outcome of a process of development from ancient traditions and institutions, modified and augmented to suit modern requirements, but still preserving the unity of the parish, and recognising its ancient boundaries.

In our nineteenth-century cry for higher wages we are apt to lose sight of the fact that many things are more important to the working man than a few shillings added to his weekly income. A good supply of water, well-paved and lighted streets, a market in which he can always obtain wholesome food, and properly guarded sanitary conditions, will do more to raise his standard of living above that of his ancestors than any increase in mere money income. With these he can lead a healthy, orderly life on comparatively small wages; without them no rise in wages, however desirable in itself, will enable him to escape danger and disease. I may illustrate this point by the case of a family which has just come under my notice. The man would be placed low in any classification according to earnings, for he is an unskilled labourer earning only 24s. a week. But until lately he has done well. His three eldest children are earning a little, and they have managed to keep a fair-sized house to themselves, and to accumulate a few luxuries, including a piano. Best of all, they have never taken charity, but have preserved their independence. Suddenly the four eldest children are stricken down with fever. The reduction in earnings is serious enough in itself; add to that doctor's bills and all the expenses incident to illness, and it is little wonder

that the family is at last compelled to appeal for help to send the children away into the country as they recover. "The first time we ever had to ask for anything," says the poor mother, almost breaking down as she recounts what she has gone through during these weary weeks of nursing. And what is the cause? Nothing but neglected drains and a careless landlord who would not have them put right when the neighbouring houses were done. Of course he could have been compelled, but no one has taken the trouble to compel him. Indeed, how many people know whose business it is to look after such matters, or what steps should be taken to get them put right? All the machinery is there, ready to hand, if the rate-payers had but the knowledge and energy necessary to set it in motion. A notification to the sanitary officer of the district persistently repeated until the necessary reforms are carried out, is all that is technically needed. But practically the working is not quite so simple. The sanitary officer works for and through the Vestry, and if the Vestry are not very keen about sanitary reform and ready to support him, he may be correspondingly lax in carrying out his duties. But the Vestry itself is only the representative of the rate-payers, so that ultimately the whole responsibility rests with them. Here is work enough ready to hand for those who hate disease and dirt, and are willing to do their share in stamping them out.

Let us look at another case to show the importance of knowing and making use of local institutions. A widow is found living with her mother and five children in a miserable little garret. She is not a skilled worker, and can earn only a few shillings a week; the children

are half starved and less than half clad. Allowing the proper amount of air to each person this family should have 2000 cubic feet if they are to live healthily, instead of which they have considerably under 1000, and are being asphyxiated as well as starved. What is to be done? If you want to move them to immediate gratitude you will give them 5s., or some bread and coal tickets; but if you are thinking how it is possible to change the conditions altogether, so that the children may grow up into strong able men and women, you must not be content with this. Here again, all the machinery for remedying the mischief is ready to your hand in the local institutions; a little knowledge and energy, combined with a good deal of tact and perseverance, will do all that is required. This is how we worked this particular case. Every parish has its special provision for children whose parents are unable to support them. For our parish there are schools out in the country, within easy reach of London, so that the parents are not debarred from visiting them. Our visitor went to Mrs. B., and asked her why she did not send some of her children to these schools through the Guardians. She did not know much about the school, she said, and did not care about parting with the children; she had never realised how greatly it might be for their benefit, and like so many of her class she would go on starving and toiling in the old well-known mechanical routine for years, without thinking of making the necessary effort to break through. The visitor represents the advantages and explains how and where application should be made, but is not very successful. Perhaps there is a lingering hope in Mrs. B.'s mind that the 5s. may still be forthcoming if she can hold out, and the visitor

withdraws to try some other plan. The sanitary authorities have power to prevent overcrowding, so a letter is written to them explaining the matter, and asking them to bring pressure to bear in the desired direction. They fall in with the idea, their officer visits, and presently sends a report that if we will visit again we shall find Mrs. B. much more amenable. And so matters are fairly in train for getting several of the children away into the parish schools, where they will have good air, plenty of food and warm clothing, and for giving the others at least a chance of doing well. Much more trouble, of course, than giving 5s., but how infinitely more worth while!

The successful carrying out of work like this depends also to a large extent upon the wisdom and uprightness of the men who are elected to serve upon our local institutions. Suppose, as often happens, the sanitary authorities have amongst them men who own house property in the district, and care less about keeping it in good condition than about the rents to be got from it. Their officer will soon find that he has little to gain but ill-will if he is too busy in his work, and he may be slow to enforce the necessary improvements. Or suppose that the Guardians are short-sighted men, of benevolent instincts but little wisdom. They may say, when the widow applies for the children to be taken to the schools, "Oh, poor thing, it's a shame to part her from her children; let us give her half-a-crown a week instead; she will like it better, and it will be cheaper than keeping the children altogether." Yes, she will like it better; but how about the overcrowding, and the starving, and the poor diseased men and women they are manufacturing for the future? We must have people on our

Boards who have bigger minds than this, and can grasp the problem better; and here again every rate-payer is responsible for the sort of man elected.

This being so, it will not be waste of time to look a little closer at our local institutions, and see how they have grown up, and what can be made of them.

The distinction between church parish and civil parish, which is always a stumbling-block to beginners, did not originally exist. Until comparatively recently the two chief areas for administrative purposes were the ecclesiastical parish and the county. Then with the growth and shifting of population it came about that the number of people in the ecclesiastical parish were, in some cases, too many to be dealt with from one religious centre, in others too few to be handled advantageously from one administrative centre. A twofold change has therefore been going on. In some places the original church parish has been subdivided into many smaller ones, in others several have been grouped together into *Unions*, for purposes of administration. In neither case is the old boundary lost sight of; it still preserves and hands on the unity of the old parish for certain purposes, but for others it is superseded.

So far as our present study is concerned the most important functions of the civil parish are those of "guarding" the poor. It is hardly too much to say that it rests largely with the Board of Guardians in any district to determine what kind and degree of poverty there shall be in that district. To any one who is fighting poverty, therefore, it is most important to know what are the powers of the Guardians, and how they are most wisely exercised; and the easiest way of grasping the full extent of these powers is to

know something of the history of the Poor Law since its origin two and a half centuries ago.

Originally its work was left to the ecclesiastical authorities. To relieve distress of all kinds has always been accepted by the Christian Church as a duty peculiarly her own; and it was long before it was recognised that poverty is an evil so differing in kind from other misfortunes as to require very special treatment. Sin and disease and ignorance and poverty; against all these the Church waged war, and so far was she the recognised authority, that at a time when begging was a criminal offence she was allowed by the State to issue licences to selected beggars. But as society became more complex the inability of the Church to deal both wisely and adequately with "problems of poverty" became more and more apparent, and in the time of the Tudors the State found it necessary to intervene. It was a time when many people were being thrown out of work by changes in the methods of cultivation, and the very severe laws in force against begging and stealing were ineffectual in face of the widespread poverty and distress. From time immemorial the great centres of relief had been the monasteries, but it had come to pass that their benevolence was so unwisely practised as merely to gather round them large bodies of "dependents"; they "made more poverty than they relieved." Moreover the monasteries were now to be swept away, and the needs of the unfortunate pauper class which they had created were added to those of the unemployed. The first aim of the State was to create new centres for dealing with these difficulties, in place of those which it had destroyed. The parish was fixed upon as the most appropriate unit, and

every parish was warned that it was responsible for its own poor, and must make proper provision for them. The Church became the centre of all "relief-work," and the congregation was there exhorted to the fulfilment of its duties in this direction ; and it is from this time onwards that so many of our endowed charities date. But the religious motive was proved to be inadequate by itself, and it was found necessary to invest the civil authorities with power to see that the work was efficiently performed. The office of collecting and distributing alms was made a compulsory one, and the Justices of the Peace were empowered to enforce contributions when the voluntary gifts of the parishioners were insufficient to meet the needs of the poor belonging to the parish.

That was the beginning of our present system of Poor Law Relief. There is no longer any ground for regarding it as a form of charity ; the large funds now expended are raised entirely by a compulsory tax, which every one would be glad to escape if he could ; and no one ever thinks of making a voluntary contribution towards the relief given by the parish to its poor. For instance, no one now would give or bequeath money towards the building or maintenance of a workhouse ; a form of charity which was common when our system was partly a voluntary one.

By degrees, also, all connection between parish relief and the Church has ceased. For a long time it was kept up through the churchwardens, who were held to be the responsible officers for the collection and distribution of the funds. Now the two institutions are quite distinct, and the poor law has its independent staff of officers, whose sole business is to carry out its provisions. We may find perhaps a

lingering trace of the old connection in the common belief that a clergyman's recommendation entitles the holder to receipt of the kind of relief he most desires, but this is a pious superstition. The history of the gradual superseding of ecclesiastical by civil authorities in this connection is full of interest and instruction ; with many lessons for the present day.

The responsibility for maintaining its own poor still rests with the parish (or with the unions of parishes), which delegates the work to a certain number of parishioners who constitute the Board of Guardians. These Guardians may be either men or women, and are elected every three years. Their work is unpaid, arduous, and responsible; for with them it rests to determine in every case where application is made for relief, whether or not it shall be given, and of what kind or amount it shall be. Within certain limits their power of decision is absolute, and the responsibility which is recognised by the State is in this way exercised locally.

What is the exact nature of this responsibility? Immediately and obviously it is that of ensuring that no parishioner is obliged to suffer destitution, of providing necessary medical relief, and of caring for the education and maintenance of children who have lost their parents. Too often these immediate duties are all that are recognised, but no public work can be carried on without involving wider issues than those immediately apparent, and this is peculiarly the case with the work of Poor Law Guardians. Their duty is not only to the poor themselves, but also to the whole of the parish, and indeed to the whole of the community. For instance, it is not well for the community that it should contain a class of people which

habitually lives upon the earnings of others, without making any adequate return for its maintenance; and it thus becomes the wider duty of Guardians to administer relief as far as possible in such a way that it may not increase, or even perpetuate, the number of those qualified to receive it.

The Guardians have again a very serious duty towards the parishioners who have elected them and entrusted them with the responsibility of expending their money. It is quite curious how often Guardians will regard a lavish expenditure as denoting a generous spirit on their part, and economy as hard-hearted niggardliness; quite regardless of the fact that it is other people's money which they are expending. To a large extent, moreover, that money is taken from people hardly better off than the paupers it goes to relieve, and it is not an uncommon thing in the poorer districts of London for householders to apply for charity to pay the heavy rates. The high rents, again, which are such a burden to the poorer inhabitants of towns, may be partly due to the heavy poor-rate; and in this way it happens that so-called "generosity" to the pauper class may involve great hardship to the more deserving class which just manages to preserve its independence.

During the two and a half centuries that the Poor Law has been at work, a vast amount of experience has been accumulated; and should be studied carefully by all who wish to do effective social work. Hardly any of the schemes which are now proposed for the reform of the Poor Law but have at one time or another been tried, and the result of the experiment recorded. Houses of correction for the "sturdy vagabond," relief works for the unemployed, and a free substitution of

outdoor relief for the workhouse, have been favourite devices for curing poverty from the first; and the history of Poor Law administration alternates between sentimentalism and repression. After studying this history we can hardly fail to see that, whatever view we may take as to any particular scheme, it is most desirable in the interests of the poor for the Guardians to adopt some well-considered policy wisely and to maintain it firmly, yielding nothing to clamours or importunity. The worst forms of poverty exist where it is known that relief is granted under pressure, and not upon any consistent plan; then all the energies of the poor are diverted to struggling for relief, and the desire for work becomes inoperative. Our own parish was a striking instance of this in the early years of this century. In those days persons who were refused relief by the overseer could appeal to the magistrate; and it became the custom for all the roughs of the neighbourhood to go in mobs of fifty to one hundred and obtain orders from the sitting magistrate, who never refused if they went in large enough numbers, or clamoured loudly enough for what they called their "reg'lars"—*i. e.* sixpence a day regularly. The overseer's position was a dangerous one, and he complains that on Saturday nights he has to take one or two beadles with him for personal security.

Another lesson which is now accepted by all who have studied the question is, that relief should never be given in aid of wages. It was thought at the beginning of the century that when wages fell below a certain point the right remedy was to make them up to a given standard out of the rates; and this was largely done all over the country. Some people went

so far as to say that a working man could never hope to earn enough to maintain himself and his family, and that therefore all earnings must be subsidised. The result of this policy was that wages tended to fall very rapidly towards the point at which relief would be given, and that the rates increased so enormously as to threaten many parts of the country with ruin; the standard of the wage-earner was lowered instead of being raised, at the cost of immense hardship to the rate-payers. It was found necessary to reverse the policy, and since then wages have steadily increased; the standard has been raised naturally instead of artificially, and perhaps no one would now venture to say that a working man can never earn enough to maintain himself and his family.

It is wider issues like these which have to be borne in mind in estimating the work of the guardians. District visitors and other workers amongst the poor are too apt to regard them only as a possible source from which to extract a little food or money for a favourite "case"; and they will praise or blame according to their success in this, and quite irrespective of wider considerations.

Amongst the institutions of every London parish must be counted the great hospitals; although, as it happens, there are none of these actually within the boundaries of our parish. But there are several just outside its confines; and our people think little of travelling all over London to attend any hospital which has been praised to them, or to which they have taken a fancy. Unlike really local institutions the hospitals are open to all comers upon certain conditions which vary according to their regulations, and they are used—or abused—to an enormous

extent. There are in London no fewer than 102 hospitals; and it is said that during the past year they admitted 87,119 in-patients, and dealt with 1,299,132 out-patients. As a rule hospital treatment is in great favour, partly because it is to be had free, partly because of the size of the buildings and the number of officials, which impress the patient with a pleasing sense of importance. To be an interesting "case," and to have many doctors in consultation is to most a great alleviation of their sufferings; while to all the freedom with which physic is dispensed to them affords immense satisfaction. To those who are really ill, moreover, the rest and good food and gentle nursing are an unspeakable comfort after the noise and discomfort of being ill at home. Occasionally, indeed, illness will even be feigned by those desirous of partaking of hospital benefits. "I think it my duty to tell you," wrote the hospital doctor to me of one man, "that there is nothing whatever the matter with him, he is only shamming;" but he had shammed so successfully with "severe internal pains" that he secured some considerable time in hospital before being found out, and imposed even upon his wife, who "didn't see how he could bear all them poultices if he weren't really bad." He is at present trying to get into another hospital with the same complaint.

Those who have once taken to frequenting the hospitals generally keep it up more or less constantly afterwards. They go round from one to another comparing the treatment which they have received at each; and often, it must be confessed, having their complaint quite differently diagnosed according to the kind of hospital to which they apply. One woman who had been treated at a specialist hospital

for some deformity and instructed to obtain an expensive surgical instrument, was greatly indignant on going to a general hospital at being told that her complaint was sciatica, and an instrument would be of no use. Another woman told me with much complacency how she had tried the "Universal College," the "Orthopathic," and the "Paralysed" hospitals, and how none of them could do anything for her.

But to some the publicity of the hospital is a great trial. This is especially the case with many women, and to them the opening of a women's hospital with women doctors has been a great boon. There is moreover a growing suspicion that treatment in the hospitals is sometimes very experimental, and if this feeling spreads it may cause a reaction in favour of private practitioners. Meanwhile there is no question but that the poorer people of London obtain gratis medical and surgical treatment of the very first class, and such as none but the very rich can afford to pay for. They are in this respect better off than the classes just above them in the social scale, who can only obtain such medical advice as can be had for a small fee.

Nevertheless, the local practitioner holds his own even in East London, and in spite of hospital rivalry; a doctor who will suit his fees to his patients and give them plenty of medicine in large bottles can generally get a good practice, and if he is careful not to allow too much credit, a very fair income. Half-a-crown a visit is about the highest that can be charged; eighteenpence is more common, and there are many "sixpenny doctors." Some will even take fourpence, but these are generally unqualified men who are

trying to establish themselves. Almost any one can get some practice, owing to the eagerness of the people to try something or some one new ; and though their fickleness may make it only a temporary one, still some fifty to sixty practitioners are well established in the district, and getting a living from their work.

Quite a modern institution in our parish are the district nurses ; and the work they do is invaluable. To many whom the hospitals reject, or who cling to their homes in the time of illness the district nurse brings unspeakable comfort ; and many are the lessons of cleanliness and gentle patience which she teaches her patients and their families.

Of other charities it would take too long to speak. The parish is beset with them at certain seasons of the year ; and money is flung in amongst us much as nuts are flung to boys to scramble for. Soup-kitchens, philanthropic societies, country holiday funds, ragged school funds, funds from all the enterprising newspapers, and funds from all the political clubs in the district ; church funds and chapel funds, missions and mothers' meetings, all are engaged in pouring money into a slough of poverty which swallows it up and leaves no trace of improvement. No one is the richer for all the thousands of pounds squandered in the parish, for it is given away in miserable little doles which are incapable of helping any man to solid ground, and only help to "keep him down." It has even been suggested that the amount of charity which comes into the parish bears a certain fixed relation to the amount taken by the public-houses ; but it would be difficult to prove any causal connection.

## § II. *Church and School*

What is the part played by the Church in the life of the parish? No doubt it varies greatly in different places according to the habits and inner life of the people, and according to the vitality with which its ministers are able to endow the organisation. Its powers are less official than those of other institutions, they depend more upon personal influence and character; men are not driven by spiritual hunger to demand its aid, as they are driven by physical hunger to charity and the Poor Law; the desire needs to be awakened before it seeks satisfaction, and so it happens that unless its representative can arouse that hunger the Church may count for little in the life of the parishioners. I can only speak of our own parish. There, if we might judge from external appearances, it should count for much; for the old parish church, which a hundred years ago sufficed for the whole district, has now no less than twenty daughters clustering around her, within five or ten minutes' walk of each other. The first of these were built early in the century, when it was found that there was not accommodation for more than a very small proportion of the population. It was thought that more room alone was needed to gather the people into the Church, and Parliament voted a million pounds towards the building of new churches throughout the land—some say as a thanksgiving for the conclusion of the war. Two of these churches were in our parish; they can boast of no architectural beauties, but they are spacious and capable of containing large congregations. It would seem also that at first

they did gather the people in, as the need has since been felt of building so many more ; but now the number and size of the churches no longer bears any proportion to the number of the people to whom they open their doors in vain. To the vast majority the Church as a religious influence is an unknown power ; some few years ago a census was taken of all those who went to church on a given Sunday, with the result that out of a population numbering about 127,000 only 4,167 attended in the morning, and 5,495 in the evening. There has certainly not been any marked change since then ; and "going to church" is for the most part connected solely with the wedding day. Even then it is not the parish church as a centre of spiritual life to which the young folks turn at what should be a solemn moment in life ; the East shares with the West the predilection for a fashionable church, and they troop in hundreds to the "Red Church" or the "Old Church," though they may never have been there before and will never go again.

This failure of the Church to reach the people cannot be attributed to any success on the part of Dissent, for Dissent is still weaker. The same census showed only another two or three thousand within the walls of chapels, while even special mission services collected but 2,357. Any sect, however peculiar and fanatical its tenets, may be sure in such a multitude of some following ; none succeeds in really reaching the heart of the people. The Salvation Army itself counts for less than nothing in the district. It has no foothold there in the shape of meeting hall or refuge ; its stray preachers in the main thoroughfares attract only small children, and within our slums no emissary is ever seen.

The attitude of the people towards the Church, then, is not one of hostility or dissent; it is simple indifference. They are not interested in matters of religion; sometimes, indeed, they will express the extent of their religious faith by explaining that they are "not unbelievers," but this is obviously only the result of a traditional feeling that an unbeliever is something bad. Of belief in any positive sense they have none, and an examination of the average parishioner in the tenets of the Christian faith would give curious results. Such things are wholly outside of, and disconnected with, their normal everyday life, and therefore do not appeal to them. Of course this does not apply to the small knot of staunch Church members in the centre of every parish; to them no doubt their faith is a reality, and as such has its influence upon their life. But the number of these is smaller even than the number of those who attend services.

This almost universal indifference to religion is partly due, it is to be feared, to a deep-seated defect of character. To some extent it is true, no doubt, that religious truths are not offered in a way that can be understood of the people; high Church services especially perplex and puzzle them terribly; but the same indifference extends to almost anything which reaches beyond the momentary interests of everyday life. Surely the people of London are like none other in England in their intense devotion to the present moment, and their blind forgetfulness of past and future. Sometimes they are carried beyond the present by discontent, but it is not often that more than grumbling is achieved by this. It is to the discontented that the would-be innovator of every

description addresses himself—the socialist, the anarchist, the vegetarian, the atheist, and all the multitude who have their favourite social remedy to push. But discontent is only another form of living in the present, and can never rise to the force of an enthusiasm. The one interest which at present has power to carry them out of themselves is politics; and even in politics principles have to figure as expediences and be supported by promises if they are to appeal to a majority of the electors.

The “one thing needful” for our parish to-day is to lift the people in some way out of themselves, to give them wider interests and a more steadfast hold upon realities. With the mass of the people the Church has failed utterly and entirely to do this. The strength of its position, the completeness of its organisation, the patient devotion and enthusiasm of many of its ministers, stand helpless before the stolid indifference of the thousands whom it regards as its flock. Whether the spiritual future of the people belongs to the Church, or whether it will move on more purely intellectual lines, the future itself must show; one thing is clear, that whatever the influence which is to raise the people, it must be one which will promote higher interests and wider views than those which rule at present.

Why has not religion done this in the past, and why does it not do so now? I believe it to be largely because the ministers of religion (and here I refer to all creeds alike) have allowed the spirituality of their work to be swamped by the material needs around them. Not perhaps in their own minds, though I believe there are few who would not admit that an undesirably large proportion of their time is spent in

the seeking and distribution of money ; but in the eyes of those about them, to many of whom the almsgiving connected with the Church forms by far the most important feature in its work. For many years almsgiving has been regarded by the Church as a mere accessory to religion, and too often as a means of promoting attendance at its services and classes. Now time has worked out its revenge, and the people have come to regard services and classes—and indeed religion itself in so far as they know it—as accessory to almsgiving and as a means of obtaining relief. It would sometimes seem as if the only hope for both lay in an entire divorce between the two.

Let us face this question boldly, and see how it really stands to-day. In many places a reaction is setting in, and an attempt being made to sweep away the abuses of charity which have crept into the Church, to clear the temple of the money-changers ; but the reform is too partial and in many cases too half-hearted to be of much effect as yet. Every church and every chapel and every mission-hall in the East End still forms a centre of relief ; not as in old days the sole centre to the whole parish as such—that position has long been ceded to other bodies ; but to an ill-defined and shifting circle of adherents, whose claim to relief depends more or less—in some cases entirely—upon their external compliance with certain creeds and usages. The alms are for the most part dispensed by untrained workers, whose main object is not to banish poverty, but to induce the poor to come to church. Some of these openly handle “ tickets ” as bribes : “ I did not see you at church on Sunday, Mrs. Smith, I am afraid I cannot leave you

a ticket to-day ;” while others use them as an introduction and a means of ensuring a hearing from reluctant backsliders. “One feels so awkward forcing one’s self upon people unless one takes them a ticket or something,” a visitor has said to me, and I am confident she was only expressing the feeling of the majority of refined women engaged in the work of district visiting. But they do not see that in this way they degrade the worth and dignity of the religion for which they are working to something below the value of the coal or grocery ticket which they employ to recommend it.

You may attend the old parish church some weekday, and find at morning service a dozen or so of old women, and reflect upon the rest and comfort it must be to them to cease a while from their toil, and find consolation in their church. Then service ends, and you note as they rise that each carries a bag, and that one and all—the whole congregation without exception—troops into the vestry, there to receive loaves and tickets, and the whole matter is transformed into one of sordid barter and exchange. I have been told by a clergyman how on first coming to his East End parish, he was pleasantly surprised by the large number of those who attended the Communion service ; then he found that it was customary for the service to be followed by the distribution of alms to all who had attended, and thinking the connection an unseemly one he broke it, and gave the alms at a more fitting season. The majority of the communicants forthwith vanished, leaving an honest few who must have felt that the presence of the “cadgers” had been nothing less than an insult to their religion.

And I have heard from the lips of a widow whose

children were lying on their death-bed, that the "sisters" over the way had the day before refused her help because she worked on a Sunday instead of going to church—an exaggerated account possibly, but showing clearly enough, even if it were false, how the people have come to regard church-going as the recognised means of obtaining alms.

Does any one regard this description as overdrawn? If so, let him spend a few months in acquainting himself with what goes on in connection with any half-dozen churches taken at random in London, and he will find a similar state of things. Here and there, as I have said, a reaction has set in, and men are found wise enough and strong enough to maintain the true dignity of their religion, even at the cost of some unpopularity and disappointment; but on the whole and in relation to the great mass of the working classes, the position of the Church is as I have described it. Its ministers have abandoned their high calling, and more or less involuntarily assumed a lower function. The result is inevitable. Some will meet them on the lower level, and accept their gifts; but the very weight of these will hinder them from rising to any spiritual heights; what real strength lies in truths which cannot win their way without a bribe? The majority of independent men and women will turn away from what in their eyes has all the appearance of a sordid barter. "I'll not go to church, to have it asked what I expect to get," is sometimes said and often dimly felt by men whose minds are still sensitive to the degradation involved in the barter of things spiritual for things material, and yet not robust enough to rise to the higher level and maintain it in the face of scoffing insinuations. If

religion is really to disappear from amongst us as a living force, then they will not be least to blame who have so identified it with a bad system of relief that it has become a stumbling-block to many straightforward and right-minded people.

It is perhaps in the Sunday school that the work of the Church has still most vitality in London. Sunday after Sunday, as the school opens its doors, the children throng in, decked out in all their little finery, and if not clean at any rate washed in patches. There is no lack of pupils of tender years, and much care and love is expended upon the training of these little souls. Why is it that so many of them cease to take any interest in school or church when they reach years of independence, and when they can no longer be tempted in by treats or sent by busy mothers, glad to feel them safe away for an hour or two? It is not necessarily so, for there are many schools in the north country where the scholars stay on in large numbers to the age of twenty, thirty, or even forty; hard-working men and women who delight after the toil of the week to refresh their minds with higher knowledge. But how many Sunday classes for men shall we find in London? Partly it may be that the ideal is placed too low, too little intelligence and willingness to grapple with real problems is expected, and the child's lessons lose their interest for men and women whose working life is one of stern realities. Partly, again, the Londoner has come to look upon Sunday as the day for recreation, and upon recreation as synonymous with absence from restraint. Hence Sunday is apt to be from beginning to end a go-as-you-please day, for those who are not tied to the house, and by the

greater number is spent according to their respective dispositions in lounging, or in energetic pleasure-seeking. Nor can we much regret the latter when it takes the form of well-planned excursions or walks, away from the dreary streets and hard pavements into fresh country air.

For the greater number, I say, Sunday is a day of recreation, but who knows for how many the six days of work are followed by a seventh? I know of no census that has been taken of Sunday workers, nor can I form any estimate of their numbers; but I do know that a glance in at garret and cellar windows will reveal again and again a pitiful vision of Sabbath-breakers, toiling in shirt-sleeves and aprons at some one or another of the innumerable small industries which help to feed and clothe poorer London. The exceptions, of course; but where the numbers we are dealing with are so enormous the exceptions themselves form a small army of outcasts; and many regular attendants at Sunday school are sent there to leave the home free for work.

But for still another reason why the sway of the Sunday school is so brief we must look, I believe, to the same mistaken policy which has wrecked the influence of the church. Find out in any Sunday school how many "treats"—teas, parties, trips, magic-lanterns, and so on—take place in the year, and ask the Superintendent what would be the effect of stopping any considerable number of these. If he is candid he will tell you that the attendance would immediately drop, and that many of the children would seek out some Wesleyan, Congregational, Catholic school, as the case might be, which would offer more attraction, and so the schools go on, bidding against each other with increasing

promises of prizes, treats, and clothing, until they are lowered in the eyes of their scholars to the level of mere adjuncts, more or less endurable, to the bribes they offer.

But of all developments of religious work the mothers' meeting in its present form is perhaps the quaintest. Few of the large army of dole-seekers work so hard for their little droppings of manna as do the women of the large class technically known as "mothers." In this connection "mother" seems to have no necessary reference to "child"; old maids and childless wives or widows put in their claim unquestioned to the rights and duties involved in "mothers' meetings." What are those rights and duties? They are not very clearly defined, but in the first place constant attendance at the meetings is involved, supplemented by a more or less frequent appearance at church or chapel. One old lady of my acquaintance has dropped her "meeting" because of a surely undeserved rebuke which she received. She was at the time supporting an invalid son (she herself being well over sixty), and a hard week's washing had obliged her to postpone her house-cleaning until the afternoon when it behoved her to appear at the parish rooms. Her instinct of cleanliness was too strong for her, she stayed away from the meeting, and was solemnly rebuked by the curate with the warning that "cleanliness would not take her to heaven"—the implication being that mothers' meeting would. To the lay mind it seems quite too hard upon a young man, almost fresh from college, to put him to instruct and entertain some fifty—more or less—of these old women; and yet it is to the curate that the conduct of these meetings is often entrusted. He should be out in the strenuous

working world, strengthening his mental and moral fibre by contact with energetic and hard-headed men, who will not flatter him, but will spur him on to put out his best energies. Instead of that he is often to be found lolling in the midst of an admiring circle of old dames, cracking his little jokes, telling his little anecdotes, and administering his pastoral rebukes; sure, whatever he may say, of meeting with obsequious assent from the majority at least of his hearers. Who is strong enough to resist the deteriorating influence of his own infallibility? Nor is the injury all on one side. What has this young lad, fresh to the world with all its joys and sorrows, a stranger to poverty, disease and sin, ignorant of the joys and griefs of wedded life and parentage, to give to these old people? What will his theological knowledge, his college training and examinations avail him—a mere apprentice in the great school of life—in teaching these wayworn pilgrims to travel the last stage of a life, the greatest secrets of which were revealed to them while he was still a child?

But assuredly the idea of the mothers' meeting is good. A quiet sociable afternoon, in a well-warmed and lighted room, where the old women and busy mothers can come together to do their sewing, and indulge in a little neighbourly chat, and—lest gossip should too greatly prevail—to listen to a quiet half-hour's reading of some simple comprehensible kind. What could be more natural or useful? But in a London parish the horrible question of rivalry crops up almost at once, and in some such way as this. There is nearly always in connection with these meetings some system of buying calico and other goods in large quantities, and selling it at wholesale

prices to the members; and this good bargain—simple as it is—may be the beginning of competing offers on the part of church and chapel meetings. The chapel sells a halfpenny a yard cheaper than the church; the church offers a premium on purchases above a certain amount; the chapel gives a present all round at Christmas; the church has a tea every year; the chapel caps it by an excursion into the country in the summer; both church and chapel apportion a certain number of doles or tickets or Christmas puddings, as the case may be, to be distributed amongst the “mothers,” and many old ladies there are who find it well worth while to cultivate two or even more sets of meetings, with a catholic indifference to the particular creed implied in attendance at each. And so the natural simplicity of the mothers’ meeting is lost, and it becomes to a large extent a mere occasion for more or less disguised begging and too often for pitiable hypocrisy. And not the least part of the degeneration is to be found in the jealousy and heart-burning to which such a system gives rise; for it must be remembered that these “benefits” derived from attendance at a mothers’ meeting are regarded almost entirely as rights, well-earned by regular attendance and complaisant acquiescence, and that any failure in the expected harvest is bitterly resented. And indeed what better can be expected, where people of little education and undisciplined tempers see themselves made the objects of rivalry amongst the great people of their parish, and find their presence courted on all hands? I have been given to understand that one of the great difficulties with which ministers of religion have to contend, is the obligation which they are under to furnish their superiors or supporters with

periodical returns, showing the work which is being done in connection with the church or chapel. Now there is no doubt that the most obvious way of making a report impressive is by quoting large and increasing numbers, and to this unhealthy desire for numbers is due the miserable rivalry and "bidding" for followers which goes on in some parishes. Many of those actually engaged in work know that their influence is best and their strength greatest when confined to a comparatively small circle; that the best work is done in the most unpretentious way; but few are strong enough to withstand the passion for numbers, and to resist the prevailing methods of attracting them.

The greatest influence in our parish outside the home is beyond doubt the school; and I fancy this would be true in most parishes. For good or for evil the rising generation is there receiving instruction and discipline which cannot fail to leave its mark upon the life of the whole nation. And who that knows anything of the working of the London schools can doubt that in the main their influence is for good? We may criticise points of detail, disapprove of the code, attempt to reorganise religious instruction, cry out upon extravagance or condemn economy, according to our own particular views; but in face of all criticism the solid fact remains, that in our schools the children are being firmly and gently brought into line, and helped up the first steep steps of order and knowledge. I do not think we attach nearly sufficient weight to this fact in estimating the advance that has been made towards reclaiming the "submerged" classes of the community. Perhaps it may be best emphasised by recalling the condition of London children fifty years

ago. A book was written in 1851 called *London Labour and the London Poor*, in the course of which a graphic but horrible picture is given of a class which hardly exists now; a class of children broken loose from all control and leading the lives of adults of the lowest type. The author attempts to estimate the numbers of this class. "Taking the returns of accommodation afforded to these children in the casual wards of workhouses, refuges for the destitute and homeless poor; of the mendicity and other societies of a similar description, and those of our hospitals and gaols—and these sources of information upon this subject can alone be confidently relied upon—and then taking into the calculation the additional numbers who pass the nights in the variety of ways I have already enumerated, I think it will be found that the number of boys and girls selling in the streets of this city, and often dependent upon their own exertions for the commonest necessaries of life, may be estimated at some thousands, but nearer 10,000 than 20,000" (p. 478). These children he describes as utterly uncontrolled, living upon their wits, without the most elementary notions of morality, and finding their nearest approach to home life in common lodging-houses of a kind so horrible that we no longer suffer their existence even for adults. The only attempt at educating them was made by the Ragged Schools, but "... the attendance of the street children at the Ragged School is most uncertain; as indeed must necessarily be the case where the whole time of the lad is devoted to obtaining a subsistence. From the best information I can collect, it appears that the average attendance of these boys at these schools does not exceed two hours per week, so that the amount of

education thus acquired, if education it may be called, must certainly be scanty in the extreme; and is frequently forgotten as soon as learned" (p. 473).

No serious attempt was made to bring this horde within the bounds of civilisation until many years later. Even yet we have not entirely succeeded, and a remnant of it remains in those districts where "shelters" and lodging-houses make it easy to evade the school officials. "An official report presented to the School Board for London shows that during the month ended on December 19, 1894, no fewer than 1,488 nomad and homeless children slept in the shelters in the Whitechapel district, in addition to which number it was estimated that there were at least fifty children sleeping occasionally in common lodging-houses—though their presence there is always denied by the deputies. The reporting officer adds: 'These 1,500 children are at present almost entirely uncared for. Their names are not to be found in our visitors' schedules, as the parents are constantly moving from place to place. The Education Acts do not benefit these children, as it is not possible to enforce the Acts in the case of homeless wanderers, but some of them are occasionally rescued through the Industrial Schools Act.'"<sup>1</sup>

But to a very large extent we have in London succeeded in putting a stop to the wholesale manufacture of pauperism and crime which had been going on. Perhaps the most important step towards its suppression was the Industrial Schools Act of 1866. By this Act magistrates were empowered to send to Industrial Schools all children (1) begging or receiving alms, (2) found wandering and not having any home or

<sup>1</sup> *Report of School Board for London, 1893-94, pp. 167-189.*

settled place of abode, or visible means of subsistence ; (3) found destitute, either being an orphan, or having a surviving parent undergoing penal servitude ; (4) frequenting the company of reputed thieves. Also all children under twelve where the child is charged with an offence punishable by imprisonment, but has not been convicted of felony ; and all children under fourteen where the parent or step-parent represents that he is unable to control the child, and that he desires that the child be sent to an Industrial School.

Here, then, is an effective means, if wisely applied, for checking the children at the very beginning of their downward course ; that they are not prevented from entering upon that course may be seen from the fact that in 1894 no less than 2,460 children were dealt with by the London School Board as coming within the provisions of this and similar Acts.<sup>1</sup> It is interesting as showing the need for unremitting care, to note the classification of these little outcasts : 298 were described as begging ; 435 as wandering or not under proper guardianship ; 51 associating with reputed thieves ; 62 as found in houses of ill-fame, &c. ; 513 as stealing or any offence punishable by imprisonment ; 153 as beyond parental control ; 15 non-attendance, &c. ; and not charged 78. The remaining 855 were merely "truants."

We shall have occasion later on to describe more in detail how these children are dealt with, and what steps are taken to bring them into useful citizenship. Much work and thought is still needed before the possibility of an outcast class shall disappear altogether ; but other forces than the Industrial Schools Act have been at work to prevent the children from

<sup>1</sup> *Report, v. supra.*

ever drifting away so completely from the discipline of orderly life. Let us look at one of these, our system of Elementary Education, and compare it with the previous state of things. We have seen to how small an extent any educational influence was brought to bear upon the lowest class of children in 1850; in 1871 an enquiry was held as to the number of children in London requiring Elementary Education, and the number for whom there was accommodation in efficient elementary schools.

The number of children was found to be 574,693; of these only 262,259 *could* find room in the schools, and only 174,301 actually attended; that is to say, 400,000 of the London children were either not being educated at all, or were being insufficiently educated. The eldest of these neglected children will now be only thirty-nine, and there is therefore among our lower classes in London a very large number who have never been submitted to the training and discipline of school life. Hence we are not yet in a position to judge what will be the effect upon our residuum of the great advance which has been made in dealing with the children. How far have our efforts during the last twenty-five years been successful in getting the children into the schools? In 1895 the number of children requiring Elementary Education (the Elementary School population; as it is technically called) was estimated at 826,371, and accommodation was provided for 738,729 of these; but the average attendance was only 578,827, so that we have still more than 200,000 children left more or less uneducated. What a splendid field of work for the philanthropist! No need for institutions or money; the schools are waiting, the children are there, all that is needed is to get the

children into the schools. Of how this may be done I have suggestions to make later on, but here may be urged the importance of the work. Whatever the reasons why these 200,000 children are not getting their schooling—and they will be very various—the effect is inevitable; they will be at a disadvantage when they enter upon the battle of life, and a large number of them will drift into the residuum of the future.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PARISH AND ITS PEOPLE

THESE are the most important of the institutions which have grown up to meet the manifold needs of our parish, and which find their counterpart in every parish in England. There is less uniformity about the people themselves than there is in their institutions, and every district will present different characteristics according to the rank, occupation, and density of its inhabitants. How shall I describe the present generation of our parish? It is so varied that it is almost like trying to describe the inhabitants of a whole town, except that it contains no members of the leisured class in the ordinary acceptation of the term. A town composed—I will not say of workers only, but of workers and of those who have fallen below the rank of workers. The class of parasites is a very large one, and contributes the larger share of the poverty in the district. But even amongst the workers themselves there are very marked classes to be distinguished, and if we are to understand our parish we must be careful to note these.

In the first place there are the really "old inhabitants," whose families have been in this or similar

neighbourhoods for generations. There are not very many of these ; like the old houses and courts in which they mostly live their numbers are swamped by the new-comers. For the most part they are, or have been, costermongers, and very likely their ancestors occupied the same courts when they were little outlying hamlets. But not all costermongers are of this class ; the genuine coster "by descent" is a very different person from the failures who crowd into his business from all the other trades and professions in London. Just as every woman turns to a mangle as the one means of getting a living when all else fails, so every man who is "down" thinks he is safe to do well if he can only scrape together enough stock-money to start in the streets. There never was a greater mistake. Probably nearly all who are really successful in the business have been born and bred in it, and have accumulated the experience of father and mother and relations of all degrees. The amateur seldom succeeds. It is difficult to say exactly why ; it may be that he is one of the people who have a genius for failing, or perhaps he has not the knowledge of the market nor the extraordinary vocal powers which belong to the genuine coster ; or perhaps again he lacks the peculiar persuasiveness which knows how to vary jest with bullying and cunning with frankness. Be that how it may the genuine costermongers form a race apart. You may know them by their personal appearance, when you are once used to the type, though it is difficult to convey the exact impression in words. Generally speaking they are shortish thick-set men, with big jaws and diminutive skulls, retreating rapidly from the brow ; as a rule they are clean-shaven (or rather half-shaven) and their hair cropped close except for one

atrociously greasy lock sleeked down low on the forehead. Collars are unknown to them, and are replaced by handkerchiefs knotted round the throat which are at once more comfortable and more useful in protecting the voice. Until one is used to hearing them talk they are very difficult to follow; more because of the accent—or want of accent—than from any strangeness in the words they use. Their speech is the embodiment of slovenliness; everything is left out that can possibly be dispensed with, and all the words are run into each other without break or emphasis or change of expression. Until the ear gets used to it it is like listening to an unfamiliar language.

The women of this class generally share the husband's labours, and carry them on after his death; they also have their peculiarities of appearance, though perhaps not quite so marked. They are almost invariably largely made and very stout, with a high colour and jovial expression; their manners are genial, and indeed affectionate, and one must submit to being called "m' dear" at least once in every sentence if one is to remain on friendly terms.

The particular "line" which the costermonger may follow varies over an immense range of articles, and though a man will generally stick to those lines in which he has been brought up and knows his markets, there is nevertheless room for considerable ingenuity in varying the article to suit seasons and tastes. Muffins and coke in the winter make way for "creases" and fruits in the summer; winkles have their season and walnuts their day, while old clothes are always "in." The adventures which those old clothes pass through in their transition from one set of backs to another are horrible to think of.

The genuine coster seldom comes to grief seriously. He has his bad times when the weather is against him, and his strokes of ill-luck; an unexpected spell of warmth will make his stock of coke unsaleable, or a sudden frost destroy his vegetables and flowers; but he has many resources and can pull himself through most difficulties. Like the modern manufacturer he works chiefly on borrowed capital; lending money to costermongers is a recognised business, and a good business too, for a shilling a week for the loan of a sovereign is a rate of interest that will cover a good many bad debts. Technically, the terms are a shilling on a sovereign for forty weeks, but the costermonger nearly always repays weekly, and borrows again, the reason being that he cannot be trusted—or trust himself—not to spend his capital during the few days which may elapse before its re-investment. Perhaps nothing could so well illustrate the careless, irresponsible nature of these people. The life is one which quite unfits them for any other, but then it is also one which fits them exactly, and is full of change and interest. They are naturally a cheerful and independent set, boisterous and loud in their prosperity, and persevering in adversity, rough and uncouth in their manners, and regarding the stranger as their natural prey, but kindly enough towards each other. They cling to back streets and tumble-down cottages, though they might get respectable rooms in much better houses for a less rent; for they like their liberty, and must be free to come and go, to indulge in shouting and singing and fighting as occasion arises, and cannot subdue themselves to the orderliness necessary for living with quiet neighbours.

Quite a distinct class, and much more difficult to deal with, are the odd-jobbers and the "labourers" of no particular calling. The painter's labourer, the plumber's labourer, the bricklayer's labourer, these and many others have specialised, and are, to that extent, skilled workmen. But the odd man who does jobs for every one and no regular work for any one can hardly be said to have any standing at all; "he's a cas'lty man," they will say of each other, and "casual" describes their whole life. They live upon chance; chance jobs, chance gifts, chance tickets and dinners, and they know no necessity but that of hunger. Their numbers are largely recruited from the failures; the man who cannot stand regular work, the man who "likes his glass," the man who has never mastered his trade, the man whose physique is too feeble for prolonged exertion, and the man who has had no training to enable him to turn his muscular strength to account, all swell the ranks of the "cas'lties." In river-side districts some of them will enlist in the army of dockers; in our parish there is comparatively little work to be done which calls for mere strength. A certain number of "deal porters" are employed in the wood-yards, but this is exceptionally heavy work, and not many of our people are equal to it. Wood-chopping employs many, both of men, women and children; it is work which calls for neither skill nor strength in any great degree; it is irregular and needs little outlay for tools; for all these reasons it is in great demand, and for the same reason it is miserably paid, and those who take to it are of the lowest.

The great problem with this class is how to bring them to regard life as anything but a huge chaos.

The confusion which reigns in their minds is reflected into their worlds, and the constant expectation that "something will turn up" is the nearest approach to a law—whether of nature or morality—which they know. It is this class which figures mainly in our "unemployed" demonstrations, and which affords the material for sensational paragraphs; but although somewhat large in numbers it is in no way representative of the genuine working class. It is constituted of failures from every rank of life, and the blunder which confuses them with the regular workers is fraught with injustice.

The bulk of my parish consists of artisans; men and women who are engaged in making. The kinds of things which they make are without number; no list which I have seen approaches exhaustiveness. Here is one in which an attempt is made to classify them, and though I doubt whether the numbers are accurate, they indicate at any rate the proportions engaged in different industries.

Furniture and woodwork .....	16,046
Building trades .....	8,369
Machinery and metals .....	5,161
Printing .....	4,646
Sundry artisans .....	4,577
Furs and leather .....	2,339
Watches, instruments, &c.....	1,523
Silk weaving .....	171

If we add to these 42,832 artisans the 43,842 children under fifteen years of age, it seems to leave too small a proportion for the women and the unclassified rank and file; but it must be borne in mind that many of the women are themselves artisans, and

so appear in the list. French polishing, boot-making, fur-working, flower-making, box-making, and many others are trades of which women do a large share, sometimes the largest.

The staple trade is cabinet-making of every description. The earnings as a rule are good; in Mr. Booth's returns 52 per cent. of those engaged in the trade are said to earn over 35*s.*, only 2 per cent. below 20*s.*, and only 12 per cent. below 25*s.*; but it seems probable that these returns did not include the lowest class of cabinet-makers, and that the average over the whole range would run rather lower. Still the figures indicate an encouraging amount of prosperity, and prove that our parish contains a solid army of steady workers earning a comfortable living. The trade is specialised into many branches; dining-table makers, chair and couch makers, wash-stand makers, looking-glass frame makers, writing-table makers—all these and many more have their own particular line, and it is significant that many of them can no more turn from their special line to any other than they can turn to printing or tailoring. A man will continue to produce the particular article which he learned to make as a boy long after it has ceased to be in request. He will have to sell cheaper and cheaper in order to get a market at all; to be able to do this he uses commoner materials and puts in less work, and so the price falls again, and he complains bitterly of the way in which prices are cut down. These are chiefly the men—an increasing number—who make on their own account, and then sell to the shops, or, when there is no demand at the shops, to the middlemen who can afford to wait until trade wakens up and they can get their profits out of rising prices. You will often meet the cabinet-

maker or his wife tramping the streets with some finished or half-finished piece of furniture; a set of corner shelves, an over-mantel, half-a-dozen chairs without seats, and so on. They are either trying to sell them, or taking them to the polisher, the turner, the carver, or the upholsterer, to have the finishing touches put to them; for they cannot even carry through their own particular article without outside help.

Wood-carving occupies a good many of the more skilful hands, but here as in all branches machinery is cutting out all but the best work or the worst. By some mysterious process of moistening and stamping the wood can be moulded to a rough imitation of carving, and to compete with this process a man must be content to work at lightning speed, aiming at quantity rather than quality.

Nearly all these men are hard workers, but many of them suffer from the absence of any proper system of training in their youth. The deficiency shows itself both in want of finish in their work, and in the narrow range of their capacities; they cannot adapt themselves to any change, and hence their earnings tend lower and lower as they grow older and fall further behind the times. How far the technical schools are going to solve the difficulty is an interesting question to watch; one master to whom I have talked says that with the adult worker there is little to be done, he has learned to be slovenly and cannot unlearn it; it is even said that a Board School teacher who has learned the meaning of exactness in measurements and in following instructions, will beat the cabinet-maker on his own ground after a very few lessons.

The only way is to get hold of the lads, but there is a difficulty in persuading parents to stand out of their earnings long enough to permit of much training before regular work is taken up; and though an attempt has been made to induce employers to spare their younger workers for a certain number of hours in the week they do not fall into it very readily.

Another great industry is the boot trade, employing many, both of men and women. An intelligent, discontented, restless set of people these. Less able-bodied than the cabinet-makers, for their work tends to stunt their growth and to develop chest complaints of all sorts; and just as the cobbler of Eastern tales is always the centre of wranglings and arguments, so the boot-maker in East London (and indeed elsewhere) is always well to the fore in times of discontent. Here again subdivision is carried to a high pitch, though as a rule the boot-maker seems better able to turn from one branch to another. And here again we find the earnings running low when bad work is put into bad material, and rising high when the article produced is of good quality. This used to be largely a home-industry, the work being given out from large shops; but latterly trade regulations have done much to check this, and by insisting upon the work being done at the shop, have tended to reduce the family earnings in cases where the wives and daughters used to help in the work brought home by the men.

Many of the best men in the district are connected with the printing industry. Compositors, readers, printers' layers-on and takers-off, machine-minders, and so on through over forty varieties<sup>1</sup> forming a

<sup>1</sup> This is the number of headings in the Census Dictionary.

regular hierarchy, ranging from the most intelligent and skilled man, down to the almost unskilled labourer, and all engaged in flooding the world with ideas. The earnings vary as much as the kind of work; according to Mr. Booth's returns (and these are lower than the Board of Trade returns),  $74\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. of the men earn 30s. and over, while as many as  $37\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. earn over 40s., but on the other hand 4 per cent. earn below 20s. On the whole the men have been, if anything, too successful in raising wages in our district, for much of the work is leaving us, to find cheaper labour in the country, and many able and highly skilled men are finding themselves left stranded and in danger of sinking permanently into the ranks of the unemployed.

These are some of the main industries, but in addition to these are hundreds of smaller ones, affording work to every degree of skilled and unskilled labour. Box-making of various sorts is a favourite occupation, especially among the women, though many men are employed in it also. The commonest sort requires hardly any time to learn, though it takes months of practice to attain the marvellous speed at which some of the match-box workers ply their miserably paid craft. But the better grades, including "fancy box-making," require a regular apprenticeship of considerable length, and a good hand at this kind of work may earn very fair wages.

"Trimmings" of various kinds and artificial flowers also employ many of our women; with more skill and versatility they should be reaping a good harvest now, but they are unable to adapt themselves to the requirements of fashion, and are short of work at a time when more artificial flowers are being worn than ever before.

Many of the smaller industries seem never to come to the light of day, and are hidden away in back premises which no one ever explores. Wandering through a box-maker's shop you may chance upon a lean-to where half-a-dozen men are employed in making clinical thermometers! Very skilled work this, calling for great nicety and exactness of sight and touch in handling the molten glass, and filling it as it cools with mercury, boiling it to drive off the air, closing the tubes, marking and testing, all done with wonderful rapidity and few failures. And like so much skilled work, while it brings good earnings to the worker, it brings also disease and death. The fumes of the quicksilver are a deadly poison; the man who inhales them is constantly in and out of hospital, until at last the poison becomes too strong for the doctors, and one day he leaves work never to return. Safeguards of course there are, in the shape of respirators and antidotes; but that prevention is better than cure is a lesson slow to be learned.

The undertaker's business is too characteristic of East London to be omitted. People are buried all over the world, but nowhere with so much extravagance as amongst us. A good many large firms and a host of small ones make a goodly living out of the funerals which the poor are apt to regard as the most important occasions in their earthly career. Births are of no more importance than the advent of a new piece of furniture, a wedding is merely one among many ways of celebrating a holiday, but a funeral is an occasion which measures the whole social standing of a family amongst its neighbours, and every nerve is strained to make a goodly show. Hence there are no bad times to speak of in the undertaking line, at

any rate for those who can keep clear of credit; and the disease and poverty which bring death to his neighbours, bring prosperity to the fortunate man whose business it is to drive them to their last resting-place, or to parade a professional grief behind the hearse. It is one of the few callings in which the seedy, dolorous, out-at-elbows man may find himself welcome if his means will run to a suit of greasy black, and if he can resist the hospitality of the occasion sufficiently to keep tolerably sober.

The mere feeding of the 122,000 parishioners employs of course very many. Of butchers and bakers there are no end, and the competition amongst them of which they complain results at least in cheap food for the many. Why is it that butchers are generally prosperous, while bakers nearly always have a struggle to keep going? Perhaps it is because comparatively few care to put up with the disagreeables connected with a butcher's business. Bakers, moreover, have a good deal to contend with in the way of competition from foreigners; for there are many Germans in the trade, and not a few Poles and Italians. Small provision dealers are very numerous, and in so far as they are cautious with their credit, do fairly well by selling small quantities at high prices; but cash payments are so little in favour that co-operative stores have never been able to get a footing in the district. To meet the tastes of foreigners there are here and there shops bearing the scroll "Deutsche Delicatessen-Handlung," where the most wonderful and nauseous-looking pickles and sausages are exposed to view.

But the most favoured shops of the neighbourhood are those where the natives throng at supper-time to buy a greasy wedge of fried fish. To the uncultivated

taste the smell of the oil in which the fish is fried is so revolting that it seems incredible that any one should like it; but I am assured that no dainty is so much esteemed when once the taste has been acquired. During the daytime these shops do a languid business in stewed eels and warmed-up scraps; but from 8 to 11 p.m. is their harvest time. Then they are crowded with hungry folk whom the white-capped and aproned cooks can hardly keep supplied with the ha'porths and penn'orths which they ladle out of the steaming oil. Some eat them on the spot, making use of the pepper-pot gratis; the majority wrap them hurriedly in a scrap of newspaper, with an added ha'porth of fried potato-chips, and hasten home as fast as they may before the hot richness has time to escape.

Below these are two lower grades in the provision line. There is the general shop, or chandler's, where you can buy everything, and most things on credit; and where the shiftless or poverty-stricken prefer to resort. These shops seldom do well enough to support their owners; they merely pay the rent, or a part of the rent, and are minded by some member of the family who cannot go out to work. They form one of the many ways in which the East Londoner supplements his earnings, and require little enough of capital to start, or energy to maintain. But if they require little the sweet-stuff shop requires still less, and will sometimes be almost as profitable; especially if combined—as it often is—with a newspaper round. But to do the best business in sweets you must be prepared to keep open on Sunday; it takes some courage to brave the local magnates, but if you can do it you will drive a brisk trade, either because the children get their halfpence on Saturday nights,

or because Sunday school whets the appetite for sweets.

We have many sizes of shops in our district, from the little sweet shop up to the roomy, large-windowed and showy shops which congregate in the High Street, and whose owners live away from their business in the suburbs. It is from the ranks of the medium-sized shopkeepers that the local magnates are drawn. The members of Parliament and the School Board are outsiders, no one living in the district can spare the time for this work ; but Guardians and Vestrymen are for the most part men whose business requires them to be on the spot, but who are sufficiently their own masters to be able to arrange their work : and the men who can do this are generally the shopkeepers and the clergy.

All bee-hives have their drones, and our hive of workers is not without a leisured class of a kind. There are three types of drones : those who can't work, those who won't work, and those who only work by fits and starts. It is from the last two that the criminal class is recruited, and of this class we have many hidden away in our back streets. It is quite well known what quarters they affect, and those who are familiar with the neighbourhood know also in what streets the burglars find refuge, where the pickpockets mostly congregate, which are the haunts of the vicious, and where we need expect to find nothing worse than dirt and drink with their necessary accompaniment of poverty.

It is, however, a mistake to suppose once a criminal always a criminal. Many of this class are skilled artisans, and will take a spell at honest work when they are out of the mood for excitement and risk. Men who have "served their time" for burglary, or just

committed some daring theft, will take their place in the ranks of the workers until their little affair has been forgotten. One man I know who is quite a striking instance of "double personality"; he has two names, one by which he is known to the police as a desperate character, the other by which they ignore his existence, and under which he will earn an honest living as a cabinet-maker. He is a clever fellow, and boasts that he has earned £200 in a year at his trade; he has also made nearly as much in a single night. He is much attached to his old mother, but is not a whit ashamed of having undergone penal servitude for a murderous assault. For a considerable time now his life has been to all appearance that of an honest, hard-working citizen, and during his leisure he has been occupied in making a table as a present to a working-men's institute and turning an elaborate "chalice" for a clergyman to whom he took a fancy. He will argue for the hour together that he has an absolute right, notwithstanding any law or morality, to take what he wants from those who have it; but not long ago he stopped me in the street to point out how the State was failing in its duties in not providing for all the "unemployed."

For the most part our thieves and burglars do not much trouble the district in which they make their homes; they find more scope for their talents by going further afield, and avoid making enemies of the people amongst whom they take refuge. But there *are* local thefts, and some of them are curious in their nature. Ninety bundles of washing stolen from a small laundry must have been cumbersome to carry off, and difficult to dispose of; but left the unfortunate laundress in despair. A cart-full of newspapers, on the other hand,

stolen from an unguarded newsagent, were easily disposed of at full price and were impossible to trace. Few shopkeepers in the district but know what it is to have the till robbed, and it is a bold man who carries his watch in sight. The skill of the pick-pockets is extraordinary, and no wonder, for they begin their training almost as soon as they can walk. Standing in a little shop one day I heard the owner order out some tiny children of three to six years old in a stern way which surprised me, for I knew him to be a kindly man. He explained that the little mites were trained to go into shops and pick the pockets of customers; the smaller they are the less likely to attract attention or suspicion, and the more conveniently can they explore the skirt pocket. Poor little mites!

Such are a few of the varieties to be found in our East London parish. Obviously it is impossible for those working amongst them to deal with all on the same lines, for each class has its different needs, and will respond differently to the same treatment; while the same external symptoms may represent quite different facts according to the people by whom they are exhibited. To a woman of one grade the pawning of the wedding-ring may mean an anguish of spirit and an accumulation of misfortune hardly to be realised by an onlooker; while to a woman of another it is merely the outcome of a fit of temper or the ordinary means of raising a little extra money. A home bare of furniture, again, may represent the last extremity to which a family has been driven by long-continued illness, or may be the normal condition of people who have never learned to want anything more. Only the expert, who knows his district and

has studied his people, will be in a position to judge as to the real state of affairs; and even he will sometimes be deceived by appearances.

This diversity of natures, and the very close contact into which they are brought in a crowded London parish, gives rise to another difficulty in handling social problems.

It is an advance upon usual methods to recognise that treatment which may be stimulating and helpful to one character may be enervating and mischievous to another; *e. g.* that help, which given to an energetic workman may enable him to fight successfully against misfortune, will break down the last moral support of the man who is drifting deeper and deeper into the slough of dependence. But it is necessary to go still further and recognise that treatment which might be mainly beneficial if we were dealing with one class in isolation, becomes much more doubtful when we consider that it is impossible to limit its effects to the particular class in question. We can see this in broader or narrower issues. Take a case which is constantly recurring. A man has let himself drift into bad ways; he neglects his work, spends his money upon drink, cares less and less about his family; the children become more and more neglected and starved. At last some charitable agency steps in. "The man is hopeless," it says, "there is no question of relieving him of responsibility, for he has already lost all sense of that, and matters cannot be made worse by our interference. The children must not be allowed to suffer for their father's sin; we will feed and clothe and educate them, and so give them a chance of doing better than their parents."

All very well if this were the only family; and we

should all rush joyfully to the work of rescuing the little ones. But next door on either side are men with the same downward path so easy before them, and to a large extent restrained from entering upon it by the thought, "What will become of the children?" This restraining influence will break down much more rapidly for the knowledge that Smith's children are better cared for since he gave up the battle, and so the mischief spreads down the street like an epidemic.

Or look at more far-reaching causes, acting in just the same way. It becomes obvious (let us suppose) that some one class in the community is for the moment really incapable of supporting itself unaided in any desirable state of comfort or decency. The first impulse is to legislate and make provision; no harm can be done, these people cannot descend lower, and it is better to give the next generation a chance of improving. It might be, that is, if it were not for their neighbours, the class just above, many of them closely akin and in constant communication, all of them quick to see when the natural consequences of incapacity and enervation are removed, and when strenuousness becomes unnecessary to life. We had an object lesson in this at the beginning of the century, when the subsidised class grew so rapidly as to threaten the community with bankruptcy; and we had a second lesson when, on the practical withdrawal of the subsidy, the vigour natural to the working class when allowed free play asserted itself and restored its owners to a position of manly independence.

This then is the lesson we learn from studying our people; that any community, however small, consists of individuals of very different natures who need to

be known as we know our own families and friends if we are to be of any real service to them; and further, that the members of a community are so bound together by their common human nature that you cannot touch one without affecting many others. In other words we can only help those we know, and we must consider wide interests as well as narrow if we are not to do much harm for the sake of a little good.

## CHAPTER III

### THE FAMILY INCOME AND ITS EXPENDITURE

THERE are several experiments which I should like to try if I were autocrat over London, and could play at Arabian Nights with it for a few months. In the first place I should like to transport the West End inhabitants into East End habitations, and *vice versa*, and take careful observations of the results. They would be of the greatest importance to psychological and sociological science, and we might probably have to change preconceived opinions on many points. For instance, I am not sure that we should find so much expansion and elevation of character as we are led to expect from placing the poor in better surroundings; it would mainly serve to bring out the wonderful similarity between their failings and those of the rich; while, on the other hand, it is very doubtful to me how far the West Enders would succeed in impressing a stamp of refinement and high living upon their new homes—unless indeed they were permitted to take with them their army of domestic servants. One hardly knows which would be most at a loss; the rich woman brought suddenly face to face with the necessity of

lighting the fire and preparing the breakfast, or the poor one confronted with the task of directing a West End establishment.

But an experiment more easily tried, and even more instructive, would be to take some dozen young aristocrats and make them exchange incomes for a time with the same number of artisans. Perhaps the former would come out best in the long run, but there would be some curious bewilderments on both sides before a *modus vivendi* could be arrived at. To realise the sort of difficulty let any moderately well-to-do man take pen and ink and map out his expenditure of 18s. a week as sole income. "How can a man live a decent life on 18s. a week?" I have heard it said in indignant protest. Easily enough, if he knows how, and has only himself to keep. It is when the family comes that the difficulties begin. Here is an account of how a young fellow (aged 19 or 20) who was not fond of work managed to live on 5s. a week and have 2d. to spare! Of course it was hardly a "decent life," in the protesting sense of the term, but he did live, and another 13s. after the necessaries of life were procured might be made to go far towards a life not only decent but enjoyable.

I quote verbatim the account which he wrote:—

[HOW I LIVE ON FIVE SHILLINGS A WEEK.]

First, there is the lodging to pay, that is 3d. a night or 1s. 9d. per week.

And then I use a loaf a day at 1½d. or 10½d. per week, and I get 2 oz. of tea for 1½d., and I use 4 oz. a week or 3d. per week for tea.

Sugar I get 1 lb. for 1½d. and that lasts me a week.

For meat I get 2d. a day or 1s. 2d. per week.

And the dripping I get out of the meat I use instead of butter.

For milk I buy a 2*d.* tin of condensed, and that lasts me a week.

For tobacco it costs me 6*d.* per week.

BREAKFAST.

Bread and dripping and tea.

DINNER.

2*d.* meat, and bread and a cup of tea.

TEA.

The same as breakfast.

	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>	
	1	9	Lodgings
		10½	Bread
		3	Tea
		1½	Sugar
1	2		Meat
		2	Milk
		6	Tobacco
<hr/>			
4	10		Total
		2	over.

When it was pointed out to him that one-tenth of his income was spent on tobacco, he said, "this was the only comfort he had, and he didn't feel too hungry with *it*" (as a moderator of appetite, I suppose).

This is of course an extreme case, and not a representative one. But the average artisan before he marries is beyond question comfortably placed so far as money is concerned, for he has an ample margin to apply to recreation, education, or saving, as his tastes may lead him. I have frequently come across young men who could only account for a bare half of their income—often less—in board and lodgings,

and who regarded the remainder as pocket-money. Some, of course, recognise the claims of their parents, and if they stay on at home contribute more or less liberally to the household expenditure, and now and again a young hero takes upon himself the whole burden of the family when the father has broken down. But in London this is rare; in the majority of cases the son leaves home when he reaches the age of 18 or 19, and starts his independent life, or at most he pays his parents 2*s.* or 3*s.* a week for rent and "keeps himself." (In northern towns, I believe, that independence is achieved, not by leaving home, but by insisting on a separate loaf; so that you will find as many loaves in cut as there are independent members in the family.)

It is frequently in the first flush of the feeling of amplitude caused by rescuing his income from the common purse that the young artisan marries. For the first year or two all may go smoothly enough! he will have only a small margin for external pleasures, but if his wife is a good manager he will not be cut off from them altogether. A visit to an East End theatre or music-hall is quite enough to prove that the working man is far from being the miserable worn-out machine which he is so often represented to be, for there you will see not only that many hundreds are enjoying themselves keenly, but that they are in the habit of enjoying themselves keenly, that they are familiar with the actors, with the piece, with all the ways of the place.

The really difficult time in the family history is in the ten years or so when the eldest child is growing from 4 to 14; when the home swarms with little children, and only the father's wages are coming in.

After that period he can fairly count upon help from one or two between the age when they leave school and the age when they assert their independence. This earning power of the elder children is perhaps the one justification for the early marriages of the less skilled workers. Their own earning power is at its maximum when they are young and strong, and as it wanes the children begin their contributions. The position changes as we ascend to the higher grades of skilled labour; acquired skill lasts longer, as a rule, than mere muscular strength, and the head of the family can maintain the burden over a greater number of years; *i. e.* he can either defer his marriage until he has made some provision for its consequences, or he can afford to dispense longer with his children's earnings and give them a better training in their turn.

It must be remembered, then, in discussing the income of the working man, that it is always the *family* income which is important, and this may be double that of the father alone. Take, for instance, the family we have already referred to (p. 24), where the father's earnings are only just above what is now called, from Mr. Booth's book, the "poverty line," the earnings of an almost unskilled labourer. The eldest daughter, a girl of 21, earns 12s. a week by "relief-stamping," the next, aged 17, earns 7s. by "feather-work," and a son of 14 earns 5s. as office boy. Thus the children's earnings exactly double the family income. Of course in ordinary times they do not put it all into the common purse; a certain amount is reserved for clothing and pocket-money, but it is there to be drawn upon if necessary, or when the family combines to indulge in some luxury.

In this case the mother's energies were reserved entirely for the duties of the home, and there can be no question but that this is in the long run the most profitable use to which they can be applied. One of the most hopeful signs of social improvement is the extent to which married women are withdrawing from the labour market;<sup>1</sup> that the working classes should recognise the importance of the women's home duties is a sign of their higher intellectual standard, and that they should be able to set them free to so large an extent from outside work is a proof of their improved material conditions. In this, as in so many ways, it is the mingled poverty and short-sightedness of the poor which keeps them poor. When the man's income is very small or irregular, the temptation for the wife to earn a little is almost irresistible; and the inevitable results are neglected homes, ailing children, and a wasteful expenditure of the money that is earned. So great are these and other evils arising out of married women's work that they are sometimes seriously urged as an argument against training women for any highly skilled work. It is thought that it would be better to take it for granted, both that all girls will marry young (and indeed this almost represents the facts among working people), and that they will cease to be wage-earners after marriage; if this were so, the careful training so desirable for lads would be to a certain extent wasted upon girls. But against this argument we have to remember (amongst other things) that a very large number of women may be, and are, forced to assume the support of the family when the husband falls ill or dies, and that then their position

<sup>1</sup> See *Report on Employment of Women and Girls*, 1894.

is almost hopeless if they have "no trade in their hands."

But we will all agree that for the woman to have to work is an unmitigated evil where there are children. Where there are none they are often driven into it by the vacancy and *ennui* of their lives; they have no resources in books or pursuits of any kind, their ideal of a home is so elementary that housekeeping consists of little more than sweeping the floor, putting the chairs straight, and doing a very little rough and ready cooking, and the workshop is accepted as much for the sake of occupation as for earnings. Where there are children it is quite different. You cannot then lock your door and pocket your key with the comfortable assurance that you will find everything as you left it. You have to choose between locking the children out and locking them in. The former alternative is the more usual where the children are of school age, especially since the custom of feeding children at school and at soup-kitchens has become so prevalent, and one strong argument against this form of charity is the additional encouragement which it offers to the women to relinquish the troubles of housekeeping. A mother who would hesitate to let her children go altogether without food, cheerfully turns them loose upon the world in the confidence that they will pick a meal up somewhere. No doubt the confidence is generally justified, but for the mother the moral effect is bad and for the children the physical one hardly less so. Which of us would not suffer from the effect of an almost unvaried soup diet, however thick and luscious the soup might be?

Some of the difficulties are avoided when the mother works at home, but others arise. For one

thing, the small trades which are carried on at home are generally of a low order and miserably paid; the work has to be done at lightning speed, to earn any appreciable sum, and too often the children are called upon to help. The work of covering steels for dressmakers, for instance, is about the worst paid of all; by working long hours from early morn to late at night a woman can hardly earn more than  $7\frac{1}{2}d.$  a day, or 3s. to 4s. a week at it; but it can be done at home, it is absolutely mechanical, and so simple that quite small children can do it (it consists merely in drawing a thread some half-dozen times through a hole), hence it is a common resource amongst the unskilled, and you will frequently find a woman and her children grouped round the small dirty window with their fingers flying as if their lives depended upon it, as indeed in a certain sense they do. You will also find the remains of the breakfast littered about the room (probably on the bed, as the table is in use), the children unwashed, unmended and half-clad, the floor black with the dirt of weeks, and marks of neglect and misery wherever you look. Box-work is another prevalent home-industry in its cheaper forms; the better work is done at the shop, and it is chiefly the more mechanical and badly paid which is taken home. Here again great dexterity of an absolutely mechanical kind is displayed. As you stand talking to the woman she takes up an oblong piece of cardboard ruled with sharp cuts and with the corners cut out; in a twinkling it is bent into shape, pasted round with paper and thrown—a box complete—upon the growing pile which almost fills the little room. Then when the given number of dozen or gross is complete, they are tied up—probably in the sheet off the bed—and

carried back to the shop. One most objectionable feature about box-making is the apparently inevitable bad smell of the paste used, a smell which is hardly surpassed for nauseousness (though said to be less injurious) by that of "fur-pulling," another low-class home-industry. The great mischief of this fur-pulling is that the loose fur gets into the lungs and induces chest-complaints much in the same way as the cotton fibre gets into the lungs of cotton-operatives: but the mischief is of course greater in the home and amongst little children than when it is confined to the mills.

In weighing the question, then, of home industries for women we must remember that in East London, at any rate, they are almost invariably accompanied by dirt, disorder, and badly-cared-for children. This question has been frequently argued from another point of view; ladies would shudder, it is said, if they knew the surroundings through which much of their clothing—fur-cloaks, *e.g.*—had passed; I myself have never bought muffins from the muffin-man since I discovered that he kept them at home between the making and the selling. But if the homes are bad for the work, the work is ten times worse for the homes, and it is pitiful to see bestowed upon it all the time and care which is due to the children.

In considering the expenditure of the family income we cannot altogether leave out the item of payment for domestic service. Twopence and a cup of tea to some old woman or little girl to mind baby for a few hours is an item which you may find in the poorest budget; while home-industry generally involves a young "work-girl" to carry the "work" to and from the City. Among the higher class artisans the little nurse-girl, the young slavey or general, and the

periodical charwoman are quite frequent ; for in this class the daughters of the house on leaving school are generally put to some trade, and the mother has her hands over-full with the cooking, mending, and washing for a family with a standard to maintain ; but it is rare to find an adult servant in possession of all her faculties until you come to the shop-keeping class. Domestic service amongst the working classes is carried on by the immature or the aged, the maimed and the halt, or those who are in some other way handicapped in the battle of industry.

The most elastic item in the family expenditure is the amount spent on dress. Among the very poorest a few pence during the year for each member of the family will probably suffice to keep them covered, at more than that they scarcely aim. The children are pretty sure to get boots at day or Sunday school, either from some charity or some school-mate a little better off than themselves. The same old garments pass from one to another, as one after another needs a larger size, and gaps are supplied by a second-, third-, or fourth-hand article from an old clothes stall. Where the hats worn by these children had their origin it is hard to say ; they may be best studied in the dressing-rooms at the schools, where it is a quaint sight to see the head-gear of the little scholars in all its variety. The straw hat suffers most in its last stages ; sometimes it has lost its brim, and though retaining much of its usefulness becomes a most rakish-looking object ; sometimes the brim is the only part which remains intact, and then it hangs round the peg instead of upon it in a way very suggestive of colds in the head. But the straw hat is fast being superseded in the East End by the cloth

or woollen cap of various shapes, which is certainly a much warmer and more durable head-covering, and in good hands much cleaner. The Tam o' Shanter, the "stocking" cap, the cricket cap—all varieties are represented in the rows of little garments so characteristic of their little owners.

Among self-supporting families, boots are the most difficult articles to provide, because of the initial expense involved in getting good ones. As a matter of fact very few do get good ones unless some member of the family belongs to the boot-making trade. Shoddy things, made chiefly of brown paper and paste, can be bought for any price from a shilling upwards, and even men engaged in active work will often pay no more than 6s. or 7s. for their boots. It is probably more expensive in the long run than buying good ones, for they wear out very fast, and from the first are not waterproof; but the lesson that it pays best to buy good things is one which we are all slow to learn. There is more reason perhaps in buying cheap children's boots; the little feet grow so fast that they would hardly wear out a good boot while it still fitted; but I often think the north-country clog would be a good substitute for the smart-looking boot which loses all shape and warmth and protective power after the first wetting.

In these days of cheap materials a handy woman with the use of her needle can keep her family clad for almost incredibly little; but as a matter of fact nearly all Londoners buy their clothing ready-made. It is hardly too much to say that most of our underpaid sewing-women are producing articles which will be worn by the working classes, though I believe even wealthy people in their search for bargains will some-

times buy the slop-work, which is almost synonymous with sweated work. But the great mass of extraordinarily cheap blouses, jackets, mantles, and skirts, which are turned out in thousands by the slaves of the needle, are bought and worn by women only a few degrees better off than their makers, who lack either time or skill to make their own clothing. Slop-work or second-hand is the choice for them, and one hardly knows which is worst; true, the second-hand clothing (*i. e.* well-made cast-off garments) wears incomparably longer, and does not involve the low wages of the slop-worker, but there is something indescribably jarring and "false" in the adaptation of dresses and mantles, suitable enough for their original purpose, to the quite incongruous uses of the working world. It is largely the presence of fashionable refuse which makes the East End such a pitiful caricature of the West in its outward aspects; under the greasy draggled sombreness which settles like a blight on everything you can trace the delicate colours and stylish cut which were fashionable in parks and squares two or three years ago.

The cheap clothing, on the other hand, is bright and pretty enough when first donned; and the London workgirl can turn herself out looking very trim and smart at small expense. Speaking generally, she is the only one of the family who pays constant attention to her appearance; her brother, unless he is a clerk and so expected to "keep up an appearance," does not much care how he is dressed except on special occasions or at courting time, but above the level of the factory all workgirls are expected to keep themselves neat, and like to keep themselves smart. There is indeed no limit to the

depths of slovenliness and uncleanness to which the lowest class girls may sink if they have never had the instinct aroused, and one of the hardest tasks of those who try to raise them is to divert their desire for dirty finery and feathers into a love of cleanliness and neatness. But for the most part our workgirls are wonderfully clever in making a little money go a long way in the matter of dress; that they should prefer strong boots to shiny ones, or a warm jacket to a showy hat is perhaps too much to expect of them until they have learned their lesson by hard experience of coughs, colds, and rheumatism. For some years past my business has taken me in an omnibus carrying some half-dozen of these girls to their work; from the look of them I should say some semi-clerical work in a large business house. In summer the neatness and prettiness of their dress is admirable, but in winter there is too little change made. The smart little shoes are useless for keeping out snow and mud; as useless as the thin capes and scanty skirts within which they shiver, or the fancy straw and flower-bedecked hats with which wind and rain play such havoc. One after the other they start coughing and sneezing, their faces get to look pinched and wan, and I long to send each of them a roll of warm flannel with a hint to make it up into underclothing. For you may take it as an almost absolute rule that however well clad on the surface these girls are lamentably deficient in underclothing, and chills from this cause are largely responsible for bad health and premature deaths. They are exposed to weather of all kinds, they seldom carry an umbrella, still more seldom a cloak, and are never prepared for cold; probably not one of them but will suffer sooner or later from

rheumatism, bronchitis, or that worst of London plagues, consumption.

It is generally considered that if the workgirl who lives at home gives her parents 5*s.* or 6*s.* of her money, she has contributed her share towards the household expenses, and may keep the rest for dress; indeed, the balance will often be but trifling. The sons may do more for a few years, as their mothers say "they are so hearty"—*i. e.* hungry; after that they will probably leave home, or pay a shilling or two towards the rent and buy their own food. Here then we may get an estimate of what the money available for housekeeping will be! About 5*s.* a week from such of the children to be fed as can earn, and the husband's money. The actual amount of this varies, of course, within very wide limits; the amount contributed towards housekeeping is much less variable. There is a widespread opinion that 18*s.* or 20*s.* is the right amount for a husband to give his wife, and she is apt to accept it without further inquiries as to actual earnings. Of course there are innumerable exceptions to the custom; but it is sufficiently prevalent to make the sort of income I have suggested as devoted to housekeeping a fairly representative one. Now the 5*s.* a week will certainly do more than cover the cost of the food consumed by the contributor; otherwise there would be less reluctance on the part of the parents to let their girls go to service. "We can't spare the few shillings," pleads the mother, when urged to let Mary leave her unhealthy, badly-paid toil, and take a situation where she would get the same wages in addition to board and lodgings; for somehow or other Mary's wages seldom find their way back after she leaves home.

Probably a good part, if not all, of the weekly rent will be made up from the children's earnings; often the plan is to put aside all Jack's or Bob's, as the case may be, and to say that he just pays the rent. The worst of this fiction is apt to be that if Jack or Bob falls ill or out of work, there is then a tendency to feel that the rent cannot be paid that week.

Thus the father's contribution will be left pretty clear to feed and clothe the mother and the younger children. One or two first charges there will be; in a better class family insurance money and clubs will often amount to nearly 2s. a week; very frequently there will be some piece of furniture—a mangle, a sewing-machine, or even a piano—which is being bought on the hire system, and will claim a weekly 1s. 6d., and too often the tallyman will have a claim for goods supplied at the door—goods which are often worn out or “put away” before the payments are completed. (“Put away,” when said of inanimate objects, implies the pawnshop; of human beings its reference is to the lunatic asylum or prison.) When all these demands are satisfied, then—if none of the tribe are absolutely bootless and frockless—the housewife can turn her attention to food. Here, of course, one can give no details; they vary with the tastes and capacities of individuals, but the housekeeping of the Londoner has certain general characteristics which we may note.

In the first place, look at the conditions under which it is carried on. Here is a family living in two rooms, with no trace of store-cupboard, pantry, or larder. True, there is perhaps a cupboard in each room, but these only just suffice to hold, one the coal, the other the crockery. It is clear that there can be

no stock of edibles ; straight from the shop to the table is the only plan, and probably it is the healthiest in houses which are so closely packed with humanity. But it involves a crudity in the cooking which is very monotonous. Think for a minute of your last night's dinner, and of all the tins and packets and jars which were dipped into in the course of its manufacture ; and imagine if you can what it would have been divested of all the little additional. That is one reason why the poor cook so badly.

But there is a stronger reason in the absence of any cooking-range in most of the houses ; a great multitude of Londoners live in the sitting-rooms and bedrooms of old houses that are now let out in tenements, and these are naturally not adapted to culinary purposes. The most you can do with a small open grate is to balance a saucepan or frying-pan on the fire, and to do even that you must stop boiling the kettle, which is a serious matter and cannot always be done if it happens to be washing day. Sometimes, indeed, a sympathetic landlord will put up a tiny range, and in the "model dwellings" there is always some kind of provision for cooking ; but even when the means are there the time and skill necessary to the art are often wanting, and a ready-cooked dinner from the fried fish shop, the eel-pie shop, or the tripe shop, is apt to prove less troublesome and more tempting.

Besides her ignorance the London housewife often has to contend with a hopeless incapacity to spend her money properly. It is not that she cannot make good bargains ; she may be a first-rate hand at that, and choose and buy as skilfully as any one. But her money, when it all comes in on Saturday, is irresistible to her ; she cannot remember that it has to last seven

days, and spends as if Sunday were the one day in the week. Hence if you inquire of the children at the Board Schools as to their meals during the week, you will find that many of them have passed through every stage from feasting to semi-starvation, perhaps from roast duck and pudding on Sunday to dry bread on Friday.

Another great source of mischief, even more prevalent than the last, and extending to the better classes of artisans and small shopkeepers, is the terrible ignorance of the women on all questions of health, and their consequent failure to suit the food to the needs of the family. Delicate, dyspeptic, or anæmic girls who need plain strengthening food, are indulged in unlimited tea and pickles and any kind of spicy "relish" which may take their fancy—or as they say "tempt their appetites"; while the unfortunate babies are treated as if they were ostriches, and made to swallow a part of everything that is going. It is in vain their shrunken little limbs, and weary wizened faces plead for something more suitable to their tender years. "Baby do look queer, give 'im a drop o' tea," is all that is suggested to the mother's mind, and baby gulps down a spoonful of tea from the pot which has been all day on the hob with helpless resignation. The current traditions as to the proper remedies for childish complaints, also, must be very mischievous; one mother, when asked how she was feeding her child which had measles, explained that she gave it no food, "only an orange and sulphur and brandy," and it was elicited in one of the police-courts the other day that saffron was the popular remedy for this complaint.

The following extract from an evening paper tells of

an instance which was exceptional only in being made public. Many a baby, if it could make known its woes, could tell a like tale.

“This afternoon Dr. Wynn Westcott held an inquiry in Shoreditch respecting the death of a child of six months, the daughter of a French polisher. The mother stated that it was a fine healthy child, and was put to bed at midnight on Saturday and found dead in bed on Sunday morning. The Coroner: ‘What did you feed it on?’ Witness: ‘I suckled it, but sometimes gave it nursery biscuits.’ The Coroner: ‘I am told you gave it lots of things. Didn’t you give it fried fish?’ Witness: ‘Oh yes, just little mites.’ The Coroner: ‘And pease pudding?’ Witness: ‘Well, yes, sir, she did have some pease pudding.’ The Coroner: ‘And saveloys and sausages and such-like rubbish. It is such feeding that kills children.’ Dr. Albert Davis, of 235, Kingsland Road, stated that the cause of death was syncope, following acute indigestion, the result of the improper feeding. The jury returned a verdict in accordance with the medical evidence, and the coroner cautioned the mother as to her future conduct.”

Improper feeding is a far more potent cause of starvation among the children of the poor than insufficient feeding, and if the benevolent people who every winter flood the East with soup would instead devise some way of teaching the women simple cooking and the elementary laws of health they would soon see better results from their work.

A very considerable item in the expenditure of a London family is the doctoring and its incidental expenses. It is of course well known that it can all be had gratis, from the best medical and surgical

treatment in the world, down to the cod-liver oil, and in this way the poor are better off than the middle-class family which must pay heavily for its middle-class attendance. But free doctoring cannot be had without an expenditure of time and money which would go far to pay the local practitioner's fee, ranging as it does from *4d.* to *2s. 6d.* To get the invalid to the hospital involves omnibus or train or possibly even cab-fare; and when there he may have to wait nearly the whole day for his turn. Many a serious illness has been developed in the waiting-rooms of the hospitals, for which not all the skill of the treatment obtained could compensate. But however they may get it or pay for it, the amount of "doctor's stuff" consumed by the London poor is enormous. They have unlimited faith in it, and quickly desert a doctor who does not prescribe big bottles and plenty of them, for one who knows their tastes better. Moreover, it must have plenty of colour and flavour, or they will suspect its virtues; the local chemist understands this, and advertises in his window "glass of saline,  $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ ; flavoured,  $2d.$ " And, indeed, the doctor's stuff need be strong if it is to do all that is required of it, for it has to make up to the children for bad food, bad air, and every kind of neglect or injudicious treatment, and to cure the parents of disease arising from every species of excess, from too much work down to too much drink.

Here, if anywhere, is the true application of the proverb, "Prevention is better than cure;" quite a small amount of knowledge and care on the part of the mothers would be so much more efficacious than the elaborate machinery which is called into play to remedy the effects of their ignorance. For apart from

the fact that there is hardly a child in East London which gets a fair start into life without its digestive organs being seriously impaired, there are great numbers of them who are hopelessly crippled for life by sheer neglect. As an extreme instance I may mention one family which boasts three cripples: *in each case the child was injured by being allowed to fall out of the perambulator.* And only yesterday I was asked to do something for a girl who is slowly dying from the consequences of being dropped over her sister's shoulder when a baby. Hence it comes that the demand from the East End for "surgical instruments" is a large one, and many thousands of pounds must be spent yearly on these ingenious devices for patching up defective human beings. Steel and leather are but poor substitutes for bone and muscle, but their very ingenuity recommends them, and gives their owners—at least while they are new—a sense of pride which they would never have felt in an ordinary human limb. And so the pathetic spectacle goes on of mothers ruining their children's lives through almost brutal ignorance and carelessness, while our highest science and skill is taxed to apply inadequate remedies.

Of course, the users of these instruments do not as a rule pay for them themselves. The cost may be anything from 5s. up to £5 or £10, or even £20, and the periodical expenditure in mending and renewal is constant. But they are not as a rule given by the hospitals, and a most degrading process of begging has often to be gone through by those who cannot afford the whole of the cost out of their normal income. One way and another they form a very serious item in the expenditure of the family.

Do the poor on the whole buy dear or cheap? Facts

seem to tell both ways. That they can buy far more cheaply than they used to do there can be no reasonable doubt ; nor is there any question but that measuring by prices alone, you live indefinitely cheaper in the East than in the West. Think of what the house-keeping books would run down to if for a penny you could buy six oranges or three eggs, or enough flowers to deck your room for an evening party ; while a shilling would give you the choice between a fowl or a hare or three mutton-chops. Or in the matter of dress, again, suppose 5s. gave you the command over a pair of boots, or a new mantle, or a top-coat " as good as new " ? How unnecessary, even iniquitous, our heavy bills seem ! But then, of course, you must be prepared to find either that half the oranges are bad, or that the oranges are half-bad ; that the eggs are " extra-French " (new-laid, fresh, " eggs," extra-French, is the order of merit) ; and that the fowl and the hare are insipid creatures of foreign extraction. The mutton-chops, indeed, may be as good as you are used to at home, provided you have exercised good judgment in selection ; and it is this question of judgment which really determines how much it is cheaper to live in the East than in the West. The prices paid in the West are largely paid for the certainty that the commodities will be up to a certain standard ; in the East the quality will depend upon your own powers of selection, and these are apt to fail when confronted with the vendor's desire to clear off a stock which shows signs of deterioration. So strong indeed has the instinct become to buy damaged goods cheap that the East Endercan hardly bring herself to buy fruit that is not a little past its prime, and many an illness during the summer is due to the consumption of rotten fruit

while the market is loaded with fresh supplies, left in their turn to go bad while the stale is being consumed.

But taken all round the facilities for getting a variety of good food are very great in London ; far more so than in the country ; and this no doubt forms one of the attractions to country people. It is as true of butcher's meat as of other things. The general idea that the poor get very little butcher's meat is a mistaken one, to be dispelled by a walk down any of the main thoroughfares of the East End. If the poor do not eat butcher's meat wherefore all these butchers' shops crowded with carcasses, which offend sight and smell in constant succession? And not even these many shops can satisfy the demand ; as evening comes on stalls spring up along the streets laden with cuts and chops, and joints and slices of every price and every description. (A reference to the *Post Office Directory* shows that of the 1,330 butchers engaged in serving London, 850 have their shops in districts almost entirely composed of working-class people—E., N.E., N., S.E. ; the remainder serving the very mixed populations of the W., S.W., N.W., and W.C. districts ; while of 215 pork-butchers, 155 serve the workers alone.)

Education is no longer an important item in the working man's expenditure ; his books and papers he can get at the free libraries, and schooling for his children is provided for him free of charge. The private school has practically ceased to exist in East London, though five little schools still languish in our parish kept by old ladies who manage to collect a small fee from parents who are unwilling for their children to run the risks of the Board School. There is also a large endowed school for the class which can

afford to pay something for a more liberal education, but it draws its pupils so little from the neighbourhood that it is to be moved into more suitable surroundings. The voluntary schools still succeed in collecting as subscriptions a good many of the pence which were formerly brought as fees ; but for the vast majority of working men education has ceased to be a necessary charge upon their income.

The really inevitable current changes are four only ; rent, food, clothing, fire and light. Of these the first always tells heavily in London, and no economy can reduce it much without a loss in health and decency which costs more in the long run. Still, there is a certain amount of elasticity even about rent ; part of the reason why it is so high is that landlords allow for bad times during which they will find it hard to insist, and insure themselves against the loss. Hence it comes that rent is sometimes one of the first items to be struck off the expenditure when pressure does come, and if we could at any moment compare the amount of unpaid rent with that of paid rent during a given week, the result would show that the high rents are to a considerable extent apparent only.

As regards food and clothing, there is, as we have seen, an almost indefinite possibility of elasticity. The families which live normally at the minimum cost are extremely few, and many will spend double or treble at good times what they will when economy is forced upon them.

The expenditure on fire and light varies perhaps less than anything. The dangerous little paraffin lamps which are almost universally in use, consume so little and such cheap oil, that they hardly count in the week's expenditure. Fuel is dear, but when you

have only one room you cannot have more than one fire, and it is only at the extremest pinch that you will have less.

Of course as we rise in the social scale new items of expenditure appear as necessities which were not considered such by the class below. I was about to write that the luxuries of the lower class become the necessities of the higher, but that would not represent the facts. The luxuries of the lower class are music-halls and theatres, brilliant clothing, and highly-flavoured foods and drinks; the necessities of the higher, to which I refer, are the greater expenditure on cleanliness and privacy (the washing becomes a recognised charge, even if done mainly at home), and the expenditure demanded by considerations of thrift and foresight, such as clubs, trade-unions, and savings. These latter are the price paid, not so much for security, as for independence; under our present system every one knows that if he fails to provide for his own wants during times of illness or incapacity some one else will ultimately do it for him, and those who choose are able to strike off this item from their expenditure. But those who value their independence must preserve it at a cost which will take the shape of a fixed and necessary charge upon their income. Like cleanliness it is a necessity to the higher standard, but drops out of the lower one altogether.

The greatest difficulty in the finance of the working man is not so much that his income is too little for his needs, as that it is apt to be irregular. Many families which would run smoothly enough on 30s. a week all the year round, living economically but sufficiently, come to grief because they have 35s. a

week and six weeks out of work, though the total income is larger in the latter case. The problem of equalising an irregular income with regular recurrent needs is one which only the most disciplined have solved. Many, as I have said, endeavour to cut the knot by varying their needs, and reducing them to a minimum at times of pressure, but this is a process fraught with danger to all concerned and apt to lower permanently the standard of the family life. Moreover it cannot be pushed beyond a certain limit, and the great institution of pawnbroking has sprung up to supplement it. To many thousands the pawnshop is their one financial recourse, their one escape from charity or the Poor Law. They lower their standard of living not only by refraining from expenditure, but also by actually parting with those accessories which are considered necessary for ten months out of the twelve. To raise money on the home is not among the lower classes the last expedient of despairing misfortune, but the ordinary resource of the average man; and some indeed will even have the pawnshop in view in their furnishing. But it is not a form of thrift; it is just the reverse. Thrift is the characteristic of the steadfast mind, reflecting the unity and necessity of life and the universe, and exercising self-control in the present for the sake of ensuring that the future shall at any rate approximate to it in value. The mind which yields easily to the temptation of pawning, on the contrary, is one to which the future is merely an uncertain chance, good only to be robbed for the sake of the present. To it the delightful facility with which future earnings can be forestalled is irresistible, and leads to a habit of pawning which can seldom be got rid of again.

It is often argued that recourse to the pawnshop is an efficient and legitimate way of equalising the income and the claims upon it, and in times of sudden and overwhelming distress there is no doubt of its utility. But those who support it can hardly realise what an expensive mode of raising money it is; 24 per cent. interest, with no risk to the creditor, who is always careful to be more than covered by the pledge, and actually gains if the debtor fails to pay interest and the ticket expires. Nor does the proposal for a State pawnshop, a *mont de piété*, meet the difficulty; the interest asked might be less exorbitant, the terms rather easier (though it has not proved so in other countries); but when all is said and done the wage-earner should be receiving interest, not paying it, and in times of stress should live upon his past savings instead of borrowing from his future earnings.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE WOMEN OF THE EAST

IN devoting a short chapter especially to the position of the women of East London it is not with any desire to raise the question of women's rights and wrongs. One of my firmest convictions is that the interests of men and women are in the long run the same, and cannot be advantageously dealt with as distinct. But there are amongst us women who have lagged so far behind their fellows in the march forward that they form a "problem" apart from all others; they are far in the rear of civilisation, and from the weakness of their position need every help which can be given to them to push on. Whether that help can best be given by legislation, by Factory Acts and regulation of labour; or whether the pressure of public opinion and private sympathy will prove more powerful, is for each one to study and determine for himself. Probably both are needed where the work to be done is so arduous. But both will be made more efficient when it is more widely understood what are the conditions under which so many of our women live.

Among a certain low type of men the prevailing

expression is one of vacuity, of absence of purpose or character; among the women corresponding to them the prevailing expression is that of patient endurance. You see it as soon as you meet them, and you become by degrees familiar with it as characteristic of the class. It is, of course, not universal; some there are who by force of circumstance and disposition maintain the reckless jollity of their girlhood to the end; in others self-indulgence has so brutalised the face as to make it incapable of any expression at all; while in some few the love of husband, home, and children shines out victorious through all traces of care and trouble, touching the homely features with the light of a quiet affection which leaves no room for querulousness or discontent. But with the great majority the expression is just one of endurance, and this not only where poverty has also set its mark of privation and suffering. It means primarily nothing more or less than the position which the woman is expected, and sooner or later forced, to take in that rank of life; a position in which all cares and responsibilities are handed on to her, not as to one better qualified to discharge them, but as to one whose sole function it is to relieve husband or son (as the case may be) of unwelcome burdens.

The discipline for this position begins young, when the little maid who can hardly speak plain herself staggers about under the weight of the younger children, and shares with the mother all the toils and drudgery of the home. Nay, sometimes even the mother will seize the opportunity of passing on the burden to shoulders still less able to resist than her own. "Why were you late for school again this

morning?" asks the teacher, harassed by late attendances, of one of these little old women. "Please, teacher, I had to take father and mother their breakfast in bed, and clean father's boots before I could come," was the unanswerable plea, and frequently it will be, "I couldn't get father and mother up to breakfast before."

The boy rebels early, encouraged by the example of his father, and having once learned that responsibilities can be run away from is apt to spend the rest of his life in pursuing that course. From the time that he becomes too big or strong to be cuffed and shaken by mother and sister, he has won a freedom which too often proves to be the merest slavery to sloth and appetite and self-will. That the woman is less often the slave of this false freedom is perhaps due to the very bonds which her position forces upon her, and affords one answer to the question constantly suggested, "Why are these women so different to their men?" How high the quality of mere endurance should rank among the virtues of civilisation it is hard to say; certainly it is not one which helps its owners, either as individuals or as a class, to push forward to better things, and to me it is very doubtful whether it is advantageous to the race. The unceasing sacrifice of patiently unintelligent women to produce and maintain more patiently unintelligent women and selfishly unintelligent men, is of little use to the community. It does not rise to the level of self-sacrifice, for there is seldom anything voluntary about it; it is mere submission to the brute forces round them. But it is a quality strongly attractive of a sympathy which it is difficult to maintain for the men of the same class, even while

acknowledging that the self-assertion of the latter *may* have in it more of the element of progress.

The discipline begins, as I have said, with the little girl who is made to bow her neck to the yoke of baby and the housework. After that her life is one long toil; at best she does but change one task-master for another. When she begins to earn it is in the lowest ranks of work, at some almost mechanical "trade," which will exercise a small dexterity of hand at the cost of all intelligence and energy. Her parents will put her to something at which she can earn at once; something therefore which requires the minimum of training and could probably be done quite as well by machinery. Of course she is wretchedly paid; quantity of work is expected instead of quality, and the growing girl has all her powers exhausted at a time when she has most need to lay in a store of strength. It is then that the heaviest of her burdens, bad health, is laid upon her, and she will never escape from it. All the troubles she has to go through will have to be met with undeveloped physical resources, and an enfeebled constitution which generally results in some definite disease as time goes on.

It is wonderful how, notwithstanding, the London workgirl maintains her spirits and her passion for excitement. The nervous system seems to be so highly strung as to counteract for years the effects of over-work and bad nourishment, but the reaction must be all the greater when it comes. Between sixteen and eighteen or twenty is the blossoming time, and at that age no extreme of poverty will keep the flower or feather out of the hat, or the gay colour out of the dress. Girls for whom underclothing hardly exists will somehow manage to deck them-

selves with some external finery, to dress their hair in the East End version of the latest fashion, and even to break out into marvellous but inexpensive jewellery (gold and diamonds and other precious stones are wonderfully cheap and plentiful in the East). It is a pathetic little outburst of vanity in most of them, and very transitory; after marriage they relapse into the hopeless slatternliness of their childhood, their normal state from which only a strong natural instinct, or possibly emulation of their companions, enables them to break away for a time.

It leads for the most part, of course, to mating, either with or without the marriage ceremony; for it is quite in accordance with the chief characteristics of this class that they hesitate but little to assume the burdens, without the rights, of wedded life. So far indeed as their economic position is concerned, the difference to them is not very real; married or unmarried they will have to do a large share towards maintaining the family, and will think themselves fortunate if the man contributes a trifle for the children in addition to keeping himself. Nor, indeed, are they liable to be made to feel any social inferiority; the wedding-ring in their rank of life is too often pawned for its absence to be significant, and if any occasion arises on which the "lines" are called in question, they are easily accounted for as in the keeping of mother or sister-in-law.

It is with the coming of the children that the real struggle of these lives begins; whatever their burdens have been before they are now increased manifold. With all the dangers of childbirth aggravated by hard work, inexperienced nursing, and bad constitutions, with the children following so fast upon one

another that there is never time to recover strength, it is no wonder that a few years are enough to rob them of all their buoyancy and change them into haggard care-worn women. To stand at the wash-tub, or tramp the streets, or bend all day long over some handywork until the last moment, and to be up again and doing at least the housework before the baby is more than a few days old, is a constant experience; and it is hard to say which suffers most from it, mother or child.

And as the children grow older the chances are that the burden of maintaining the family falls entirely upon the mother. It is so easy now for the father to disappear and to take up life free of responsibility in some of the many shelters or lodging-houses in London; to change his name if necessary, but in any case to elude the necessity of feeding more than himself. Or if he carries his ideas of irresponsibility still further, he may—as many indeed do—dispense with the trouble of seeking new quarters, and falling back upon the plea of “no work,” remain at home an idle loafer, living upon oddments of charity and his wife’s poor earnings. There is no depth of selfishness to which they may not sink when once they have come to this. One man I know who has done hardly a stroke of work for years; during his wife’s periodical confinements he goes off on the tramp, leaving her to take her chance of charity coming to the rescue, and returns when she can get to work again; I have known fathers who would send their hungry children to beg food from their neighbours, and then take it to eat themselves; and one I have known who would stop his children in the street and take their shoes from their feet to pawn for

drink. The negative attitude of a man to his own family is an impossible one; if responsibility disappears it will be replaced by brutality.

Of course many cases could be pointed out in which it is the mother who neglects her duties, while the father clings with pathetic affection to the little ones dependent upon him; but these cases are the exception, while the others tend to be the rule as soon as you get below a certain level of civilisation. Indeed you might almost make this "woman question" a test of the degree of civilisation to which a family has attained. Where the woman is a partner admitted on equal terms with a free voice in the disposition of the whole income, you may be sure the family has reached a high level, whatever the amount of the income may be; and you may fairly expect to find many of the qualities which make for the higher life. But who that knows the London poor does not also know the feebly apologetic smile with which the women will say, "Oh, I don't know what 'e gets; I only know what 'e gives me," mentioning a sum which amounts very often to less than half the earnings, and which is ridiculously inadequate to cover the feeding, clothing, and housing of the family. Her business is to make it do, to eke it out with her own toil if she can, but never to dream of questioning the man's right to the exclusive disposal of the rest. To scramble along from day to day, to take what comes and never look for more, to spend wastefully what is given grudgingly, to bear poverty, toil, and suffering for husband and children, and yet fail to win either affection or respect in return; this is the lot of our poor uneducated women of the lowest class.

For their position with their sons is but a repetition of what it is with their husbands. It could hardly be otherwise, considering the kind of bringing-up which their children receive at their hands. Given an entire absence of all method, patience, and discipline, combined with alternations of excessive harshness and indulgence, and nothing short of a miracle could produce a dutiful and affectionate son. In homes where children are threatened and bullied as a vent for bad temper, bribed with sweets and halfpence when they are restive and troublesome, allowed to run wild and do as they please for just as long as they will keep out of the way, and permitted to indulge every freakish fancy which comes into their heads—in such homes there is no room for the growth of principle or unselfishness, all is caprice and self-will. And though the mother transfers to her son all the hopes and affections which her husband has disappointed, it is only to meet with the same return of indifference and neglect.

So far I have been speaking of the lowest class, but even at a higher level in the social scale this terrible devotion of the women is apt to produce similar results. We see this trait in the strongest light where the real tragedy of working life is being played; where, that is, the breadwinner falls ill or dies. It is not too much to say that the chief burden of the only misfortune which the poor are in truth unable to resist, always falls upon the woman. If *she* falls ill, the man at any rate goes on earning, and what suffering she undergoes is confined to herself; if the man falls ill there is thrown upon her, unskilled and untrained as she is, and in addition to her own arduous tasks of housekeeper, mother, and nurse,

the necessity of supporting the whole family. I am always surprised at the apparent calmness with which the man in such cases accepts the position; partly, no doubt, it is the torpor of illness, but there is something almost Eastern in the fatalistic spirit in which he will settle down into chimney-corner or bed, and watch the struggles of the poor woman to keep a roof over his head. Over and over again I have known men discharge themselves from hospital or infirmary on the most trivial plea of the bread being cut too thick or the tea made too weak, quite indifferent to the fact that their presence at home will almost double the wife's burden.

Imagine the position of a woman left with three or four little children to maintain, and knowing that work as hard as she may she can never earn more than 10s. to 15s. a week. Some will get the *Guardians* to take two or three of the little ones, and will do well to do so; others will cling to them all the more tenaciously for the loss they have just sustained, and will struggle on for years rather than part with them. Most will get charity from one source or another (to write to the Queen is a very favourite form of appeal, and one which for widows often produces a gift of £2 or £3); but charity is generally as fickle as it is inadequate, and soon closes its hand after the first novelty of distress has worn off. There are years to be tided over before the eldest child may leave school and get to work, and the prospect for those years is one which few men would have the courage to face. Partly, no doubt, it is the courage of short-sightedness which helps these women, and also the perpetual toil which leaves them no time to think. Mrs. P. is a typical instance; she was left a widow with four little ones

some six years ago; Freddy, the eldest, was only nine or ten, and Annie a year younger. These two "mothered" the little ones during the long weary days while she was at work in the City; they took them to school, bought and cooked the dinner and tea, and even cleaned the home ready for mother's return late at night. This in busy times, when she earned as much as 13s. to 15s. a week; in slack times she would be home earlier, but then the purse would be lighter. At last the time came for Freddy to leave school; he was a most diligent boy and had done well there, but to the grief of the family he was very small (how could he be otherwise, fed on the fifth part of 13s. a week!) and had a difficulty in getting work. The Post-Office had been his ambition, but no amount of anxious measurement could bring him up to the required standard, and that had to be given up. Finally, he found a berth in an architect's office; 5s. a week and a chance of promotion, and Mrs. P. begins to hope for better times. But already her motherly devotion meets with checks; Freddy begins to assume a masculine superiority and to resent her humble ways. "Do tell me what's a draughtsman," she begged one day; "Freddy says he's learning to be a draughtsman, and if I ask him about anything he says: 'Oh, bother, mother, you don't know anything.'"

But Freddy is well at work, and not likely to give it up; it is when the lads take to loafing that the hardest time is in store for the poor mother. All the promise of his boyhood still clings (in her eyes) round the hulking young fellow who is leading a life of disgraceful leisure at her cost, and who slinks home after a day's lounging and larking, always sure of a bed and a supper from the mother who still has faith in

his turning over a new leaf, and cannot bring herself to close her door to him. It is curiously often the youngest son—the Benjamin of the family—who turns out badly, who is the “raggy-cheap.” Can any one explain this term to me? I have never seen it written, but am told that “there’s something like it in the Bible”; “there’s a raggy-cheap in every family,” *i. e.* a black sheep or good-for-nothing. Long after the elder children have married and settled down into sober men and women, he will hang on at home, a curious perversion of the ancient custom by which the youngest son remained at home to support his parents in their declining years. The “raggy-cheap” has no such disinterested motive as this; he has sounded the depths of his mother’s affection and knows that hers is a patience which he can never exhaust; he cares little for the reproaches of brothers, sisters, and neighbours, for they are outside and occasional, while he feels sure of the warmest corner and largest share of the old woman’s home and food. The latter is scanty enough maybe; the proceeds of a day’s charring, a loaf from the parish, groceries from the church, will form the bulk of it, but she pleads against remonstrance of friend or conscience that an old woman needs nothing but a sup of tea and a bite of bread, while Bill he’s young, and out all day “looking for work,” and must keep his strength up, poor lad. And so it goes until even her feeble resources fail, and then Bill leaves her, broken-hearted to find that her long trust has been in vain, and ready at last to end her weary life in the grave or the “Big House” as the case may be.

Poor mothers; surely they would have done better, one thinks, to have chosen the burden of a solitary life, and travelled on alone to the end. If in the

freshness of youth they could have foreseen what was in store for them, would they not have turned thankfully to the quieter, more restful if less picturesque life, of the unmarried sisterhood, in which they would at least escape the dangers and sorrows of wives and mothers? But these are seldom weighed by girls; not because they do not know, for they may read the lesson every day in the lives of their mothers and friends; but because they are young and hopeful and trust that things will go better with them. And perhaps they are right, after all, and in spite of all that may come to them. It is better to suffer much than for heart and soul to starve slowly in the solitude into which single women of the working class are apt to fall. Not always, of course; the single daughter or maiden aunt may be the centre of as much affection as any wife or mother; but the tendency is, as years pass on, for her to become so engrossed in the difficulty of keeping herself as to lose all hold upon other people. It is always hard for a woman to keep herself; as she grows older it becomes much harder. This is because of the nature of her work. As a mere child she learns some semi-mechanical, not highly skilled, but very much differentiated trade; that is, her economic training consists in acquiring some dexterity of hand and eye which leads to nothing else, and is useful for only one purpose. To a large extent the demand for her services is dependent upon fashions, and as fashion changes she is left stranded. Moreover the services themselves are generally such as can be performed better by machinery, and it is only by accepting lower and lower wages that she can hold her own against the dreaded substitute. So it comes that towards the end of their lives the single women

find all their energies absorbed in a desperate struggle to keep themselves, and gradually lose touch with all the human sympathies and affections which would sweeten their lives. As a rule I have found that employers are very pitiful towards these women, and will keep them at work long after they have ceased to take on new hands; they know how impossible it is for them to turn to anything else. The very fashions seem loth to vanish altogether and leave them quite helpless. Old Miss G. still earns her 5*s.* or 6*s.* a week by making stiff frills for antiquated widows' caps; every frill passes eight or nine times through her hands in the process of making, and she gets 6*d.* a gross for them. Then there is still a certain demand for plain needlework in preference to machine-sewing; enough to provide a scanty living for many a score of old needlewomen who will tell you regretfully how in the good old days they would get three or four shillings for work which brings them now only eightpence or ninepence.

And so with rents getting higher and higher and wages falling lower and lower, our old spinsters tend to become mere automata, with neither strength nor time for anything beyond the one task of keeping up the fire of life sufficiently to get through the next day. Presently they will fail to do even this; it will flicker out, and their work will be done by steel and iron and steam—as indeed all mere drudgery should be done.

That is the one remedy for the troubles we have been considering. These poor untaught, overworked and underfed women must cease to exist, and we must substitute for them a race of women working more with their minds and less with their muscles. They must be able to take their place as managers, not

rivals, of machinery; and then the "starvation wage" will disappear. Whenever we get a class working mainly for quantity, instead of for quality, it is a sign that the time has come for their work to be taken over by machinery, and that the struggle has become one in which flesh and blood have no chance against the unconscious strength of natural forces. It is a struggle in which the class must be either killed out, or forced upwards into the ranks of skilled workers, on to the higher level where intelligence can hold its own.

Our poor women then must learn to do something requiring more than mere manual dexterity; something which exercises the intelligence and involves the more distinctly human faculties. This is why domestic service is never so badly paid as the lower branches of manufacture; it requires a constant adaptation to circumstances and exercise of intelligence in its functions in which women need never fear the rivalry of machinery. Why is it then that our girls object to it so much, that they call it slavery, and if they get the chance will always learn "a little trade" rather than go into service? Partly, no doubt, it is because the trades to which girls turn are still at a stage in which machinery is not much thought of; at first the work demanded from them is not so excessive nor the pay so low, and when once the work-hours are over they are free to amuse themselves as they will. But as a rule the woman who takes to the low-class trade will be worn out and starved in mind and body at an age when a woman who has been in service is developing her faculties to the fullest and has made herself a responsible and valuable position.

There must be other reasons why domestic service

is less popular than a trade; and chief among these is probably the tendency of mistresses to caprice and petty tyranny. Bad mistresses are perhaps even more common than bad servants; and the antipathy of such a large number to domestic service is to a great extent the reflection of a vast accumulated experience of neglect and harsh treatment. There are many ways in which service might be made a more attractive and satisfactory career for women. Most of these should need no teaching; the most ordinary consideration and kindness will daily open up ways of making the lives of our servants easier and pleasanter, especially where we keep but one or two, and are brought much into contact with them. But there is one point to which special attention may be called, and that is whether the young girls, who are just beginning their career, get enough encouragement or opportunity to improve their work. If there were more opportunity of rising to the higher grades of service it would be more attractive to the young; but the prospect of remaining a rough "general" all one's life is not an attractive one.

The whole question of women's work is of course complicated, both here and in the professional classes, by the prospect of marriage and all that it involves. It is a difficulty which cannot be settled offhand or on any *à priori* grounds; nothing but experience and careful observation and experiment can show us how it will be ultimately solved. The point, as it presents itself to middle-class parents, is this, "Our sons will have to make their way in life from first to last; they must look entirely to their own exertions for their maintenance, their homes, and their social position. Our daughters, on the other hand, if they have to keep

themselves at all, will very likely do so for only a short time, and during that time we can eke out their earnings in many ways. Very shortly they will be dependent upon a husband for maintenance, home, and social position. What is the use of giving them an expensive training which will so soon become quite unnecessary? A certain proportion of women, no doubt, will remain unmarried, but there is no reason why *our* daughters should be among the number, and indeed they are less likely to be so if they do not waste their time and spoil their complexions in study."

Much the same line is taken by and for the girls of the working class. Their anticipation of marriage is even more confident and better justified; for they marry in larger numbers and at an earlier age than girls in a higher social station. What they and their parents want is that they should begin to earn quickly, during the few years while they are at home between leaving school and getting married; and this involves work requiring little training. To train a woman highly, it is thought, is waste of time and money; and it is sometimes argued that such training is injurious as unfitting them for domestic life. In the sense that women may be attracted back to the factory or workshop after marriage by the greater interest of the work there, this may be to some extent true, but I do not believe that efficiency in good work of any kind will of itself unfit a woman for her household duties; the woman who fails as a housekeeper does so because she lacks economy, intelligence, industry, or self-control, and these are qualities that she is more likely to gain than to lose by being well taught, by being made competent, that is in any direction. And though the evil results of

married women's work need to be emphasised as strongly as possible, it is none the less necessary that wives and mothers should have it in their power to earn a decent living when the responsibility of maintaining the family devolves upon them. It is absolutely certain that of those who marry many will have, sooner or later, to take up work again, and that being so the work should be as productive as possible. At present many of them "earn a scanty living by taking in each other's washing"; and they realise the height of their ambition if they can become possessed of a mangle. Others wander about doing odd jobs of cleaning, or wear themselves away in scrubbing hospitals and other large institutions—work which would be done by machinery, if (as will some day be the case) there were no women willing to do it.

The remedy for all is education; women must be taught to do work that is good and valuable, and in this way their economic position will improve. They must be taught also in a way which will give them greater intelligence in managing their homes and children, for their deficiencies in this respect are partly due to their teachers. The old-fashioned idea that something without much practical bearing is most appropriate in the education of girls still lingers on, and I have heard an attempt which was made to introduce some classes on physiology or elementary laws of health into the evening schools rejected on the score that a little botany would be nicer and more suitable to girls. But something wider still is necessary. As I have tried to show, the mere poverty of working women of the lowest class is less fatal to their happiness than their social position. No doubt improved competency and earning-power would tend

to make them more respected by the men; but nothing short of an altogether higher standard of civilisation can raise them out of their bondage, and give them at least the possibility of a life worth having. This, to my mind, is the real "woman's question" of to-day; and all others are of importance mainly as they contribute to its solution.

## CHAPTER V

### THE SUNNY SIDE

IN writing about the East End, and especially in writing about our own particular and favourite part of it, the temptation is strong to dwell almost entirely on its shady side. It is the poverty and disease, the ignorance and brutality, which jar upon the sensitive observer like painful discords, and which he transmits to others as the result of his observations. Thus we almost necessarily get a one-sided view of the lives in which we are interested, and are very likely to be misled by it into a wrong attitude towards them. Those of us especially who put our hands to charitable work must expect that henceforward we shall have put before us mainly the melancholy aspect, and we shall find it hard enough to remember that the other is there. Even the amusements and daily intercourse of the East Enders seem coarse and rough to minds used to different surroundings and a different code of etiquette and manners; and many of our efforts to "elevate the masses" are only attempts to train them to our own standard, not because it is intrinsically better, but because it is what we are used to and can understand. Let us by all means do what we can to

place within reach of every one those things which seem to us to make for a higher life ; but do not let us be too readily discouraged or disgusted if some are slow to avail themselves of the opportunities offered. Nature insists on a certain fitness of things, and all kinds of recreation are not equally suited to all kinds of toil ; a noisy, breezy day on Hampstead Heath with its fresh air and exercise of voice and muscles, will do more than a day in a picture gallery or library to refresh the young people who have been cramped and confined over their work all week. The boisterousness which so often repels us is but an exaggeration of the natural reaction upon painful and exhausting restraint, and is little more than the vigour which under different circumstances would find an outlet in hunting, dancing, and other energetic pastimes. The chief harm in the rowdyism of Bank Holiday is the annoyance which it causes to other people, and the East Ender is not yet imaginative enough to realise fully that what is entertainment to him can be distressing to some one else.

Nor are our people wanting in their ideals of what is seemly, and I am inclined to think that in our intercourse with them we are as liable to offend against their dictates of good taste and courtesy, as they against ours. Anything, for instance, of the nature of inquisitiveness into another person's affairs, and especially intrusion into their house unbidden, is a great offence against social etiquette ; and they will often "pass the time o' day" with a neighbour for years without knowing her name, rather than seem inquisitive. Their attitude of patient endurance towards the uninvited "visitor" is well illustrated by the story of the old lady who said there *was* one thing

at least in which rich people were better off, they didn't have to be "read to" when they were ill; and the man who gave his wife standing instructions to say he was drunk when the parson called was perhaps within his rights.

To get any adequate idea of the amount of solid comfort, and kindly happy life even in East London, we must be able to appreciate happiness even when arising from a different source than our own, or finding a different expression. If all the unhappy families were weeded out of our district, even including those made unhappy by inherent defects of temper and character, there would still be left thousands of happy homes, in which the young people are being brought up to lead cheerful, busy lives, and the parents are reaping the fruits of their labours in the respect and affection of their children.

What are the sources from which an average wage-earning family draws its enjoyments? First and most important are the ordinary domestic pleasures which fortunately have very little to do with wealth or poverty above a certain low level. We may grant that the continuous strain to make an income cover expenses which exceed it, is very likely to divest home life of all grace and restfulness, but this strain is in no way confined to the wage-earners. Where the thrifty housewife has learned the limits of her purse, where some provision is made for the rainy day, and where above all debt is avoided, there we find an ample field for the development of family life, at any rate while the children are young. It is true that in London the home is small, one, two, or three rooms, as the case may be; but during the daytime, when the elder members of the family are out at work and the

children are at school, the narrowness is not felt, and after the day's work the cheerfulness of the family party is more desired than the quietness which the student or the exhausted brain-worker finds necessary to him. The main point is that in these homes the fathers are as tender of their daughters and as proud of their sons, the mothers as devoted to all alike, as in families where the income is ten or twenty times as large ; and it is upon these simple elementary affections that the chief happiness of life depends.

But such families have not, it is argued, and cannot possibly have, the resources for education and amusement which wealthier people have. This is no doubt true, in the sense that they cannot have them within their own homes. But to insist upon this point is to overlook the very large provision which the community is making to meet these needs. There are now comparatively few districts of London where a man cannot, for the trouble of a short walk, have access to a library far more comprehensive than can be possessed by any but a very few private people. He can, if he wish, take his book home, or he can make use of comfortable and quiet reading-rooms ; he can see the daily papers and the leading periodicals, and he can have the assistance of a skilled librarian and good catalogues in following up any course of reading which he may wish to pursue.

As regards art it is true that for the most part he still confines his decorations to prints from the illustrated papers, or the shop-keepers' almanacs ; but good photographs and "reproductions" of various kinds are already within his means and will be in his rooms as soon as he develops a taste for them ; and he has every opportunity to cultivate that taste in the

museums and galleries of London, where the art treasures of the world are thrown open to him.

Gardens are small, and becoming more and more scarce as the builder becomes more economical of every scrap of ground ; but though nothing can quite make up for the little bit of land to be cultivated in one's spare moments, most would admit that the "people's parks" with their gardens and playgrounds are no bad substitute for the sodden strip of soot and brickbats into which town gardens are apt to degenerate. It is a pretty sight on Sunday mornings to see the troops of fathers and children, Sunday washed and Sunday dressed, who enjoy their great pleasure grounds while mother gets dinner at home in peace ; and to watch the throngs of young people who make use of tennis grounds and cricket fields on holidays and summer evenings, encourages us to hope that orderly sport may in time take the place even of Bank Holiday rowdyism.

For ordinary recreation, then, the London workman has a good basis to build upon ; it is true we need more parks and more libraries, but these come as the need of them comes to be felt more and more imperatively. Does this exhaust his resources of amusement ? To think so would imply a great misapprehension of the character of our people, for they are a pleasure-loving race, and above all things seek for excitement. The great theatres of the South and the East bear witness to their passion for the drama, and one of these great theatres filled for a popular performance is a sight not easily forgotten. The auditorium is so large that you see the faces at the further end through a kind of mist, and not an inch of the vast space is wasted. The first impression is of row upon row, and tier upon tier of solid humanity, pressed

close and overflowing ; presently you begin to distinguish groups—families, friends, and above all couples. Every age is represented there, from infirm old grandfathers and grandmothers down to babies of a few weeks old ; the latter in large numbers, brought for the convenience of the mothers, and frequently uplifting their voices during the performance with a total disregard to all remonstrance. Whole families have come, bringing with them baskets, bags, and bottles of refreshment, to enliven the interludes, and youths in hundreds have brought their girls for an outing. Ragged paper-boys and errand lads throng the galleries ; costers brighten the pit with their picturesque working dress of shirt-sleeves and gaudy neckcloths ; and in the boxes, which are big enough for an evening party, the local aristocracy sits dignified in Sunday best. The breathless eagerness with which the audience follows the melodrama is delightful, and its moral sentiments unimpeachable : the hero must surely feel the glow of an approving conscience, as he hears the roars of applause and commendation which follow upon his virtuous remarks, and the villain shrink with shame at the contemptuous groans and hisses showered upon his baseness. Certainly there is a sympathy between audience and actors which one never sees in a West End theatre ; the actors address themselves direct to the audience, and take comparatively little notice of each other, while the audience accepts their attention as part of the entertainment. The result is an amount of genuine and harmless enjoyment which, repeated as it is night after night for the greater part of the year, goes far to dissipate the supposed gloom of working London.

Theatres, music-halls, and “ varieties ” are the staple

entertainments ; but many and various are the amusements which the people devise for themselves. Every political club, every school, every society of every kind, nay, even every church and chapel, has its periodical outbreaks into festivity. Concerts, dances, amateur theatricals (not always of the most desirable kind) in the winter ; "bean-feasts" and outings, visits to Kew and Hampton Court and the Crystal Palace in the summer ; few indeed are the young folk who do not share in some or many of these. Even the old women, crippled with rheumatism and racked with coughs, consider themselves aggrieved if they do not get at least one outing from their mothers' meeting, though they will feel the fatigues of the long weary day for many weeks after. In our district also the Germans have instituted "Gesellschaftsvereine," which meet behind the little sausage and pickle shops, and after work hours loud and prolonged bursts of German joviality may be heard behind the green baize doors, which exclude the uninitiated public.

But the East Londoner supplements his set amusements by his extraordinary faculty for getting entertainment out of the ordinary incidents of his life. The occasions which he cannot turn into a festival are comparatively few, and the greatest festival of all is perhaps the funeral. The women especially are incorrigible in this particular form of extravagance, and one sympathises with them in so far as they regard it as the last mark of respect in their power. But mingled with this not unnatural feeling there is a great love of display, a desire to exceed the expectations of the neighbours, and a determination to make the most of the opportunity. The poverty of the family makes no difference to their eagerness, and the

little nest-egg which a man has provided to help his wife through the first months of widowhood is often lavished within a few days of his death. I have known a woman have a hearse with four horses, and a carriage and pair for her husband's funeral, and within two weeks apply to the Guardians to feed her children. If all other resources fail a collection will be made ("sending the basin round") or a "friendly lead" will be got up, the proceeds of which will go towards the funeral—an entertainment given by the friends to enable the widow to entertain them! One shrewd woman I knew who combined the "friendly lead" with the funeral feast itself; she was left quite without money, and to my astonishment as to how she managed to have a feast at all, she explained that it was "only shrimps and watercresses," and there was a plate on the table with a leaf on it under which the guests slipped their contributions. I have never yet known a woman who did not make a death in the family the occasion for new clothing all round, however desperate their poverty; except, indeed, in one instance where the poor widow borrowed a sister's weeds for the funeral day.

Their very illnesses are an unfailing source of interest to them, and it is not altogether a blunder of language which makes them say that so-and-so "enjoys very bad health." To hear or describe all the details of some accident or disease bears with it the delights of a sensational novel; and if the symptoms in which they revel are their own, all the pride of possession is added to their interest. A long fine-sounding name does much to mitigate the evils of an illness, and the woman who told me her husband was suffering from "the first assumptions

of paralysis" forgot for the moment her distress in watching the effect upon me of this new medical term. To have "the chronics" is much more common and less sensational, but then it is a permanent dignity which one need not fear to lose, a sort of retiring title.

But the pleasures of melancholy, real though they are, are after all mingled with much suffering, and are apt to fail when indulged in too freely. For an unmixed and never-failing pleasure, at any rate for the women, we must look to their shopping. Those who have burdened themselves with debt have to a great extent cut themselves off from this pleasure; they must buy how and where they can. But to all others shopping combines the practice of social intercourse with the exercise of all their intellectual faculties; the keen zest of bargaining with the interchange of friendly amenities. There are many kinds of shopping in the East End. We will exclude transactions with the tallyman; literally speaking, these are not "shopping," and they are apt to have about them too many associations with cheating and debt and secrecy to be worthy of ranking with the genuine pursuit. Least exalted in the scale is the ordinary humdrum purchase of tea, sugar, blue, &c., at the general shop; prices and qualities are too well known to admit of any gratification of the desire for cheapness, and no prestige attaches to the tiny purchases made there. So the function of buying ha'porths and pennorths of daily necessaries is for the most part delegated to the children, and who will doubt that they revel in the dignity and importance of it to the full as much as their elders? But the dulness of the general shop does not mean that the very poor are excluded from the true delights of

shopping; they taste of the excitement in its fullest form in the flaring streets where the costers have their stalls, and where vendors keep up the practice we are told of in histories of mediæval London, of attracting custom by crying their wares. To the unaccustomed a walk down one of these streets during the busy hours of the evening bewilders every sense; the uncertain flare of the kerosene over the stalls mingles with the steadier blaze of innumerable gas-jets to dazzle the eyes, the hoarse shouts of costers and shopmen rising above the chatter, laughter, and wrangling of the crowd deafen the ears; while pungent odours, amongst which fried fish is always the strongest, assail the nostrils on every hand, until we turn for relief to the quiet and darkness of some deserted side-street. But the true East Ender is in her element and completely mistress of the situation. No matter how small the sum which she has to lay out, nor how recondite the article she wishes to purchase, she will find her means and her wants both suited in this gay scene. A double row of stalls lines the street, welcome as attracting possible customers by the shopkeepers, who have enlarged their own premises for the time being by throwing out shelves and trestles, and are straining every nerve to reap the full harvest after a long dull day. The pavements are so thronged with busy bargainers as to be impassable without a great expenditure of force in pushing, and the middle of the road is occupied by a stream of potential buyers who saunter slowly along scrutinising the stalls at a safe distance from the insidious salesman. Most clamorous of all are the butchers, eager to get rid of meat which will be unsaleable to-morrow; they have cut it

up into minute portions, sixpennorths, threepennorths, nay even pennorths, and they proclaim the merits of their fine juicy cuts and slap them about in a succulent way which the poorer shoppers find irresistible; few of them will go back without a little bit of stew or fry slipped into their baskets. Next to the butcher's stands a stall which appeals to quite different desires, and is therefore not dangerous as a competitor. Here the women come for their bits of finery; it is covered with "remnants" of lace, ribbons, edgings of all sorts at astonishingly few farthings the yard, and makes a brave show with goods which are many of them "damaged lots," but some merely the old-fashioned remainders of West End stocks. Further on is a hat-stall, with innumerable hats trimmed and untrimmed, the latter strung on long strings and swaying about in dangerous proximity to the flaring lights. Ready-made clothing, new and second-hand, gives rise to a brisk trade all up and down the street; and boots of all sorts and sizes are as plentiful as blackberries on a bramble. It is here that the man with a wooden leg comes to fit his sound limb from the miscellaneous assortment of job-lots and misfits, for the "job-lotter" is not particular as to selling a pair if he can get his price for a single boot; and here, too, you may pick up cheap a variety of surgical instruments, artificial limbs, and elastic stockings.

The piles of fruit and vegetables are always a pretty sight, and enormous quantities are bought in very small amounts, especially of tomatoes, leeks, and celery ("creases" are more often cried from door to door, so as to appeal to the consumer just at the critical moment of tea-time). Towards spring the

flower and seed stalls make their appearance, and through the summer they glow with geraniums, creeping jenny, and other gay blossoms such as the Londoner loves to have about him. Nor are the more solid needs of life neglected; hardly any article of furniture is lacking, and many a home has been stocked entirely from these stalls. Carpets, chairs, tables, and sofa, bedroom crockery, and even pianos, are exposed for sale, and a speciality is made of ironmongery, new and old; one stall is covered with rusty old locks and keys, and another attracts the numerous old women who wander about seeking a lid to fit a kettle, or a pot to match a lid. Another speciality is linoleum and oilcloth, great rolls of which are spread out to catch the eyes of thrifty housewives, who will think little of carrying off a few stiff and heavy yards under their arms if it be but cheap enough to be a bargain.

And so the busy scene goes on during the few hours of the evening in which by far the greater part of the shopping is done. On Saturday nights especially the women will often be out until ten or eleven, bringing in the Sunday dinner, and thoroughly enjoying the opportunity for chaffing, bargaining, and gossiping. Nor is it only the poorer and rougher people who take advantage of the variety and cheapness of the stalls; though these predominate there are many who deal there and yet patronise the shops in the High Street as well.

For it is in the great shops in the High Street that shopping reaches its most aristocratic level; there the fashions of the East End are exhibited in all their freshness, and there business is carried on with the orthodox accessories of neat but coquettish young ladies behind the counter and obsequious shop-walkers

in front. To a casual inspection also the very goods themselves are much what we should find in West End shops ; the prevailing styles and colours are all reproduced, and it is only closer consideration which discovers the hats, dresses, and mantles to be caricatures rather than imitations of the ruling fashion. About all there is some note of exaggeration or want of harmony ; and the fact that all alike are made of poor materials badly put together is enough in itself to justify the extraordinary difference in price. This applies chiefly, of course, to the showy things displayed in the windows ; but it is difficult even for the few who wish it to get good materials and have them well made up. Something cheap and "stylish" is what the majority aim at, and what is therefore provided. Gloves, for instance, may be bought at remarkably low prices to look quite good until they are worn, then they fall to pieces ; but gloves are articles of very occasional wear in the East End, and are more for show than for use. Boots, again, one would think might be obtained of good leather and well made in a district which is a stronghold of the boot-making industry ; but the boots which sell here are cheap and showy goods, with pointed toes, high heels, and much adornment of stitching and glaze ; they cost from five to ten shillings a pair, and are worn out in as many weeks.

But to the delight of shopping which consists in getting something showy at small cost these details are small drawbacks ; indeed, the sooner your things wear out the sooner you have the joy of replacing them with the newest "novelty," and the shopkeepers of the High Street know well what class of goods will suit their customers' tastes and pockets. They know, too, how to make the shop an attractive resort, and it is amusing to trace the same spirit of confidential

familiarity which we saw prevailing between actors and audience in the theatre. The shop-walker will greet many of his customers by name as they enter, will kiss the baby, pat the little boy's head, and inquire after absent members of the family. Girls will drop in to buy a ribbon or a reel of cotton, and to continue last night's gossip or flirtation with the young man or woman behind the counter ; and a large amount of talk goes to a small purchase. But it all pays and every one is well content—except perhaps the poor needle-woman or workgirl behind the scenes at whose expense these cheap and showy goods are made and sold.

In shopping as in other matters there are traces of a strong though unwritten code of etiquette, to be observed by all who have any pretensions to gentility. For instance, it is not considered "the thing" to be carrying a parcel when you enter a shop ; it looks as if you had tried some one else first, and a woman with several purchases to make will run home and deposit such of her parcels as she cannot conceal about her person before proceeding. In return for such consideration for their feelings the shopkeepers are generally very obliging to those customers whom they know, and will often reserve for them articles of food, &c., which they think will be specially appreciated. Another delicate point is asking for change, even where you are well known, without buying something, and ludicrously inadequate purchases will be made in order to avoid the appearance of this transgression against good manners. One old woman whom I sent to get change for a sovereign brought me back nineteen shillings and elevenpence three-farthings, and one farthing's-worth of sticky sweets.

One great occasion for shopping is of course a wedding, and though this does not necessitate quite

such a comprehensive refit of the family as does a funeral, it involves a considerable outlay by the parties chiefly concerned. Sometimes white, but more commonly some very brilliant colour, is the favourite wear for the bride, and the subsequent fate of the wedding dress will be a good index to her character. If she is thrifty and handy with her needle it will reappear year after year in the shape of small frocks and coats for the frequent babies ; if she is careless and indolent it will soon find its way to the pawnshops, and will "pay the rent" and serve for holiday wear until it becomes too shabby even for the pawnbroker, and he refuses at last to advance anything more on it.

The greater cheapness of the wedding makes it less of a festival than the funeral, and comparatively little thought of. Of the light-hearted and irresponsible way in which married life is entered upon I have written at length elsewhere ; but as an occasion for much merry-making and some real enjoyment the wedding feast cannot be omitted here. "Bank-Holiday Monday" is the favourite day, and large numbers of our people spend it in getting married or watching other people get married. It involves of course its share of eating and drinking, and the combined expense of the wedding-ring, the church fees, and the bouquet will sometimes exhaust the whole capital of bride and bridegroom. But it is all in keeping with the great unconscious ruling spirit of their lives : "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die," and there is something not altogether ignoble in the spirit which seizes every opportunity for mirth in a life which less buoyant dispositions would make only grey and gloomy.

It would be an omission to close an account of the pleasures of the East End without reference to one which almost seems at times to preponderate over all others—the pleasures of drink. Apart from its deplorable consequences in empty pockets and ruined health, no unprejudiced person can deny that strong liquor is now, as it always has been, a source of pleasure, and hence a gift of the gods; it is less the fault of the drinker than of the brewer that it has ceased to be the inspirer of enthusiasm, the revealer of the poetic spirit within men, and has become a mere drug, confusing the brain and paralysing the will. To taste the horrible decoctions of the East End public-house, carefully doctored so as to increase the thirst they should assuage, is enough to make pity supersede the contempt we feel for the beery, fuddled creatures under their influence. But that even this bewildered state, when all the senses seem to fail the owner, is not without its pleasure we seem to have evidence in the amused sympathy which it arouses in the East End public. “Bless yer, ’e ain’t drunk; ’e’s only got a bit of a booze; ’ave yer, old man?” a friendly onlooker will plead in defence of a poor creature too far gone to tell the tram-conductor his destination; and a man who has left his last penny in the public-house will rarely fail to have his omnibus fare paid for him by some sympathetic fellow-passenger. Drinking and gambling are evils which we must all unite in fighting, either directly or indirectly; but the qualities which make them acceptable to the rich are fully appreciated by the poor, and it is only their terrible consequences which blind the onlookers to the fact that to a certain extent they are veritable, if poisonous, sources of pleasure.

PART II.—SUGGESTIONS FOR  
WORKERS

WORLD OF PROGRESSIVE  
WORKERS

## CHAPTER VI

### NATURAL LINKS BETWEEN RICH AND POOR

WHAT is there which rich (or, as I should prefer to say, leisured) people can do to help in a parish like this? Amongst these thousands of workers the tragedies of poverty are constantly taking place which so move the sympathies of those who realise their own comparative immunity from trouble, and the question will arise, "Cannot we do something to help?"

Perhaps it is no bad plan to begin by asking ourselves exactly what it is we want to do, and to consider what it is that we may hope to achieve.

In the first place, we must put away the idea that we can save human beings—whether poor or rich—from the natural consequences of sin and vice and idleness; I do not say that we cannot with patience make them less sinful and vicious and idle, but where the seed has been sown the crop must be reaped, and any attempt to break the connection between moral failings and their natural punishment will retard our social progress indefinitely. We have not yet got beyond the wisdom of the law that if any man will not work neither shall he eat. Nevertheless there are

hundreds of more or less well-meaning persons to whom hunger seems so far worse an evil than any depth of moral degradation, that every winter they will lavish their own and other people's money in feeding all the loafers in London, and thus giving them practical assurance that though they will not work yet they *shall* eat. If we could only make these benevolent but ill-doing people realise to how great an extent the mass of poverty in our large towns is poverty of *their* making, the work of *their* hands, we might begin to hope to cure it.

But though we cannot safely avert the consequences of moral defects, we can, in some measure, mitigate the results of misfortune, and we can prevent many evils which we could not cure. We can come to the rescue where illness and death are laying waste the home, and better still we can remove the causes of illness and death; we can cure poverty without encouraging it by attacking its causes, by substituting energy for listlessness, and knowledge for ignorance; and these are the objects which the true philanthropist will have in view throughout his work.

But this brings me to another point; we need to be quite sure that we really *want* to cure poverty, to do away with it root and branch. Unless we are working with a whole-hearted and genuine desire towards this end we shall get little satisfaction from our efforts; but those who share unreservedly in this desire are comparatively few at present. Only the other day I heard it said that it was a very doubtful policy to aim at curing poverty, for that in the absence of poverty the rich would have no one upon whom to exercise their faculty of benevolence; and I believe that this was but an outspoken expression of

a feeling which is still very prevalent, the feeling that there is something pre-ordained and right in the social dependence of one class upon another. There is the lurking fear also that if the working classes get too independent the rich may suffer for it. "It won't do," said one wise lady, "to make them too independent; they go and join trade-unions, and a friend of mine lost quite a lot of money because his workmen joined a trade-union." This is quite in the vein of the old Quarterly Reviewer, who summed up the current objections to the Owenite schemes of co-operation as "the fear that the working classes might become so independent that the unworking classes would not have sufficient control over them, and would be ultimately obliged to work for themselves."

The Lady-Bountiful spirit is another side of this same desire to perpetuate the dependence of one class upon another. I once showed an old lady, much given to good works of the Lady-Bountiful order, how some *protégés* of hers who were constantly on the verge of starvation might be placed in possession of a small but regular and sufficient income. "My dear," she said, "I don't think it is a good plan, they would get too independent; I like them to come to me when they are in difficulties and ask for what they want." And this is the spirit of much of our philanthropic work; we don't so much care that the poor should be placed beyond the need of asking; we like them to come and ask for what they need, and thus we enjoy that glow of benevolent patronage without which much of our interest in the poor would disappear.

"But the poor are like children, and must be treated as such," is another argument that has been urged

against me in favour of encouraging class dependence. To a certain extent, and especially in those parts of our large towns where the rich have played with them, it is true that the poor *are* like children; but this is largely because they are treated as such and prevented in every way from developing the manly qualities which spring from independence. Some of the evidence given at the earlier commissions on the Poor Laws well illustrates the dependent position into which a man is encouraged to drift in London. One of the clergymen of Whitechapel has described the effects of charity in his day on a working man: "Thus he proceeds from year to year with a *charity* to meet every exigency of health and sickness. The time at length arrives when, either from the number of children born to him under the kind superintendence of Lying-in, the Royal Maternity, or the Benevolent Society; or from a desire to add a legal and permanent provision to the more precarious supplies of voluntary charity, he solicits *parish relief*. . . . In this uniform alternation of voluntary and compulsory relief he draws towards the close of his mendicant existence. Before leaving the world, he might, perhaps, return thanks to the public. He has been *born for nothing*; he has been nursed for nothing; he has been clothed for nothing; he has been educated for nothing; he has been put out in the world for nothing; he has had medicine and medical attention for nothing; and he has had his children also born, nursed, clothed, fed, educated, established and physicked for nothing. . . . I wish it to be particularly understood, that in thus describing the operation of charity in any district I have been giving an *ordinary*, and not an *extraordinary* instance.

I might have included many other details ; some of them of a far more aggravated and offensive nature. I have contented myself, however, with describing the state of the district as regards charitable relief, and the extent to which that relief *may be*, and actually *is*, made to minister to improvidence and dependence."

This was written over fifty years ago, and it is still as true as it was then ; true, that is, as a description of many lives. After all these years of hard experience we have not yet learned the meaning of true charity !

"But," it is urged again, "the kindly dole is the one link between rich and poor." Those who believe this, who have never realised the deeper bond which binds all classes together in one brotherhood, can have had but shallow sympathy and no real intercourse with those whom they think they befriend. What a pitiful confession of narrow-mindedness, selfishness, and class prejudice lies behind such a view of the relations between rich and poor. And what a burlesque of charity the "kindly dole" becomes when it is really regarded as the only link. I was shopping during the last Christmas season in a large stores in one of our northern towns, and my business led me past the blanket counter. There before me lay a goodly pile ; above were snowy fleeces, of the finest and warmest texture, marked with the price only ; next came an inferior quality, harder to the touch, but bright of hue and warm to feel, and these were labelled "Hospital." At the bottom of the pile, ugly to see and harsh to touch, were blankets which might easily have been mistaken for magnified floor cloths, and these were branded "Charity." "As cold as charity" one may well say, in face of such evidence of the spirit of our

Christmas doles; is it not time to find some better expression than this for our love to our neighbour?

The true link between rich and poor, as indeed between all human beings, is not the "kindly dole" with its accompaniments of patronage on the one side and subservience on the other, which costs the giver nothing to give and helps the recipient no whit to receive; it is the sense of mutual service and respect, upon which alone sympathy and friendship can be securely based. It may be that the nearest approach we can make to such service is the money gift, that we have not time or knowledge for the direct service which is so much more valuable; but those who are privileged to help most substantially are those who have leisure to study the evils they deplore and to put their own hands to removing them. After all, the only great thing which wealth can give to its possessor is the privilege to choose his own field of work and to direct the energies of others into useful channels. It is this privilege which makes the rich man powerful for good or for evil in social life, and it is in respect of it that his responsibility is laid upon him. To think that he can fulfil this responsibility by handing over some of his spare cash to charities or beggars is an almost ludicrous misapprehension of the situation.

Let us think for a moment why it is that so much of our philanthropic work has failed. We are surrounded by institutions of every kind for wrestling with poverty and disease, but poverty and disease are still unvanquished; every winter sees millions devoted to the relief of the poor, and the poor still cry out that their hunger and cold are unrelieved; it would seem almost incredible that such large efforts could be made with so small results, if indeed we did not

know how little thought and care those efforts often represent. What would be the position of any man who carried on his business with as little care and zeal as he devotes to his charities, who used no more discrimination in investing his capital than he does in selecting the institution or person to be the recipient of his benefactions, who bestowed as little forethought to the consequences of his sales and purchases as he does to the consequences of responding to begging-letters and sensational appeals, who neglected his office work as he does his local duties, and chose his clerks as carelessly as he chooses his representatives on the Vestry and Board of Guardians? No one would wonder if such a man should fail in business, and why should we wonder if a similar negligence brings failure in the difficult and complicated relations of social work?

Here, then, I will sum up the general conditions under which the rich or leisured must work if they are to help their poorer neighbours to a better and healthier life.

1. They must have a clear idea of what can be done in the sphere of social work, and recognise that any attempt to work in defiance of great moral truths will bring its own defeat.

2. They must maintain a high ideal of what the relations between rich and poor should really be, and be very sure that they are working unselfishly and not for the gratification of class superstition.

3. They must work with the same kind of devotion and thoughtful energy at the difficult task of helping their neighbours, as they would give to the pursuit of wealth or knowledge for themselves.

Given this spirit of true helpfulness, how shall we

begin? Almost any work we may touch will succeed in the long run if we satisfy the conditions laid down, for they are the conditions of success; but the choice of work is great, and we may expect more or less satisfaction according as we take up work more or less suited to our tastes and capacities.

Perhaps it is not always realised how far effective work starts originally from some quite natural point of contact between rich and poor; grows, that is, out of relations entering into our everyday life and capable of being developed into fruitful sources of mutual helpfulness. The duties arising out of the relations between employers and employed, or between different members of a family, are striking instances of this. No one, for instance, can do for the wage-earners in any place of business what could be done for them by the man who employs them, and with whom it rests so largely to determine the conditions under which they shall work; and no one can do for the children of a family what the parents can do who are constantly with them, and have every opportunity of knowing all their needs and understanding all their weaknesses. The very closeness of the relation enables them to have the intimate knowledge and sympathy which are necessary to all real helpfulness, and without which no mere outsider can possibly take their place.

Perhaps the easiest way of realising the primary importance of these natural duties is to look at the consequences which ensue when they are neglected. Very many of our charitable institutions are nothing more than attempts to avert or mitigate those consequences. Take, for instance, the many thousands of "invalid children" in London, who are either invalided

through the ignorance and neglect of their parents, or whose neglected state in illness makes outside help imperative. An association has been formed for helping these children in various ways, chief of which is the attempt by means of visitors to supply the care and supervision which the children cannot get from their mothers. The society has on its books from three to four thousand children, and from three to four hundred visitors; but even if the visitors were adequate in number, no visitor, however devoted, can do for a crippled or ailing child what the mother could do if she had but the requisite knowledge and thoughtfulness. Perhaps the best work of the society lies in developing the careless affection of the mothers (who are seldom really unkind) into intelligent tenderness.

Another class of societies which exists mainly to remedy the neglect of individual duties are the numerous associations for befriending and rescuing young girls and women.<sup>1</sup> Of course the cure is never really adequate to the evil; no one can ever fully reclaim the lives that have drifted astray through the negligence of employers or relations. But a large proportion of the girls with whom these societies deal are, or have been, domestic servants; and the evil which it is next to impossible to cure, might often have been entirely averted by a little care and friendly sympathy from their mistresses.

Our hospitals, again, are full of the victims of carelessness and culpable neglect. Not long ago I came across two young sisters, both showing signs of incipient phthisis. Enquiry brought to light that they

<sup>1</sup> There are between eighty and ninety homes and refuges for this purpose in London alone, in addition to the larger societies, M.A.B.Y.S., G.F.S., &c.

had been put to work in an underground cellar, containing a gas-engine; there was no ventilation in the cellar, and if they opened a door or window to get a breath of fresh air the foreman would make them shut it because the draught interfered with the working of the gas-engine. All was done to remedy the evil which could be done; the factory inspector was informed, the girls were sent into the country and prevented from returning to the work; but the mischief was done, and they will probably die prematurely with some form of consumption, the great destroyer of London workers. There are in London six hospitals for consumption and diseases of the chest, dealing altogether with about fifty thousand patients (and hospital patients are only picked cases); and a very large proportion of these cases—as well as of those in other hospitals—must be due to neglect of employers or landlords in not providing sanitary conditions. No doubt our hospitals are monuments of charity; but they are also monuments of our indifference to the elementary principle that prevention is better than cure.

The employer who interests himself in the welfare of his employés will very possibly have no time left for outside "philanthropic" work, in the ordinary acceptance of the term; but how infinitely more effective his work will be than anything to be achieved by the outsider who vainly endeavours to pluck up the evils which have already taken root. We are not, however, all employers, except in a very humble way; and it may well be that we have energies for a wider field of work after conscientiously fulfilling our immediate circle of duties. How to enlarge that circle effectively then becomes the question, and it is a question deserving very serious study. It cannot be

done simply as a pastime, by taking up some piece of work intermittently, to let it drop when we tire of it and turn to something more novel. We might as well try to take up a doctor's or lawyer's work with which to amuse our leisure hours. If the object is only to pass the time, then games, or fancy work, or novel reading, are the appropriate pursuits; they will serve the purpose and do no one any harm. But if we really desire to extend our work, and to exert a helpful influence over a larger sphere, then we must aim at realising on a larger scale the conditions which enable us to be useful in our immediate circle. These are, a sympathetic understanding of the people we wish to help, and an intimate knowledge of their circumstances. I heard a striking instance not long ago of the uselessness of well-meant efforts when unaccompanied by this understanding. A lady of title who had obviously grasped the idea that prevention is better than cure, but was unaware of her own ignorance, was anxious to teach poor mothers how to bring up their children. So she travelled down to the East End to address a number of them on the subject, and to give them good advice. One of the things she pointed out was that it was better for each child to have a bed to itself, and she recommended some nice little beds costing only 18s.—only, that is, a week's wages or thereabouts. Then she went on to point out the desirability of bathing each child night and morning, and the mothers thought of the seven or eight grubby little urchins at home, and wondered when they would find time to cook breakfast, dinner, and supper, to scrub the rooms and wash the clothes, and do their mending and making, if they should add sixteen baths a day to their tasks. Further, they were

told that to encourage modesty in the children they should each be bathed in private, and for this purpose the lecturer recommended the purchase of some neat light screens, which could easily be folded out of the way, and would cost only another 15s. or so. And so she went on giving advice all excellently true, but absolutely inappropriate to the circumstances of the women she desired to help—women from whom she was, so far as intelligent sympathy was concerned, as remote as if she had never left her West End mansion.

Compare with this the helpfulness of another lady, whose intimate acquaintance with the poor and knowledge of their circumstances enabled her to give them just the advice they needed and could make use of. She, too, was anxious to save the children from some of the effects of an ignorant bringing-up, and being a doctor she knew that a chief trouble was inappropriate food. She arranged, therefore, to go round to several of the "mothers' meetings" in our district, and gave the mothers simple, clear advice as to the proper way of feeding and treating babies and young children; in this way going straight to the root of one of the principal causes of mischief amongst the poor. Practically, then, the only difference between the work of the two was knowledge of the women and their circumstances, but that constitutes the whole difference between effective and ineffective work.

Of course this knowledge which is to make us efficient is not to be obtained all at once, or out of books; only patient perseverance and study can give it; and as a first step towards gaining it we shall do best to fall into line in the ranks of those who are actually engaged in one way or another in carrying

on the work by which society is held together. We want, that is, to put ourselves in touch with the forces which are pressing on towards a better and happier humanity, to throw in our efforts towards strengthening the healthy life of the community; and in order to do this we must both understand what those forces are, and realise what the life of the community actually consists in; then we can in some measure be certain that our contribution goes in the right direction.

Does this mean that we are all to become active politicians, and promoters of political measures? Not necessarily; though probably the man who comprehends the wider issues of political life will bring a sounder judgment to whatever social work he may take in hand. But I should say that the first step is to open our eyes to the organic nature of the life which is going on just close around us, to understand how it is working, and to determine at what point we will direct our energies towards making it work better. Many of us are brought up in complete ignorance of the way in which local affairs are managed; we merely live on the surface of the organisation, and beyond accepting its conveniences, paying rates, and grumbling when the machinery proves defective—when our streets are ill-kept and our pipes frozen, or when epidemics break out—we take no interest in the common life which really makes our own individual lives possible. When this is the case there is some appropriateness in the term “parasite” as applied to the leisured class, but it is always open to us to repent, and take up our task as a living part of a living whole.

Before treating more at length some few of the

social functions we have mentioned, in which leisured people might render good service, I will say a few words about the unconscious influence exerted by the rich upon the lives of the poor. Whether they recognise it or not, and whether they wish it or not, the lives of rich people will—for good or for evil—largely mould the lives of the poor with whom they are connected, however remotely. We may see this most obviously in some of the phenomena of dress. In a town where there are both rich and poor the dress of the latter will invariably follow that of their well-to-do neighbours; the fashions spread like an epidemic from high to low, repeating themselves in poor materials with all extravagances of cut and colour accentuated, and any original appropriateness to surroundings quite lost. I still occasionally see a great wire "bustle," such as was worn some ten or twelve years ago, protruding through the rags of some poor woman whose scanty cotton gown refuses to conceal it; a pathetically ludicrous badge of her kinship with the fashionable lady who set the fashion, though they have never seen or heard of each other. The extravagances of the weak rich will always find an echo in the extravagances of the weak poor, with the difference that what is mere extravagance in the former becomes ruin to the latter. The difficulty I have already alluded to of preventing women from wasting their last resources in unserviceable crape and "black" will never disappear until a more sober example is set from above; and the gambling and betting which may be mere waste of time to a rich man is spreading far and wide among a class of people to whom it brings irreparable loss of means and position. The costliness of a fashion seems

absolutely no safeguard against its adoption in some form or another among those of the working classes who have so little character as to be purely imitative.<sup>1</sup>

Another range of considerations is opened up when we come to the ethics of buying and selling. How far the maker and seller of injurious commodities is responsible for the harm caused by their use, is a nice question in morality which no one has yet solved in general, though individuals must often have been troubled in conscience about it. The man who grows rich on the proceeds of gin-palaces where lives are wrecked by hundreds, and prides himself on his benefactions to charities and public institutions, is a moral anomaly who requires extirpating; but there are many degrees of possible harmfulness short of this extreme which are a perplexity to those who would prefer that their influence should be all for good. The buyer, too, has a responsibility not always easily seen, but none the less real. Some of the most injurious trades would be stopped or made less harmful if buyers refused to use their products; while much of the "sweating" against which we all declaim is the doing of the purchaser who will buy cheap, no matter at whose cost. If the woman who rushes round town in search of a shop where she can get her blouses  $6\frac{1}{2}d.$  cheaper than anywhere else were made to follow them back to the little room where some girl or widow is making them for  $2s. 6d.$  a dozen, there would be a check to her craze for cheapness. Twopence-halfpenny for all the sewing and button-holing and finishing, and find your own cotton out of that! A dozen and a half

<sup>1</sup> More than a hundred years ago, when tea cost many shillings the pound, a writer describing the poor, speaks of their "drunkenness, tea-drinking, and other vices."

to be done before you can pay the rent, another two dozen before you can get enough food to keep yourself, and very likely yet another two dozen if there is to be food enough for the children. "Why don't you put better work into it?" I asked a woman in my ignorance. "They don't want better work," she said; "they want them cheap, and we must do so many at the price before we can live by it, that we can't get time to put better work into it." That is the root of the mischief; "they want them cheap." The so-called "sweaters" would willingly pay better wages for better work, but how can they? They must meet the demand of their customers, and they want them cheap. Of course many of these customers are themselves poor, and must buy cheap or go without; but many others could very well afford to pay a better price for better goods, even at the sacrifice of a little variety, and these would do well to remember at whose cost they are buying cheap. For their guidance it may be laid down as an almost infallible rule that good work is fairly paid, while bad and hurried work is almost sure to mean "starvation wages" to the maker.

## CHAPTER VII

### ON GIVING MONEY

TO give money is so easy, and to give it wisely so difficult, that it will hardly be waste of time to try to find some principles to guide us in our giving.

Both the ease and the difficulty, seem to arise from the fact that money is not in itself valuable, but only for the sake of the things over which it gives the owner power. We know that it would be no charity to give a poor man foreign coins that are not current in this country, for they would give him no command over the things he needs; but it is such a simple matter to transfer shillings from our pockets into his, that we sometimes fail to ask ourselves whether we are really giving him this power. Our common—might I not say common-place?—way of considering money as representative of everything blinds us to the fact that after all the things that can be bought for money are limited both by their nature and the capacity of the buyer.

For instance, here is a man, very poor, whom we are rightly anxious to help. He is also very ill, which is indeed the reason of his poverty, but is not so immediately obvious. If the clergyman or visitor who is

interested in him were to come to us and say, "This poor fellow is terribly out of health, you are strong and healthy, for pity's sake give him some of your strength," we should smile and say that health and strength cannot be given in that simple way, that a long course of medical treatment and change of air and rest are probably necessary, and that even then the desired end may not be attained. And then the very difficulty of the matter might excite us to bestir ourselves and see whether, with great efforts, we could not succeed in bestowing this priceless boon upon our poorer brother. But suppose instead, as will more likely be the case, we are asked for money. Our heart is touched by the picture of suffering, but the real issues are concealed; the ready purse is opened, the coins transferred with less trouble than it takes to write these words, and a neat little entry made of "charity," 2*s.* 6*d.* or 5*s.* as the case may be. Then the transaction is forgotten, and the poor man is as far off as ever from attaining the health and strength which are what he needs.

In this way the easiness of giving money blinds us to the difficulties of giving really valuable gifts. Yet money represents power, and in the hands of those who know how to use power may be made to do wonderful things. Why, then, should it be difficult to use it wisely?

In the first place, it may be much more easy for us to use money wisely ourselves than to give it wisely. When we spend we are presumably spending upon things concerning which we have some knowledge—we are using our power under conditions with which we are familiar. But when we give we are not really using our power at all, we are transferring it to some

one else to use, and we are very likely quite ignorant of the conditions under which it will be applied, and therefore of the results which will follow from it. As an illustration of what I mean I will refer to an anecdote which was going the round of the papers a little while ago, which is typical of a great deal of giving. It was something as follows: A woman with a baby begged in the streets from a gentleman who happened to be a very shrewd and wealthy business man. He was struck with the miserable looks of the child, and gave the woman sixpence to get it a drink of hot milk. Watching to see what happened, he saw her go into a public-house and spend the money in spirits; so he followed her, scolded her, took her to a shop, and saw the child fed, gave her more money, and bade her go straight home. Now a little knowledge on his part of the habits of these beggars would have told him that in all probability the child was hired for the purpose of exciting compassion, and that the sole result of his action was to make it more likely that the child would be taken out and subjected to cold and misery again. Mere suspicion is not enough by which to guide our gifts of money: we need real positive knowledge, and it is this which is so difficult to get after we once pass beyond the range of our immediate experience.

When we give our time and trouble to the people we desire to help, we are necessarily brought more or less into contact with them and their conditions of life; and if we go the right way about it we shall be able to gain this experience which is so necessary. We shall see when we fail and when we succeed, and, what is still more important, we shall see *why* we fail and why we succeed. But the mere giving of money

brings with it no such salutary experience; we may go on giving all our lives, and know no more of the poor at the end than we did at the beginning, and we may never really know whether the money we have given has worked for good or for evil.

One guiding principle then in giving might be to give our money where we can also give our time and our trouble. In that way we shall be really using our power, and not merely transferring it to some one else. And though we may make mistakes at first, and use our power ignorantly and unwisely, yet we shall have put ourselves in the way to learn, and shall gradually make ourselves fit for the responsibility.

But there will be many who cannot do this, whose lives are occupied with other work, and who—just because they recognise their own want of experience—prefer to transfer to others the power which their money gives them. In doing so they are well within their rights, and may be acting most wisely. But the responsibility remains, and the question then becomes one of choosing whom we will trust to do the work we feel ourselves incapable to do. To whom shall we give our subscriptions?

Looking at the matter from an impartial point of view one would naturally expect to find that the people thus trusted were people pre-eminent for their wisdom and experience in particular departments of good work; but this does not appear to be altogether the case. To judge from the degrees of success which attend different methods of raising money for charitable objects, it is not so much experience and tried wisdom which inspire confidence in money-givers as titles and position. For instance, I have before me an invitation to subscribe to a certain

charity, and this invitation is graced with the names of two princesses, thirteen grand and other duchesses, twelve marchionesses, forty-three countesses, four viscountesses, and twenty-two ladies of lesser rank. For what purpose are these names sent to me? In themselves they are obviously an inconvenience, for they take so much room that out of some seventy lines of print only one-and-a-half can be spared to describe the object of the charity. As establishing the probable *bona fides* of the promoter of the charity they might be useful, but the names of two respectable householders would have been quite sufficient for that purpose, and would have had the advantage that the ordinary person would have felt less scruple in approaching them for information. Nor does it seem likely that such a large and miscellaneous list of ladies can have been selected on the ground of special experience in that particular department of charity; so that the confidence which they are obviously intended to inspire must be due to some other cause. A certain number—it is to be hoped a small one—are no doubt attracted by the thought of any link, however intangible, between themselves and the “great” world of titles. One lady, with a pathetic frankness which almost atoned for her smallness, begged the secretary of a charity to which she sent her subscription, not to forget to send her a ticket for the annual drawing-room meeting, since that was the only day in the year when she saw good society; and one hears of others who deliberately make their charities a means to pushing themselves into a higher circle. But leaving ulterior motives of self-advancement out of the question, let us ask ourselves from the point of view of making the best use of our money in the

interests of the poor, is there anything in this list of titles which *ought* to inspire confidence in the objects of the charity? Should we not be guided by quite different considerations in giving our money?

It would be obviously unsuitable to advocate the claims of any particular charities here, but a few warnings and suggestions may be given as applying to all alike.

With regard to the particular branch of charitable work to be supported, the would-be donor will naturally be influenced by his own tastes and feelings. Some are interested in young people, some in old; some feel their sympathies strongly drawn to crippled children, others are stirred with pity for the blind, or deaf and dumb. All these, and many other causes, are worthy of support; but in all there is bad work as well as good being done; and it is the duty of the charitable donor to discriminate between bad and good. How is this to be done?

In the first place, anything like sensational appeals at once inspires distrust in those who have experience of charities. Good work is not sensational; it is quiet, methodical, and patient, and neither expects nor advertises startling results. Look out for a business-like annual report, with a proper balance-sheet, and a sufficient statement of the work that is being done to enable you to form your own judgment upon it. The recital of horrors implies either a man with a heated imagination or one who is coolly calculating the profit to be got from harrowing your feelings, and neither of these men is fit to be your agent in good work. When the clergyman tells you his parish is the poorest and most depraved in London, remember how many others make the same plea, and

ask yourself whether he is not naturally a little prejudiced in favour of his own flock. Then go and help some one who is too hard at work to have time to scatter appeals broadcast among strangers, and let him have the pleasure of feeling that quiet devotion is not always overlooked.

It is wise, again, to avoid charities which in the recital of their merits rely upon large numbers. The numbers may be true enough in one sense, and yet utterly false in their implications. "So many hundred poor families relieved annually," you read; and your duty is to challenge the statement at once. Not the hundreds; accept those if you like, for counting is a tiresome and profitless business; but if you are being asked for money, you have a right to know just what is meant by "relieved." If you are going to support the work, you must insist on being shown just what is being done for the recipients, and whether they are worse or better off after the interference with their lives than they were before. Have they merely found "another pool to fish in"? or have they been uplifted or succoured in such a way as to be stronger against misfortune next time it comes upon them? The best workers say least about numbers, and most about the nature of the work and of the people they deal with, and where they succeed and where they fail, and why. That gives you at once the opportunity of judging whether their methods are wise, and the results such as you think desirable, whether therefore you wish to support them.

It is of course very difficult for any one to form a wise judgment on all the different kinds of philanthropy which are brought under his notice, and for this reason it would be well to concentrate one's

attention upon some particular branch. It would not, for instance, be difficult to find out what are the best methods known of dealing with the blind, and then to bestow what we can upon promoting those methods, leaving others to do the same in other departments. In this way the bad charities would be starved out, and the good ones reap a golden harvest. Some of us, again, are naturally brought into touch, either through our own experience or that of our intimate friends, with particular kinds of work, such as district nursing, and can master its history and literature without great exertions. Here again we shall be able to give so as to encourage the best work.

Another advantage of this concentration would be that the incomes of established charities would be less liable to fluctuation. Donors who are susceptible to appeals from every quarter, find themselves sooner or later obliged to retrench, and good work suffers for the sake of the latest novelty. New experiments must of course be tried in philanthropy as elsewhere, but they should only be tried by experts, and if all donors were wise, experts would have no difficulty in obtaining the comparatively small support which they will need. But that it should be possible for every emotional or crafty person who chooses to make a sensational appeal, to get money out of the charitable public, is a disgrace to common-sense.

Perhaps the most puzzling thing about charitable donors is that they are content with such a small return for their money where they might have such a large one. "But we are not seeking a return, we only want to bring a little pleasure into poorer lives." Exactly so, but why not bring a great deal of pleasure instead of a little? For instance, you contribute or

raise money among your friends, say £15, to give a good dinner or tea to the children of one of the poorer quarters of London; you go and see them at work, and delight your heart with the sight of the dear little ragamuffins having a really good "tuck in," and you ask, "How could the money have been better spent?" Why, in this way. Follow this little family of three home; they are among the poorest, and you find on talking to them that their mother is a widow, and she can't get any work. They live in a tiny room, almost without furniture, for the mother is fighting a losing battle, and bit by bit the "home" is being pawned for food; the poor woman knows no trade, she can only do odd jobs of scrubbing and cleaning, and these are almost impossible to get in a neighbourhood so poor that if people care about cleaning at all they do it themselves. Either she will have to give up the battle soon and take refuge in the workhouse, or the children will struggle up to manhood half-starved, and quite unfit to begin the battle of life on their own account. That £15 wisely applied here would have been sufficient to teach the woman a good trade, and to keep her and the children while she was learning; and *that* would have meant—not just one happy, merry meal, over in an hour and forgotten in a week—but three meals a day for 365 days in the year for that little family, with constantly improving prospects as the elder children become more and more capable of earning. There are so sadly many of these families in London, and so few people interested in them. Can it be questioned which is the better use to put the money to?

Or take it on a larger scale. The money spent upon those ephemeral joys, "free meals," amounts to

many thousands of pounds in the year. At the same time there is probably not one of our large towns in England which is not in crying need of "open spaces" and parks in which the poorer people may take their delight. In one district in London, with over 120,000 inhabitants, there is no space larger or more cheerful than a graveyard, where the children can play and men and women rest from the turmoil of the street. Yet in one day alone there was enough money spent in charitable dinners to have provided what would literally have been a "joy for ever" in that district. Day after day, year in year out, the children might have been playing there in safety, seeing what they never see—growing flowers and green grass; and day after day thousands of weary workers might have passed through a quiet oasis on their way to and from their toil, and the whole people would have had cause to bless the donor for the contribution to their health and happiness. There is surely some strange oblivion of the real power of money when donors can lose the opportunity of giving so much lasting delight for the sake of so fleeting a pleasure.

A difficult question sometimes arises as to how far subscribers to a charity should seek to influence the working of the charity. It seems quite clear that subscribers are responsible for the work which could not be carried on unless they supported it; if it is injurious it is upon them that the guilt mainly rests. So far then as they can take a real part in its government, either directly or by election of representatives, it is in every way desirable that they should have and exert their influence. But ways have been devised of substituting for the legitimate influence of the subscriber, a patronage which is by no means so desir-

able, and which is sometimes very terrible in its effects. In what are known as Voting Charities, votes are distributed amongst subscribers according to the amount of their subscriptions, and the benefits of the charity are bestowed, not upon those who are most needy or most deserving, but upon those who can collect the largest number of votes. The recipients, instead of being *selected* by those who can weigh the claims of all, are *elected* by subscribers, each of whom cares and knows only about his own particular candidate. This means, of course, that the benefits of the charity go to the most effectual canvassers, the most pathetic pleaders, and the most inveterate beggars. Such a system could hardly be expected to work well, but its indirect effects are even worse than this. It is said that there are in London about 11,200 candidates annually for 2,200 vacancies in 63 Voting Charities, and that £45,000 is spent yearly on election expenses by the 9000 unsuccessful applicants. This money, as well as that spent by the successful candidates, is sheer waste, for on any reasonable method of selection not a penny of it would be required. But the waste of money is as nothing compared with the waste of time and labour which must be undergone by candidates, and many times the sum would be profitably spent if we could thereby avert the pitiful anxiety and heartrending disappointment which awaits them time after time. For most of these applicants have to wait years, sometimes many years, before getting sufficient votes to surpass their competitors; and every year there is the same round of weary, humiliating begging, culminating in bitter disappointment, to be gone through. Think of writing, as one did, 1,600 notes to subscribers,

delivering 1,370 by hand to save the postage, and then finding that you had secured just one vote!

The one plea urged in justification of this cruel plan is, that subscribers would withdraw their support if they had not the excitement and interest of the voting. This could hardly be, if they realised what suffering they were promoting; and certainly any person of real charity would never subscribe to one of these institutions if he could find another doing the work he wished to support. Those already subscribing to them might use all their influence to get the system changed, and meanwhile could lessen the evil by the simple expedient of returning their votes to the executive committee to be used by them in favour of the most suitable candidate.

The system of "letters" is analogous in the unnecessary hardships which it inflicts upon the poor, though on a smaller scale. If a man is in urgent need of hospital treatment, and a proper recipient of the charity, he ought not to have to pass weary days in writing begging letters to strangers before he can receive it; and if a poor woman is crippled for want of a surgical instrument it is altogether wrong that she should have to spend day after day tramping through the city and making her wants known in every office where there is a subscriber to the charity in question. But this is what I have known them have to do.

In giving our money, then, let us as far as we can give within the range of our own personal experience. Where we go beyond this, let us know enough of the charities we select to be able to judge about the effects of their work, and let us use our influence to promote wisdom and humanity in their management.

## CHAPTER VIII

### AMONGST THE CHILDREN

IN whatever district we may choose to begin our work the great thing is to bear in mind that it *is* a district having an organic life, and not merely a crowd of human beings. However large or however small the parish which we select as a field, we must begin by finding out what are the local institutions, customs, and laws by which its people are ruled and influenced, and then we shall know how to deal with the individuals we may wish to help. Unless we put ourselves in touch in this way with what we may call the organic life of a district the difficulties of our work will be enormously heightened. To attempt, *e. g.*, to take some street by itself, or a certain number of houses, on the ordinary district-visitor plan, and to carry on philanthropic work of whatever kind without putting ourselves in touch with established forces, is very like trying to cure a diseased limb without knowing anything of the body to which it is attached. Not only will our influence be limited to merely external intercourse, but it will also be liable to counteractions and frustrations of many kinds of which we know nothing. On the other hand, if we

begin our work from some centre of influence already established it will at once bring us into contact with the realities in our people's lives and give us an influence which, whether great or small, will at any rate be genuine.

As a simple instance let us look first at the work of a school-manager in connection with our elementary schools. It is work which is perhaps especially appropriate to begin with, partly because of the comparative ease of obtaining an appointment and partly because of its intrinsic interest. Considering the importance of the work done by the schools, and the readiness with which sympathy and co-operation is welcomed in them, it is extraordinary that so little should be known about them. Even when some hotly-contested election has made them for the moment fashionable, many of those who get most excited over their management have never actually been inside them, and have seen nothing of what is taught and done there.

"But," it may be said, "what right have we to go into the schools? and how can we know what is being done in them unless we do go in?" No right, perhaps, unless you are prepared to work for them in some way, though I never heard of a visitor being refused admission. But in London the schools are all under the supervision of groups of managers, and it is generally an easy matter to get appointed to serve on one of these groups, as there are nearly always vacancies, and sometimes more vacancies than managers. Candidates for appointment must now be nominated by the School Board member for the division, and appointed by the Board; so that the first step will be to communicate with the divisional member.

The power of a manager under the London School Board is small, but his influence may be great. On all points involving expenditure of money the managers can only make recommendations to the higher authorities: hence there is always a tendency for their formal meetings to become lifeless and uninteresting. But in the school itself there is practically no limit to the influence which a sympathetic manager with plenty of time can exercise through teachers and scholars alike. The mere right of entering the schools at all hours and on all occasions gives the opportunity for constant little attentions and suggestions, and innumerable ways will gradually show themselves of helping the teachers in their difficult task.

For instance, the first condition of a teacher's success is, that the children should attend with some approach to regularity, but how is he to secure this? A child whose name is on the books fails to appear at school; perhaps some excuse is sent by another child, more likely not. The mechanical remedy provided is to hand the name of the defaulter to the School Board officer, whose business it is to visit and rebuke the parents; this he does, and perhaps the child appears once or twice and then stops again. The "School Board" (for the officer is popularly known by this dignified title) tries once more, and is informed that Tommy, aged seven, is beyond parental control; or that Maud, aged eight, is wanted to mind baby while the mother goes to work; or that Bob "ain't got no boots"; and the "School Board" is apt to accept the position as final, and perhaps can hardly help himself. True, he is backed by the terrors of the law, and can threaten fines; but the mothers have learned the unwillingness of magistrates to inflict fines, and their

strong sense of the domestic responsibilities of these little ones. And so Tommy and Maud and Bob defy the authority of the School Board, with the result that the average number of children attending school is one hundred and forty-six thousand below the number on the books.

But where the officer fails to enforce attendance the manager may often intervene successfully with encouragement and persuasion. A good beginning of your work as a manager will be to take the names and addresses of two or three of the worst attendants on the register; the head-master will be delighted to give these and to welcome your co-operation. Then go to see Tommy's mother, and persuade her, if you can, that Tommy at his early age can hardly be so unmanageable but that a little firmness and discipline would take effect as they do in other classes of society. Enlist Tommy himself in the cause, and explain to him that you will expect to see him in his place next time you visit the school, and after some weeks of patient persistence you will find that you have reclaimed one at least of the one hundred and forty-six thousand. From Tommy's home to Maud's will probably be but a few steps, and a woman's tact and understanding will often do more than all the weight of the School Board to help Maud's mother to arrange some plan by which the little daughter can be spared for at least a part of the day. Bootless Bob may be a more difficult task, for "no boots" is so obviously a reason why he should be in the warm schoolroom rather than in the streets, that there will almost certainly be some more serious difficulty in the background, and you may need to take skilled advice about him. But the mere fact that

some one is showing interest in the children without being paid for it is apt to touch the parents in a way which will greatly strengthen your hands, and help you to do very useful work if you persist. Moreover, the fact that you come from the schools will at once give you an introduction to the homes of the poor, and place you on a footing of frank and independent intercourse with them, very different from what you would gain as a stray benefactor, and the possible source of tickets and shillings.

As a guide to the visitor (whether manager or not) who interests himself in this work I quote the following summary of the law relating to school attendance, as it stands up to March 1895.

A child between five and thirteen years of age must attend a certified efficient school during the whole time for which such school is open. Exceptions :—

(i.) A child between eleven and thirteen years of age is not required to attend school for more than five attendances in each week, if such child can be shown to the satisfaction of the School Board to be beneficially and necessarily employed, and shall have received a certificate from one of Her Majesty's Inspectors that it has passed the *Fourth* Standard.

(ii.) A child between eleven and thirteen years of age is not required to attend school at all, if such child shall have received a certificate from one of Her Majesty's Inspectors that it has passed the *Sixth* Standard.

The following are reasonable excuses for the non-attendance of a child at school :—

(a) That the child is under efficient instruction in some other manner.

(b) That the child is prevented from attending school by sickness or any unavoidable cause.

(c) That there is no Public Elementary School open to which the child can attend within two miles.

The parent, or guardian, of any child who ought to attend, but does not attend school, is liable, upon conviction, to a

penalty not exceeding, with the costs, five shillings for each offence.

Moreover, the employer of any child who ought to attend but does not attend school, is liable to a penalty not exceeding forty shillings for each offence.

Nor is it only while the children are attending school that the manager can help them. The period just after he leaves school is often the most critical time in a boy's life (the same is hardly less true of girls); for in the interval between the loss of school discipline and the commencement of work he will often lose the greater part of what he has gained. Many schoolmasters are most helpful in advising their scholars when they leave, and recommending them to suitable work; but the manager who would watch over the boys and girls after they left school until they were fairly settled into whatever opening may be found for them, would save many a young life that tends to drift astray through the carelessness of the parents and the ignorance of the children themselves.

The elementary school provides education for the normal child, living under normal conditions with his family, and amenable to the ordinary discipline of home life. But amongst the very poor there is a large number of children whose conditions of life are so exceptional that special provision has to be made for them; the children who have either joined the criminal classes, or are in danger of doing so unless they are subjected to special care and discipline. The conditions which are held to justify such special treatment are crime, and, as conducive to crime, vagrancy, non-attendance at school, and dangerous surroundings. Vagrancy, as has been pointed out, is a reversion to the

nomadic state, and always the first step towards crime; while non-attendance at school clearly encourages vagrancy. Hence it comes that the 25,000 children whom we have to deal with in this way are offenders of very different degrees of culpability, and different kinds of treatment are necessary in handling them. The worst offenders, and those for whom provision was first made, are sent to Reformatory Schools. These schools were originally instituted as an alternative to prison, in view of the evil effect of prison life upon the very young; inmates are admitted therefore only upon conviction and sentence for some offence. Until recently no child could be sent to a Reformatory unless imprisonment preceded, and for this reason magistrates have generally preferred to make use of the Industrial Schools. There are now 50 Reformatories, all under voluntary management, and containing 4,800 inmates between 13 and 19 years of age.

The Industrial Schools are of more recent origin, and much more numerous. Out of 141, all but 16 are under voluntary management, and they contain between 16,000 and 17,000 children between the ages of 6 and 16. These schools differ technically from the Reformatories in that no child is admitted on conviction, and that the inmates are admitted and discharged at a younger age. No doubt the intention was that the Industrial School should deal with a less criminal class, but except in so far as younger children are necessarily less criminal than older ones, the distinction is not really maintained. "At a Reformatory all must have been sent on conviction of an offence punishable with imprisonment, not with mere fine; some will actually have been imprisoned. The

offence may have been serious, but it may also have been a very venial one. The child may have been before convicted, often, once, or not at all. In an Industrial School there are none who have been sent on conviction; but there is nothing to exclude children who have been previously convicted. . . . A child under 12 can be sent for an offence which he has actually committed, provided that he has not been previously convicted of theft or felony, and that the magistrate does not proceed to conviction for the particular offence with which the child stands charged before him. This offence is usually very slight, but it may be grave.”<sup>1</sup> Many of the children again are committed to these schools merely for “petty delinquencies or truancies of their own, or faults of their parents, and very often little more than poverty.” Thus there are in our Industrial Schools between 17,000 and 18,000 children, of very different classes and characters, and unclassified even as to age. It is for this reason that the charitable worker should think twice before taking steps to get a child sent to an Industrial School. It is very easy to get a magistrate to commit, and it *may* be the best thing to do: on the other hand, it should be remembered that the child may have to mix in the school with others of very much worse character than himself, while he will be deprived of the individual care which might enable him to withstand evil influences. That the number of children committed at present is excessive there is no doubt, nor is it to be wondered at “when it is borne in mind what large and various classes have an interest in procuring children to be sent to these schools, and how easy it is for them to succeed in doing so, chiefly

<sup>1</sup> Report of Reformatory and Industrial Schools Committee.

at the expense of the Treasury. In the first place there are the parents; many of whom no doubt unwillingly see their children taken from them, but there are also many with whom it is not so. A parent may have an object in getting rid of his child, as when there is a stepmother in the case, or he himself is going to marry again, or is going to travel, or cannot from his business look after his child or send him to school; or he may simply desire to relieve himself of the expense of maintaining his child. He feels little or no shame in letting his child be at an Industrial School, for he sees many other parents doing the same, and, as the law now stands, if he is a poor man he may almost count upon immunity from being called upon to contribute. Accordingly, though he rarely goes the length of tempting the child to commit an act of dishonesty, or of himself charging it with an offence, he allows it to beg, or to wander, or to keep any company in the street, or to play truant from school, and so become qualified for an Industrial School, and readily listens to any proposals from a School Board or a philanthropist that his child should be sent there, and there is no difficulty in finding a school ready to receive him. When a parent's self-respect is once broken down, he has no more compunction. Almost in every Industrial School there are brothers or sisters in the school, or boys or girls in the school having brothers or sisters at other schools, sent at the same time or at different times; on board the *Mars*, when we examined the superintendent, there were thirteen pairs of brothers, and we may refer to one instance, at Leeds, where a father has had seven children successively committed."<sup>1</sup> The "offences" for which these

<sup>1</sup> Report of Reformatory and Industrial Schools Committee.

children were committed were:—Michael, sleeping out; Bridget, vagrancy; James and Patrick, begging; John and Andrew, habitually wandering; and Thomas, playing truant. Altogether, and up to 1895, the family cost the community about £500.

But it is not only for the sake of economy, nor for preserving the parent's responsibility, that greater discretion should be exercised in this matter. The children themselves are liable to suffer, not only from possible intercourse with children more depraved than themselves, but also from the disadvantages inseparable from institution life. Mr. Morrison, whose experience entitles him to speak with authority, and who maintains that the work of the schools is important and beneficial, urges that "it is as a rule inadvisable to commit children to corrective institutions who are living under normal parental conditions, even if these children have become offenders against the criminal law. The discipline of a somewhat inferior home is always better than the discipline of an institution, and the efforts of parental solicitude are much more likely to be effectual in the ultimate reclamation of a wayward child than any kind of State machinery."<sup>1</sup>

But granting that there are a certain number of children whom it is undoubtedly desirable to send to these schools, the work of the friend should not come to an end when the child is safe within the walls of the school. The really critical time is still to come, when the child must leave the school, and find a new place in the outside world. This it may do under great disadvantages. Institution life does not tend to develop resource and self-reliance, and the natural support of the family is probably wanting, so that to

<sup>1</sup> Juvenile Offenders, p. 289.

plunge such a child into real life may be very like transplanting a specially weakly plant straight from the shelter of a hot-house into the open air. "New to liberty, quite inexperienced of the world, without friends of his own making, and often having a bad home, he is apt to become despondent or to make mistakes, or otherwise fall into difficulties." There is great scope for useful work in the "after-care" of these children! As a rule situations are found for them, and they are reported on from time to time, but what they need is some one to see them constantly, to whom they can turn for advice in difficulties, and whom they can regard as a real friend.

The Truant School, as its name implies, is for those children whose only offence is persistent truancy from school. There are fifteen of these schools, all of them for boys, and the object is by a brief detention under more or less disagreeable conditions, to discipline the boys into better ways. Unfortunately the mistake seems to have been made of confusing discipline with punishment, and the treatment in some of the schools at least seems unduly harsh. For instance, "in some schools the custom is, or was, for every boy, on readmission, to be flogged," and cells and solitary confinement appear to be part of the "discipline." Even under the milder *régime* of the London schools, "on the first re-admission, the half-hour for play and talking is taken away for a fortnight, during which period therefore the boy has no play and no freedom to talk at any hour of the day. On the second re-admission the complete deprivation of play and free talking lasts for a month, and the Saturday half-holiday is taken away as well; and on the third or any subsequent re-admission the complete deprivation of play or free talking is

enforced throughout the whole of the twenty weeks." It is perhaps only a natural reaction against such repression that drives the boys, after their detention is over, to play harder than ever, instead of attending school, and we need not be surprised that these schools "have had a certain degree of success, but no more."

A much more successful attempt to reclaim truants has been made by the Day Industrial Schools; of which however there are as yet only twenty-three, dealing with between 3000 and 4000 children. In these schools the children are fed, washed, cleaned, and the day is spent in school work, the simpler kinds of industrial training, manual drill, and play. The parents are made to contribute to their support. Government makes a grant, and the balance is found by the managers. Thus "parental responsibility is enforced; the home tie is maintained; the child, whilst subjected to so much discipline as is necessary, is not deprived of its liberty, and is treated on a system of kindness." Schools of this class clearly form an excellent field of work for managers capable of influencing an exceptionally difficult class of children.

Special provision is also made for the suitable instruction of blind and deaf children. By the Elementary Education Act, 1893, "The powers formerly vested in the Guardians of the Poor, for the maintenance and education of blind and deaf children, have been withdrawn, and it has become the duty of the school authority to provide facilities for obtaining education, including, if necessary, boarding and clothing, in cases where no school is available near the child's home." The London School Board have gone beyond their legal obligations by providing

special instruction for "deaf, dumb, blind, and physically or mentally defective children," and in all these special branches of education the efforts of the teachers can be greatly aided and supplemented by the voluntary co-operation of the managers. Take, for instance, one of the centres where the physically or mentally defective children are gathered together for special care and management. The reason for separating them from the normal scholars is to insure their having more individual attention, and for this purpose it is directed that no teacher shall have more than thirty children under her care; but even with this precaution it is a strenuous task which she undertakes. The first sight of a class of these children is most pitiful; every child is in some way defective, and some of them, with their vacant eyes and open mouths, are almost repulsive until one gets to know them and to find how they will respond to kindness and patience. But what wonderful patience the teacher needs! every little lesson, the simplest movement or sound, must be repeated over and over again before the clouded intellect or feeble body can grasp its significance and repeat it accurately. And at the end of it all what is achieved? What is to become of these little waifs, so terribly handicapped in the race of life? Some, no doubt, will repay the care bestowed upon them, with awakened intelligence, and will even take their place among other children in the ordinary schools; and all will gain a certain amount of understanding and self-control which will be invaluable to them whatever their lot may be. But for the majority the start into life will be made very difficult by their deficiencies, and it is here that the manager who has learned to know them and their

needs can come to the rescue. Jemmy Clarke, for instance, is now twelve years old; he has something wrong with his back, and will never be able to do heavy work. If he is to have any chance of a happy useful life when he grows up he must learn some skilled trade needing little bodily exertion, but how is he to do that? The school can only look after his general education, and his parents have never even thought of teaching him anything; even if they had, what could they do for him? There are four little ones younger than he is, and father and mother are busy all day long. Jemmy must take his chance with the rest, if it were not for the school-manager who arranges for him to go to a special home for teaching crippled boys remunerative work. When the advantages are explained to them the parents are glad enough to avail themselves of them, and even to pay a small sum towards Jemmy's maintenance in the home; the rest of the money will have to be obtained from charitable persons and institutions. The important thing is that some one was there to make the plan and carry it through; otherwise Jemmy might have shuffled through life a helpless, useless cripple.

It has been estimated that the number of these children who are crippled, maimed or deformed, is (in London) between two and three thousand; and this estimate is probably rather below than above the actual number. Nearly one thousand are entered in the School Board returns as "permanently disabled," and of these something over eight hundred never attend school. Many might be got into the schools, especially now that the special classes have been instituted, if only there were some one to take the trouble of making special arrangements and seeing that they were carried

out. For instance, here is the case of Georgie B., a little fellow who is not quite right in his head—"simple" as the neighbours say. His mother drinks and has drunk herself into an asylum once or twice. Six children run the streets neglected, of whom Annie, aged thirteen, is the eldest. Annie has ideas of responsibility towards George, but her chief way of expressing them is by hitting him over the head with a chunk of wood, which clearly does not tend to improve his mental faculties. He gets plenty of soup tickets and free dinners and other unconsidered trifles from injudicious district visitors and missionaries, but they don't improve his position much. What is really needed is for the school-manager, or any other wise person with a knowledge of the circumstances, to find out where the nearest "special classes" are held, and arrange for him to attend. There he would be beyond the reach of Annie's sisterly admonitions, at any rate for a considerable part of the day, and would have every chance of developing intelligence; while Annie herself might be gradually won over to more judicious methods.

But in hundreds of cases the difficulty of getting education, even for those children who are only physically disabled, is far greater than in the case of Georgie B. I quote from a report on crippled children issued in 1893:—

"We have then a large number of crippled children of whom many get no schooling. The difficulty of giving a school education in the more serious cases of disablement is frequently very great, often insuperable. In many instances space has to be provided for a wheel-chair or perambulator. The child must be taken to and fro, occasionally lifted perhaps. The

teaching must be given on the ground floor, for stairs cannot be mounted. The selection of class-rooms is thus limited. The child cannot follow his class-mates, as removals are made to new classes in new class-rooms, unless the rooms be on the ground floor. And with all these disadvantages, which make education at an ordinary school well-nigh impossible, there are the many lessons which the child, lying down, and required, perhaps, to remain motionless on his back, can only follow under the teacher's special supervision." <sup>1</sup>

This difficulty of carrying on the education of crippled children in the ordinary classes has already given rise to several attempts on the part of school-managers and others, working in their private capacity, to organise small classes in which the special needs of each child can be studied, and there is room for much good work in this direction. The little cripples do not suffer from lack of attention, at any rate in London; the pitifulness of their position is too obvious to be overlooked. But much of the kindness lavished upon them is injudicious, and even cruel. They are taken for long and wearisome days into the country, or down to the seaside, which would tire even a healthy child; and too often they are exhibited to attract alms from the careless sympathy of the bystander. What they need is the constant unwearying attention and care which will persevere day after day, not only in giving them relief from pain, but in developing mental resources which may to some extent compensate them for physical deficiencies. The necessity of this has been recognised in one or two of the smaller hospitals for crippled children

<sup>1</sup> *The Epileptic and Crippled* (Swan Sonnenschein and Co.), p. 110.

where visitors have been found to carry on the education of the little patients with most successful results.

In addition to the difficulty of dealing with the children *in* the school, there is the difficulty of getting them *to* the school. Even where the parents are willing to take a little extra trouble, they are not always able to carry the child, or to provide a wheelchair for its conveyance. In one of the private attempts referred to, this difficulty has been got over by organising a van which starts on its rounds an hour or so before school time to collect the little scholars, and they are conveyed home again in the same way when school is over. It is possible that when the success of the method has been proved the educational authorities will themselves make similar provision; meanwhile very much could be done by private effort to supplement the work of the schools.

It may be said that work of this sort does not, strictly speaking, belong to a manager's duties; but it grows very naturally out of them. Perhaps one characteristic of good work is that it always does tend to develop under our hands in all directions; at whatever point you touch the real needs of the people it leads you deeper and deeper into their lives, in a way never realised by the mere giver of doles. But those who prefer to concentrate their attention upon the schools themselves will find enough to do. There are libraries and clubs and games to be encouraged; expeditions into the country and visits to "places of interest" to be organised, in addition to the supervision of the ordinary routine; and if the day schools do not occupy all spare time the evening schools are

still more in need of help and encouragement. The managers for these are appointed from the managers of the day schools; and volunteers for work which is apt to fall at inconvenient times, are especially appreciated.

There has been a tendency of late years to treat the schools as convenient centres of relief; and managers as well as teachers may find themselves being overwhelmed in the attempt to provide boots, clothing, and free meals on a wholesale scale. I believe this to be a serious mistake. For purposes of teaching children can, for the most part, be conveniently treated in large numbers, and apart from their families; but for other purposes, and especially for purposes of charity, they cannot. The needs and circumstances of every child differ from those of every other child, and no help is real which is not adapted to those needs. The school affords a very convenient *field of selection* wherein to pick out those children who seem in need of help; but having done this the manager should follow them to their homes, and there find out the reason why the children look starved, or are ill-clad and badly shod. Consultation with the mother, or with the doctor if needs be, will often show that a child is pale and thin, not from want of food, but from some definite complaint which no amount of soup or free dinners will cure, but which only needs some kind of treatment in hospital or home easily procurable by the experienced manager. And in other cases a visit to the home may reveal a state of things which makes it absolutely useless to give boots or clothing, until the conditions can be altered. Many a pair of boots finds its way to the pawnshop within a few days of leaving the school; and then the

natural wish of the parents to conceal their delinquency leads to the removal of the child to another school, where very likely the same process is repeated.<sup>1</sup> "One by one" is not only the safest way of helping, *it is the only possible way of ensuring that any real good is done.*

<sup>1</sup> It is stated by one head-teacher that the migration in his school is 56 per cent. in the year.

## CHAPTER IX

### LOCAL RESPONSIBILITIES

THE work of a school-manager is in many ways the most hopeful and cheerful we can undertake. It is full of promise for the future, for in it we are dealing with young lives as yet unspoiled which our efforts may make happier and more useful to the very end. To a large extent the work of a Guardian of the Poor is the very reverse of this. Under his care come the failures ; those who have tried to carry out their own lives and have failed in the attempt ; and his task is to take charge of these broken lives in such a way as may be most beneficial to the community. There is perhaps no work which calls so urgently for strength of character to persevere in face of many disappointments, firm principle to withstand importunity, and liberal education to see wider issues than those immediately apparent ; and none in which the workers are so liable to be misunderstood by the inexperienced and ignorant outsider. But to those who do understand, the results of consistency and wisdom on the part of the Guardians manifest themselves clearly and surely in the decrease of distress and the growth of civic virtues. The recognition of the importance of

the Guardian's function is spreading, but it is still true that it is mainly left—at any rate in our large towns—to persons of little education and primitive morality, who place caprice before principle and like to indulge a pseudo-generosity at the expense of the rate-payer. The type of the commonplace Guardian is still one who will explain his "policy" by saying that he would rather help ninety-nine impostors than neglect one deserving case; oblivious alike of all wider issues involved in helping impostors, and of the obvious fact that the proper course is to do neither the one nor the other.

Of the general principles of the work of the Poor Law Guardians we have already spoken, and it only remains to mention a little more in detail some of the particular branches to which he may turn his attention.

In the first place it will rest with him and with his colleagues to determine upon the right policy to pursue in relieving those who apply for help. The end to be aimed at by the Guardians is already laid down by law; it is to relieve all destitute persons belonging to the district; but considerable discretion is left to the Guardians as to how they will attain that end. Broadly speaking there are two policies, known as indoor and outdoor relief; the first insists that except in very special cases the recipients of relief shall obtain it within the walls of some institution, while the second favours the giving of relief at the applicant's home. The arguments urged in favour of the latter are that it is cheaper to give a man *2s. 6d.* or *3s.* in his own home than to provide for him altogether in an institution, and that it is more humane, as being what he prefers. Against these arguments the advocates of indoor relief contend that it is not cheaper to give relief in a form which encourages

others to apply for it who would not otherwise do so; and that to give inadequate relief outside on the chance of its being supplemented from other sources is less humane than to insist upon the recipient entering an institution where he can be properly cared for. They further urge that it is both unwise and unjust to give relief in such a form that the position of the pauper shall be preferable to that of the independent worker, and that the only sure test of a man's inability to support himself is to attach certain conditions to the granting of relief.

To estimate fairly the arguments on each side is a matter requiring both study and experience; there is perhaps no Board of Guardians which practises either policy exclusively, but most have a decided bent towards one or the other. But the first duty of a Guardian is to study the problem carefully and as a whole, and to choose the policy which seems to afford the most adequate solution. This will give him the best possible instrument in his work; *a principle of action*, by which he will be guided in the daily routine of deciding to whom, and in what form, Poor Law Relief is to be given.

The Poor Law Guardian will also have under his charge the so-called "children of the State," who belong to his district; the destitute children who, for one reason or another, are abandoned to the public to nurture and educate. Upon the way in which this branch of the work is carried out largely depends the welfare of the next generation, and no one need desire a wider or more important field for their energies than in watching over, literally "guarding," these poor little waifs and strays. Here again, however, controversy has arisen as to the best way of providing

for the children, and the Guardians will have to determine upon the best policy to be pursued. On one point all are probably agreed—*i. e.* that the children should be entirely separated from workhouse surroundings; beyond that point the battle rages between the respective advantages of “Boarding-out,” “Cottage-homes,” and “Schools.” Before deciding which system to support it will be necessary to give very careful consideration to the matter, and to study the amount of success attained under the various plans, if possible by visiting the institutions themselves. It will then be found that each has its own advantages and disadvantages, and that all alike depend mainly upon the care and vigilance with which they are carried out. It will be found, for instance, that “boarding-out”—*i. e.* boarding the children with families who are to bring them up as their own—while being obviously a natural and healthy way of providing for the children, can only be used for those who are quite healthy in mind and body, and whose parents are not likely to be constantly claiming them; and the number of children under the care of the Guardians who satisfy these conditions is a limited one. Again, it will be found that it is not easy to find a large number of suitable families ready to take the children under proper inspection; and it must be remembered that the position of a child placed amongst strangers without proper supervision may be exceptionally hard and helpless. Terrible instances of neglect and cruelty have come to light when this supervision has been inadequate.

The district schools, again, which were originally devised to secure efficient education at a time when the elementary education of the country was very

defective, have tended recently to grow too large. In management and efficiency many of them have been brought to great perfection, and they can show excellent results in the children they have educated and started in the world. But the gathering together of children in very large numbers gives rise to difficulties which not even the best management can quite overcome, and there is a very general feeling that for those children who cannot wisely be boarded out a system of smaller schools or cottage-homes is more satisfactory.

It has been proposed that the whole care of these children should be taken out of the Guardians' hands and placed under a different authority; but the difficulties of having parents managed by one body and children by another are so obvious to all who have practical experience, that the proposal will probably not be carried out. For the present, at any rate, it rests with the Guardians to provide the most suitable arrangements: arrangements, that is, under which the children will be most kindly treated and best fitted for their after life.

Nor should the care of the children cease as soon as they leave school. From sixteen to twenty is the time of life when young people are perhaps most in need of help and sympathy, and these children are likely to be particularly friendless unless the Guardians can make some special arrangement for them. The actual "befriending" may perhaps best be done by volunteers, ladies or gentlemen, who will undertake to visit and keep in touch with each child as it leaves school. This is already done for every girl who leaves the London Poor Law Schools (see p. 196), but it needs doing all over the country, and for the boys almost as much as the girls.

Then, again, there are the inhabitants of the workhouse; the old people who have drifted there in their loneliness, and are eagerly responsive to a friendly chat or thoughtful consideration of any kind; and the young, whose lives have been suddenly overthrown by misfortune, folly, or wrong-doing, and some few, at least, of whom need only timely help to resume their place in the healthy life of the community. No one has such good opportunities as the Guardian for selecting hopeful cases from amongst the stream of hopeless ones which pass before him, and bringing to them the particular kind of help they need. Often he will be disappointed, especially while inexperienced, but the successes, however few, will far more than compensate for the failures. For instance, I know two young men who are now doing well, one as a skilled artisan, the other as a typewriter and shorthand clerk. Both of them were stranded in the workhouse as lads of about sixteen, on account of physical infirmities, and would have been there still, but for a Guardian of energy and resource who saw them on his visits to the wards, and obtained skilled surgical treatment for one, and a few months' training and teaching for the other. The same Guardian was instrumental in saving a young woman who had been obliged to go into the workhouse on the death of her husband just before the birth of a child. She had three other children, and knew no trade whereby to support them, but she seemed willing to work, and eager to leave the house. He referred her case to the local committee of the Charity Organisation Society; she was taken out of the house and kept for several months while being taught laundry work, and now she is comfortably settled with two of her children in a private laundry in the country.

The infirmary, where the sick and dying are nursed and treated by the parish authorities, affords another field for the Guardians' energies and vigilance. In no part of the work is there more need for kindly judgment, to discriminate between real hardships and merely capricious complaints. Every needful comfort should be bestowed upon the poor, broken-down creatures who take refuge here, and above all they should be tended by trained nurses in place of the inefficient pauper attendant. But many complaints will be made of an utterly frivolous nature, and it needs considerable tact to disregard them kindly. For instance, whatever pains are taken to secure good, wholesome food, there are sure to be some who find it not to their taste; one man, *e. g.*, "discharged" himself because the butter was served with the bread and not spread upon it. Nearly all miss the strong, tasty food to which they are accustomed, and many are the devices to which their friends will resort to smuggle in a "relish"; one woman going so far as to conceal a red herring in her bonnet. But even frivolous complaints are useful if they serve to maintain a proper care on the part of the Guardians as to the important task of feeding their large family.

The "housekeeping" for these various institutions is an onerous task, and one in which experienced women are much needed. And even more urgently is their help required in dealing with the women and children who come under the Guardians' care. The number of women Guardians is increasing fast, and it is desirable that many more should qualify for the work; perhaps the danger at present is the tendency to regard any woman as suitable simply because she is a woman.

The really discouraging part of the Guardians' work is in dealing with the large class of chronic paupers; the vagrants and "ins and outs." The latter are the thriftless, shiftless ne'er-do-weels, who regard the workhouse in the light of an hotel, and prey like ugly parasites upon the community. Some of these will be "in and out" fifty or a hundred times in the course of the year, while others will come in periodically when the weather gets cold, or other resources fail them for a time. One man I knew, a skilled painter, who would earn 30s. a week all through the busy season, spend every penny as he went along, and retire to the workhouse for six or eight weeks every winter, to be kept at the expense of his more provident neighbours. It is with this class that the greatest firmness and strictness is needed if it is not to increase upon our hands until it becomes unmanageable.

This is a very brief sketch of the work of a Guardian; and for further information the reader is referred to the list of books later on. To go into technical details would require a volume three or four times the size of this one, and the knowledge of a lawyer.

The post of Guardian is an elective one, and without considerable local influence it is not always easy to get elected. In a district which has been apathetic for some time, and where the same set of Guardians has been returned time after time, almost any one may capture a seat who will be energetic in exciting interest; the number of voters may be easily doubled in such a district by a vigorous canvass, simply because more than half the people have never thought it worth while to vote before. In other places the election will run on political lines, and in others again

questions of policy—such as out-relief and anti-vaccination—or of personal considerations will rule the day. I have even been canvassed on behalf of a corpulent pork-butcher, on the ground that “he’s such an invalid, poor gentleman; he has to be lifted in and out of his cab.”

Both for those who wish to be Guardians and for those whose duty it is to elect, the following suggestions, taken from a circular issued in 1894, will be useful :—

“The plural vote has disappeared. The *ex-officios* will officiate no longer. The parochial elector will in future take the place of the rate-payer. The lodger who has the Parliamentary vote can vote also for the Poor Law Guardians. The franchise of women will be extended. The vote will be by ballot. Any twelve months’ resident of full age, man or woman, can stand for election.

“Thus the whole field is open. Almost all can elect; almost any can be elected. As are the electors, so will be the elected. How should the electors choose? For what duties must a candidate prove himself suitable?

“Guardians of the Poor have to perform duties of two kinds.

“One is to decide, in regard to applications for relief, with knowledge, impartiality, and discretion.

“The other is to manage large institutions, with as great carefulness and insight as they would conduct private affairs on which their own livelihood depended. For this purpose they must have a knowledge of business and of that skilful housekeeping that can alone prevent waste, mischief, and failure in institutional life.

“Candidates who have no record of suitability for one or other of these duties should not be elected.

“A good heart and sympathy are not by themselves sufficient: for the work of poor relief, special aptitudes and abilities are also necessary.”

For those who are not able to undertake the arduous duties of a Guardian there is much which may be done to supplement them. For instance, every Board of Guardians now has the power to appoint a Visiting Committee of Ladies, to assist them by visiting and supervising the various institutions, and to report and recommend to the Board. The Committee is advisory only, but its influence should be considerable; and the right to visit would give many opportunities of private helpfulness to inmates. There is a large field of work to be done by private charity, which it is either illegal or unadvisable for Guardians to do officially, and out of public moneys. It would constantly happen that such visitors would come across cases in which liberal and well-planned help would make the recipient independent, as in the case of the two lads which I have quoted.

The Guardians' work may be supplemented and relieved in similar ways by entirely outside workers, if these will place themselves in communication, either with some of the Guardians or with some of their officials. The Clerk to the Guardians is often a very able man, well versed in all the powers of the Guardians and the details of the Poor Law, whose knowledge gives him great influence at the Board. His advice will be invaluable to the charitable worker in difficult cases, and he will generally welcome intelligent co-operation in carrying out any

scheme of work. The Relieving Officers, again, are men of experience, knowing the district and the people, and often able to give much useful information, and no one should attempt the difficult task of giving relief without first seeking out some means of communication with them.

As an instance of the sort of work which may be done where there is this co-operation I may quote the case of E.R., a young widow who was left with three small children to support; she had a sewing-machine with which she earned 2*s.* 3*d.* a week, and the Guardians granted out-relief to the extent of 2*s.* 4½*d.* Out of this there was 2*s.* 6*d.* rent to pay; the children were half-starved, and the mother despondent and careless. She had no inducement to work hard, for if she increased her income by a few shillings the out-relief would be stopped, and the family seemed likely to relapse into hopeless pauperism. One of the Guardians, however, seeing a chance of better things, referred the case to a committee of private people carrying on charitable work in the district, and they undertook to deal with it on condition that the out-relief should be stopped. Every effort was made to put the poor woman in the way of better work, and an adequate allowance of from 10*s.* to 15*s.* a week was made to support the family meanwhile. At the end of two weeks it was found from the Relieving Officer that she had again applied for and received out-relief. Enquiries were made, and excuses plentiful; they all came to this, that she did not like looking for work, and one of the children was ailing. The committee communicated with the Guardians, and they undertook that if the woman applied again she should be told that no help could be given by them unless she

went into the workhouse. This she was unwilling to do, so the committee resumed their help, the ailing child was sent to a home, the others to a day nursery, and the woman was seen every day and incited to fresh exertions. In less than a week she found herself regular employment, and was soon earning more than four times as much as the out-relief which she so much coveted.

There are very many cases similar to this in which the Guardians can do nothing effective, and which are far more appropriate to the energy and resources of private workers. Unfortunately Guardians and private charity too often work quite independently of each other, and without any mutual knowledge of what is being done. In the bygone days when all paupers wore a distinctive badge, there was less chance of deception; but what we need is not merely to avoid deception, desirable as this is; we want the strength and unity of purpose, which nothing but mutual knowledge can give.

An interesting scheme of cheering the lives of the old people in the workhouse was devised in 1882, which is known as the Brabazon Employment Scheme. It has for its object "to bring interest and change into the lives of *non-able-bodied* paupers by teaching them light and amusing employments—painting, carving, knitting, &c." Those who are strong are employed in carrying on the work of the institution, but many who are too infirm to do this find the time hang very heavily on their hands, and are pleased with anything which breaks the dull monotony of the days. One old man in our workhouse is an enthusiastic tinker, and is always happy in patching up the pans and kettles; he will even go so far when

he is short of work as to make a new pan to fit an old lid. But few have his resources, and to those who have not the ladies who carry on the work of the Brabazon Scheme must be very welcome friends.<sup>1</sup>

One of the most important branches of work in connection with the Poor Law is that done by the Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants, familiarly known by the picturesque name of "Mabys." It was originated in 1874 by Mrs. Nassau Senior, for the purpose of helping the young girls who were placed out in service from the Poor Law Schools, many of whom used to lose their situations and drift into the workhouse for want of a friend to whom to turn in times of difficulty. The plan was that, as each girl left the schools and passed into her situation, she should be placed under the care of a lady who should visit her and watch over her when in work, and help her to find another situation when she left. The same help is now accorded to the whole class of little "generals" between the ages of thirteen and twenty, whether coming from the workhouse schools or not; and the results are most satisfactory. The life of a "general" is a hard one at best, and it may be very hard; when the little slavey has no outside friend to whom she can turn the position may become a hopeless one. To what an extent the help is appreciated may be judged from the fact that at the end of last year the Association had under its care no fewer than 7,818 "young servants," and was helped by 974 ladies engaged in "actively befriending young servants." There are also twenty-two Homes working in con-

<sup>1</sup> The address of the organising secretary is 33, Lancaster Park, Richmond, Surrey.

nection with the Association, in which the girls are trained when too uncouth for service, and lodged when out of a place. And there are thirty free registry offices in different parts of London, where any girl can go for help in finding a respectable place. Work such as this requires much help, both in time and money, and ladies wishing to engage in the work are requested to communicate with the Hon. Secretary of the Branch in their district, or with the Secretary (Central Office), 18, Buckingham Street, Strand. (The work of the "Mabys" is confined to London, but there are similar societies at work all over the country, notably the Girls' Friendly Society, Central Office, 2, Albany Buildings, 39, Victoria Street, S.W.)

I have already spoken of the importance of the work of sanitation and sanitary inspection, and will only emphasise it here, and make a few suggestions as to how it can be helped by intelligent people. It is mainly carried on at present by paid officials working under the direction of voluntary boards, and is capable of being rendered far more efficient by the co-operation of private people with a disinterested understanding of the matter. In one large town a "Ladies' Health Society" has been formed, which assists the work of the medical officer by organising a systematic visitation of the poorer districts of the town for the purpose of discovering and reporting upon sanitary defects. To illustrate the work they are doing I quote from the last quarterly return of the Medical Officer of Health for Manchester:—"The Female District Visitors, under the joint supervision of the Ladies' Health Society, the Ladies' Society for Visiting the Jewish Poor, and the Medical Officer of

Health, have paid 10,097 'house to house' visits to poor people during the recently ended quarter; they have made 647 special enquiries on behalf of the Medical Officer of Health in cases of death, and have also made to him 1,005 special reports on sanitary defects which have been detected in the course of their daily rounds. . . . Out of every hundred houses visited the Female Health Visitors found nine houses dilapidated, and thirteen dirty; in nineteen cases a generally improved condition of the houses was noted as compared with former experiences; in eighteen houses sickness of greater or less intensity was found to be present; whilst in only '3 per cent. of the houses more or less overcrowding was detected."

Of course the real success of such work depends upon the extent to which the visitors can enlist the co-operation both of the sanitary authorities and of the people themselves. They can hardly fail to do so to some extent, and "health societies" might advantageously be formed in every town, and every district of every town, in England. A similar work is carried on in London by the Mansion House Council on the Dwellings of the Poor, which supplements the efforts of the local authorities both by voluntary visitors and by paid officials. Its offices are at 31, Imperial Buildings, Ludgate Circus, E.C.

But even apart from any organised system such as these, much can be done by quietly and persistently reporting to the sanitary inspector or medical officer at the Vestry offices upon any defect or overcrowding which we may come across in our work. The Englishman is a noted grumbler, but he too often fails to make his grumbling effective by not addressing it to the proper quarter.

## CHAPTER X

### CHARITY

TO many minds, and those often of great sympathies, the preventive work we have been describing is less attractive than that of relieving actual distress—what is generally known as charitable work. For one thing, if you *can* succeed in removing distress the result is much more obvious than the seemingly negative result of preventing it; and for another thing, it always seems easier and pleasanter to distribute money than to acquire expert knowledge in any branch of social work. But we are beginning to learn that to distribute money is not necessarily to relieve distress, that indeed it may even increase it; and also that true charity is one of the most difficult branches of work which can be undertaken, requiring, if it is to be thorough, the knowledge and experience of the experts in all other branches. Of course this knowledge can seldom be accumulated in one person, but one great qualification for the charitable worker is that he should know where to go for help and advice on the difficult cases he comes across, and that he should be willing to accept that advice.

There are, roughly speaking, two ideals of charity.

One, I hope we may now say the old-fashioned one, is that of distributing as much money to as many people as possible. "In a report dealing with a poor and populous district of London stands written—'District Visiting Society : 600 families relieved : £60 15s.' It would be a pleasing discovery to find that 600 poor and worthy families have been really relieved by the modest expenditure of £60 15s., or 2s. per family. Families in such districts are often large, with as many as five, six, and seven children. If, however, we take only two children as the average, a simple sum will show that 2,400 of our fellow-creatures in distress were relieved for sixpence each."

The other ideal is that of meeting each specific need and difficulty as it arises with an appropriate and adequate remedy.

Of the first, there is little to be said. It is impossible that it can have any good results, for what definite distress can be adequately met by a gift of 2s.? Moreover, when practised by many people over large districts, as it is in London, it tends to have very mischievous results. I used to be taught as a child that I must not water my garden unless I were prepared to do it thoroughly; for that to sprinkle the surface of the earth caused the plants to turn their roots upwards in search of moisture instead of striking deeper down into the firm moist soil below; then when the drought came they perished. So with the unfortunate people who are subjected to this sprinkling charity; they are always on the look-out for the little gifts which come dropping casually in, and they never get a chance of developing resource and self-reliance.

We will leave this ideal, therefore, as being thoroughly uninteresting except where it is mis-

chievous, and consider at length the charity which strives to meet definite needs with an adequate remedy.

In the first place, however, we must consider what will be the best way of getting into contact with the people whom we wish to help. We have seen that the work of a school-manager serves to bring us very quickly and very naturally into touch with the people, and the school-manager need search no further for opportunities for exercising charity. Any positive work will serve in the same way to bring us into genuine relations with those who need our help; the great thing is not to go about inviting applications for relief amongst a people we do not know. Those who take advantage of such invitations are generally those whom we should least desire to help if we knew them better. How far the Church (or any other religious body) is an appropriate centre for charitable work is a very difficult question owing to the misuses of relief of which I have already spoken. If Church-workers could really keep foremost in their minds the primary importance of their influence upon character, they, more than any others, should be able to build up broken lives and strengthen the feeble; as it is, they, like others, have come to regard hunger as the worst of all evils, to be satisfied at the cost of any other consideration, moral or spiritual. "Feed a man first and then convert him," is practically the maxim amongst many of them; but experience shows that unless the conversion precedes or accompanies the feeding they have only made a cadger of him. I have heard it said that the Church fails in relief work because it does not believe in God; *i. e.* it has not sufficient faith in the power which makes for righteousness, and puts its trust too much in almsgiving.

Moreover, relief work from the Church is greatly increased in difficulty by the light in which the poor have come to regard it. To show that I have not exaggerated this I quote from the monthly paper of a parish church: "Our experience leads us deliberately to avow it as our belief that by far the greater part of our population regard the Church simply and solely as an institution with enormous wealth at its disposal, and the clergy as a body of men—'mostly fools'—who have been ordained for the express purpose of running about the parish with a can of soup in one hand and a half-cwt. of coals in the other." Hence it comes that any one who comes as a visitor from the Church is apt to be regarded primarily in the light of a natural prey, from whom alms can be extracted by the assumption of a certain kind of language and manner. One of my most curious experiences was a time when I went to receive applications for relief in a parish room connected with one of our churches. I used to see the same people afterwards in a different place and capacity, and was astonished at their completely different tone and bearing. In the first instance I was regarded as a professional "sister," and their talk was interlarded with pious ejaculations and enumerations of the classes and services and mothers' meetings which they attended, and I seldom got any real intercourse with them until I gave them an appointment to meet me at another address.

Handicapped as they are by the results of bad work in the past, there are districts in which the churches have put relief work on its right basis and are doing excellently. There the ardour of the inexperienced visitor is instructed and guided by the

organisation of relief committees, or by co-operation with the Charity Organisation Society; there the sprinkling system is abandoned in favour of the higher ideal; and there the people are coming to know that they cannot qualify for relief by a perfunctory attendance at services or the use of professional cant, and that the Church has a nobler function than that of mere dole-giving.

However well organised the relief of a Church may be, the difficulty will still remain that visitors will find it hard to approach their people without some definite object. The old ticket served as an introduction, and paved the way (it was wrongly thought) to higher things. Under the new order the visitor must go empty-handed and somewhat abruptly.

This difficulty is being got over in many districts by substituting the savings book for the grocery ticket, and "provident collecting" is coming to be recognised as one of the most potent means of help as well as of instituting friendly relations. Wherever it has been tried we hear reports of its success; whole streets that have been demoralised by "sprinkling charity" begin to recover their self-respect under the stimulating influence of the provident visitor. Instead of cringing for doles the women produce their pence with pride, and the new relation of mutual congratulation on the growing account is a far more healthy one to work from than the old relation of patronage and subservience. I quote a few of the sayings of those who have tried the plan:—

"Our collectors have never met with one rough word; on the contrary, I can truly say they have had more gratitude shown them than for anything else they have tried to do for their poor neighbours.

Some of the latter are much amused at our latest vagary as they consider it; they have a profound disbelief in the value of a penny as a first step along the path of thrift, but they often put in just to please us. But to get them to make a start is the great thing; they soon see the advantages of the bank, and begin to put in more.

“All these emergencies, for which there is so little margin in the hard-pressed lives of the poor, are well-nigh overwhelming; but the little sum put by in the collecting bank just enables them to surmount the difficulty without being crushed by it. ‘Well, who’d have thought,’ they say sometimes, ‘that the few ha’pence would have mounted up so?’ ‘It’s like a gift,’ said one woman; ‘only it’s better than a gift, there’s such a *relish* with it!’”

“The Rev. J. H. C. regarded the collecting bank as the beginning of thrift. The Post Office was an excellent institution, but it did not reach the poorest class. For this class they needed what he would call a ‘perambulating’ bank. He claimed that the collecting bank afforded a means of helping the poor without weakening their self-respect. The ‘ticket’ lady was regarded as some one from whom something was to be got, and she accepted that estimate of herself, and had a consciousness of neglected duty if she failed to dispense all her tickets. The ‘bank’ lady, on the other hand, raised no expectations, and was welcomed with good feeling. She gained the confidence of her customers, and was able to acquire much truer knowledge of the poor. He knew no better training-school for workers. . . .”

“The Rev. B. H. was convinced of the necessity of some such plan for the beginning of saving. The

step from saving nothing to making a formal deposit in the presence of a number of bank clerks was a very long one. He remembered an actual case of a drunken woman upon whom he could produce no influence by all his endeavours, until one week he succeeded in inducing her to put by 3*d.* The second week she put by another 3*d.*, 'just for the humour of the thing,' and when her savings amounted to 9*d.* he began to notice a marked change in her. Ultimately she became a sober and respectable member of society."

From the collecting bank to the savings bank is found to be an easy step, when once the habit has been formed; and in this way the provident visitor may open the path to better things to families whose poverty seemed hopeless before. Moreover, she again will have the opportunity in her regular periodical visits of finding out naturally and thoroughly what the real needs of her poor friends are, and will find many opportunities of exercising true charity.

Whatever institution we may work in connection with, there are certain negative conditions to be observed if we would avoid causing positive harm to the working classes by our efforts. They may be briefly summed up as follows:—

1. *We must avoid encouraging bad habits.* Directly, of course, no charitable worker would do this consciously; indirectly, many do it with their eyes open, or with what would seem almost wilful blindness. The most common form of this is by "relieving" the wife or children of an idler or drunkard; in other words, by relieving the man of responsibilities which he has voluntarily assumed, and setting him free to spend his time or his earnings in his own particular form of self-indulgence. "But," it is often urged,

"we cannot let the family suffer for the father's faults." It is not quite clear to me that we cannot, if that is the shortest way to redemption for all alike. Moreover, what right have we to assume that the man would not be less self-indulgent if it were not so persistently pressed upon his notice, that in this London of ours, at any rate, there are plenty of people prepared to share his responsibility with him? Only to-day I came across a family where the father periodically deserts his wife, and leaves her to keep things together as best she may in his absence. She does this by making match-boxes at 2*d.* a gross, and says she could never get along but for the tickets and other doles which she receives; one child helps her in her miserable work; another, a sturdy girl of eighteen, shares her father's irresponsible spirit, and when asked why she does not get better work, says she "s'poses the fact is she don't care to." But for the mistaken charity which keeps them half-starved, the woman, who is in wretched health, would go into the infirmary, the girls would go to respectable work, and the Guardians would force the man to contribute to his wife's maintenance. In many cases the mere knowledge that the home would be broken up without him would keep the man to his duty.

2. *We must be careful not to do anything which may check the free movement of labour.* One of the most instructive pages in economic history is that which tells of the Settlement Laws and their effect upon the working classes. Under those laws it was made extremely difficult, often impossible, for labourers to leave their own parish and seek work elsewhere. The consequence was that in many places there would be great dearth of employment,

very low wages, and many "out-of-works"; while in others there would be scarcity of labourers, wages would be high, and the work would be undone. Of course the cure for this state of things was to set the labourer absolutely free to seek work in the best market, to leave the place where he was not wanted and go to the place where his services were in demand. Now much of our modern charity has just the same tendency as the old Settlement Law; it encourages people to stay on in a district where they are no longer wanted, competing for every little bit of work which may be going, and keeping themselves and their neighbours on the verge of starvation. The true function of a wise charity when called upon to help "out-of-works," is to spend all its energies and resources in helping them to migrate or emigrate where they are wanted. Mere "relief" only prolongs and intensifies the distress by encouraging men to stay where their services are not required.

3. *We must avoid raising expectations which we shall not be able to fulfil.* To a certain extent this condition is covered by the last. Relief to the unemployed, whether by alms or by the institution of "relief works," rouses an expectation of being provided for that it is very difficult to quench again, and impossible to fulfil in any adequate manner. But it applies also to any kind of relief which does on a large scale for people what they would otherwise do for themselves. To take one instance only: it applies to all work in the direction of providing pensions for the aged, unless very carefully guarded. As yet, at any rate, we are not in a position to provide pensions for all who fall into this class, and unless we are very careful in our talk and actions we may cause great

suffering by preventing others from doing what we are expected to do. Already the expectation of charity has done much in London to cause sons and daughters to neglect their parents. I was describing some of our pension work to a north-countryman not long ago, and he expressed his surprise that it should be needed among the class of people we deal with; saying that in his town it would be quite a matter of course that whatever the position of the parents they would throw in their lot with their children and be cared for by them. How far, again, the expectation of State pensions will prevent the working class from providing for its own old age, may be estimated by the discussions of the great working-men's clubs on this important question. It is certainly wonderful how soon the rumour of any charity spreads among even the most secluded of the poor. We have one old woman on our pension list, who put off making her needs known for many weeks because the rumour had penetrated to her garret that "there was something in Parliament which was going to give 5s. a week to all old people," and she thought it was only a question of holding out a few days or weeks longer.

Given these negative conditions we may safely proceed to the constructive work of providing adequate assistance to meet special needs. I can most easily describe this by describing the work of the Charity Organisation Society among the poor, because that is the institution with which I am most familiar; but exactly the same methods will be found useful by all, whether working independently or in connection with the Church or with any other institution.

The work of the Charity Organisation Society

consists indeed only of the combined efforts of charitable people and institutions. Apart from these it is not merely powerless, it does not exist. Those combined efforts have issued in a mass of accumulated experience and literature covering the whole ground of charitable work; and to proceed without reference to this is like trying to study history without books. Moreover, the organisation of the society is in many ways more convenient for its purpose than that of any other institution. It follows the districts of the Poor Law Unions, and is specially devised for taking all the work which cannot be done by the Guardians, or can be better done by private charity. In every Poor Law district in London a committee is formed of persons interested in "improving the condition of the poor," and relations are established as far as possible with all the various institutions working in the district. The offices of the society are open to all who wish for help, information, or advice; records are kept of the many thousands of families with whom the society has dealt, and these records are open to any one who is legitimately interested in any family—*i. e.* who is genuinely desirous of helping it. (Not infrequently we are asked for information by creditors or personal enemies, but these are of course refused.) Here all the charitable workers in a district may meet and take counsel together, and learn what is being done by others; for this is neutral ground on which all may meet without regard to sect of any kind. The one sufficient link between them is an earnest desire to help the poor without the thought of any ultimate gain to themselves. Here you will find the minister of religion, who has abandoned the idea of increasing his con-

gregation by doles ; the doctor, to whom the sufferings of the poor are more than the occasion of fees ; the politician, who has freed his mind from the thought of the next election ; and the well-to-do man or woman, in whom the desire for patronage or subservience has yielded to the spirit of self-forgetful charity. "In the multitude of counsellors there is wisdom ;" and the hands of all are strengthened in their fight against distress.

Long experience shows that human needs refuse to be completely covered by any classification ; we are constantly coming upon some new complication of distress which calls for all the ingenuity of experts if it is to be really met. Still, the great majority of cases fall into fairly well-defined classes, and though the "treatment" must be modified in each particular case, yet it will run on more or less familiar lines. For instance, one of the most definite needs we may have to meet will be that of skilled nursing in the homes of the poor. They cannot all go to hospitals ; to many it would be an unnecessary hardship to go to the infirmary (which indeed is only intended for the destitute sick), and even where the women of the house have leisure they are often lamentably deficient in the skill and tenderness required in nursing. Every visitor among the poor who cannot do what is required herself should know where to apply for a nurse who will attend to any urgent case of sickness which she may come across. In our parish we have a "District Nursing Association," from which over 17,000 visits were made among the sick poor last year ; and one of our first enquiries when asked for "help during illness" is whether the nurses are visiting. The gratitude of the poor invalids for their

care is very touching, for it is help which they can thoroughly appreciate ; one old lady is quoted in their report as saying, " I think, Nurse, you must be a fallen angel," a testimonial none the less convincing for its error of expression.

This "help during illness" is constantly called for amongst our poor people. Where it is a non-worker that is stricken down it may be only the nurse that is needed. When the bread-winner falls ill matters become far more urgent. Amongst the more independent of the working class, illness, unless of a very aggravated kind, is largely met by their own organisations of sick benefit clubs. Members of these secure to themselves an allowance sufficient to keep things going during any moderate illness; sometimes, indeed, men of an exceptionally prudent turn of mind will contrive, by subscribing to several clubs, to have a larger income when incapacitated by illness than when at work. Every care should be taken in our work to do nothing which may discourage men (and indeed women) from belonging to these organisations, which do their business far more thoroughly and efficiently than private charity can hope to do. But often we come across cases where it has been for some reason impossible to make such provision, or where it has broken down before the length and severity of the distress. Then there can be no better work than for charity to step in, and keep the home together until the family can recover itself. But this cannot be done by means of a few tickets and half-crowns; unless the family is to pawn and sell, to be half-starved and to accumulate a burden of debt, in other words to sink to a lower level from which it may never raise itself, we must make an allowance sufficient to meet

all necessary expenditure as it arises, and be prepared to continue this until the invalid is in a position to earn again. Then, and then only, may we hope to have applied charity so as to preserve instead of to undermine the independence of the recipient. Sometimes we may even give such help where provision might obviously have been made if we make it a condition that the patient shall join his club as soon as he has regained his health; but then we must be careful not to lose sight of him until he has done so, for he may need many reminders of his promise. Sick-bed resolutions are proverbially fleeting, though they may for the time easily convince both the patient and his friend of their permanence.

As an instance of the accumulation of troubles which it is impossible to provide against, and which is therefore an appropriate opening for charity, I may quote a family with which we are now dealing, and which bids fair to try our resources. Mrs. L. is a widow who in ordinary times does dressmaking with her eldest girl Emma; Thyrsa, the second girl, earns 4*s.* 6*d.* in a cigar-making shop, and there are two younger ones. Emma fell ill, and the doctor said she must have rest and fresh air, so we arranged for her to go to a convalescent home; while settling this our visitor found Mrs. L. herself incapacitated from work, and in urgent need of a surgical instrument; this we supplied as quickly as possible, and as the greater part of the family income was stopped we made a weekly allowance to meet present needs. Mrs. L.'s illness, however, proved more serious than we expected, and acting still under doctor's orders we were arranging for her also to go to a convalescent home when our visitor called and found Thyrsa in bed. A man

had been walking over the roof of the shop in which she worked, and had fallen through the skylight upon her, breaking his own fall, but hurting her severely. Emma returned better, but only to find that she had two invalids to nurse, and for months we have been giving them 10s. to 15s. a week to supplement help from other sources. Things are beginning to mend a little now, but it will be still some weeks before all are earning again as before.

To charity of this description it may be objected that no single person, or even institution, could bear the strain; that their resources would be exhausted upon a single family, and indeed be insufficient for that. This is one of the reasons which makes it so desirable to work in concert with others, to be in touch with all the agencies at work, and to be able to concentrate the energies of all upon one spot when needful. It is probable that more than enough money to do all the really good work required is lavished every winter upon ineffectual soup-kitchens and wholesale free-meal schemes. So long as the public imagination continues to be moved by the recital of huge numbers signifying nothing, it will be difficult to get money for real work; but it will not be impossible for those who have learned all the resources of the neighbourhood.

In the case of Mrs. L. we made use of two forms of aid which are in constant demand: convalescent treatment and surgical instruments. When doctor and nurse have done their work there is nothing like the "convalescent home" for inspiring the patient with new life and vigour. To the poor man the period of convalescence is irksome in the extreme; the only escape from his small and often ill-ventilated room is into the noisy, dusty streets, and the recovery of

strength is postponed far longer than it need be. The effect produced by three weeks of quiet, fresh air and good food is marvellous, and I have often failed to recognise in some sun-burned man or woman, beaming with health and gratitude, the wan and shaken invalid to whom I said good-bye so short a time before. From 30s. to £2 will generally cover the cost of treatment, though sometimes the cure cannot be completed without a prolonged stay of six weeks or even months.

The charitable worker should be able at all times to secure this help for her poor friends ; but even this, simple and straightforward as it seems, has its own difficulties, and experience is needed to realise and solve them.

In the first place, though there are many homes, and though they are constantly increasing in number, there are not nearly enough to accommodate all who wish to make use of them, especially in the summer, when all weary workers are longing for a rest and change. The consequence is that many an applicant for admission will be told that he must wait three, six, or even eight weeks before his turn will come ; and has to return to work long before he is fit for it because "the place won't be kept open for him," or "the landlord is pressing for the rent." There are two ways in which we lessen this difficulty of delay. In the first place our central office is in constant communication with between fifty and sixty homes, and always knows just where there is a vacancy, besides having reserved beds at many of them. When therefore we want to get a man or woman away quickly we simply apply to our "convalescent secretary," describing the nature of the case, and he sends us at once

an admission order to a suitable home to which the patient can go—generally in the course of the next three or four days. Working in this organised way we were able last year to send away over two thousand men, women, and children with a minimum of delay and friction.

In the second place we do what we can to ensure that the people who use the homes are really those for whom they are intended—*i. e.* that they are convalescent from some definite illness. It is hard for some weary man or woman whose health is always a little below par to be obliged to stay in town all through the summer; but it is still harder for some patient recovering from serious illness to have his convalescence retarded and perhaps to become a chronic invalid because the homes are too full to admit him. A good deal can be done to relieve the pressure on the homes by “boarding out” less serious cases, where only rest and quiet is needed; and the “Home of Rest” is also beginning to supplement the work of the “Convalescent Home.”

Another precaution to be taken in using the homes is to adapt the climate to the complaint. A great many “free letters” are given away by subscribers rather carelessly in this respect. Some poor woman, the office-cleaner it may be, asks “her gentleman,” as she calls him, for a “letter” for her daughter’s husband “who’s been very bad.” Her gentleman, remembering that he or the firm subscribes to a home, say on the east coast, and looking through his desk, finds a “letter,” which the woman accepts gratefully, regardless of the fact that the young man is suffering from phthisis or pneumonia, and is not likely to benefit from March winds on the east coast. She goes home

singing the praises of "her gentleman," the doctor round the corner fills up the medical certificate for *6d.*, the young fellow starts off full of hope, comes back worse than he went, and is dead before the summer is over. The only safe plan is to have a trustworthy "medical referee," to be consulted in all doubtful cases; and to use very careful discrimination in choosing a home. For some it will not much matter where they go, so long as it is out of town; but then it is clearly a pity to send a man with a broken leg to a south coast home where a patient might recover from pneumonia or bronchitis.

The visitor amongst the poor will be often called upon to aid in providing a surgical instrument. The price of the thing required may place it quite beyond their power to get it, and they are reduced to asking every likely and unlikely person they come across for a contribution in the way of "letters" or money. Sometimes a poor woman, whose child must have a splint or surgical boot, will tramp the city for days in search of "letters" for the Surgical Aid Society, which still keeps up the system of subscribers' letters regardless of the undeserved and useless suffering it inflicts upon the poor petitioners. I have seen them on their return from their quest into innumerable offices, begging amongst total strangers, quite broken-spirited with fatigue and repulses. On the theory that each subscriber bestowed his "letters" upon his own *protégés*, the system might work well enough; but for some of the instruments the society requires as many as twelve or sixteen letters, and how many among the poor are likely to know subscribers personally?

If it is right that the instruments should be given

at all they should be given properly, and with as little as possible of the mendicant process. But here again care and discrimination should be used. There is a tendency—especially on the part of certain “special” hospitals—to order unnecessarily expensive and complicated instruments, which soon become worse than useless in the hands of ignorant and careless people. Moreover, it should be remembered that the interests of the instrument-makers and those of the patients are not always the same. I have in mind one mother who came to ask me if I could “spare her a surgical aid letter”; her little boy was rickety, and she had been told to get him some complicated “irons” which would cost from £4 to £5. I sent him to an eminent surgeon, who sent back word that the child was hardly strong enough to carry his own limbs, let alone heavy irons, and advised us to “plant him out in the country for six months.” This was done, and the child returned strong and healthy, able to run about quite easily. In other cases there may be no doubt as to the need of the instrument, and yet it will be useless to give it unless we can insure by constant supervision that it will be used. Little John Allen is lame with hip-disease: he has had a splint given to him, and should never move without it, but the other day a visitor called and found him running about with no splint and a patten on the wrong foot.

Even with grown-up people the difficulty of making them use the instruments is very great. They will move heaven and earth to get them, especially if they are very expensive, and throw them aside with scarcely a trial. Many of them feel strange and awkward at first, and some are of necessity painful until they have done their work. One young man suffering from

curvature of the spine came to us for a costly surgical jacket, which was to support and strengthen his back. It was a beautiful piece of mechanism, carefully moulded and shaped to its purpose; but he found it "hot and uncomfortable," and never wore it after the first trial.

Artificial legs are always in great request, and the serviceable old "peg-leg" has fallen into disfavour. "Something with toes" is what all lame people now set their hearts on; but at our committee we are inclined to regard toes as a useless luxury, and to insist upon a cheaper and simpler article.

Some of the most satisfactory work which can be done is that of fitting the incompetent or disabled to take their place in the ranks of the independent. It is not always easy. When people have been living for some time from hand to mouth, and have learned by their own experience, or that of their neighbours, that it is possible to live without earning enough to live upon, they come to regard it as part of the natural order of things, and will take no trouble to change it. But where there is any energy and character left the most hopeless-seeming cases can be put right with sufficient care and patience. A good instance of what can be done by organised and persistent effort is that of W. S. He came to us literally in despair; he had been an attendant in a lunatic asylum, and the strain upon his nerves, combined with an attack of influenza, had destroyed his sight. His employers had been very good in paying his wages for some time after he was unable to work, but had at last told him they must stop in another month. His wife could, by working hard, earn just 8s. a week; this was all they had to look to, and she was very delicate and likely to

break down. Both were quite young and respectable, and much dreaded the hopeless poverty which seemed to be before them. The first idea was that a permanent allowance should be made to them; but it was felt that for a man of twenty-seven to settle down to live upon charity for all the rest of his life would be a very unsatisfactory solution of the problem, especially as one of his chief troubles was that he got so low-spirited with having nothing to do. Many other plans were suggested, including of course the inevitable mangle, which is the one resource of the London poor. Finally, the plan which was adopted, and which succeeded beyond our hopes, was suggested by the man himself; he was started as a tea-agent, and has worked up a connection with admirable perseverance and business capacity. At first it was up-hill work; he cleared only 2s. or 3s. a week, and used to get very despondent. Then his wife fell ill, and had to be sent to a convalescent home; and for nearly twelve months their earnings had to be supplemented by a weekly allowance. But at last the business increased so much that they were able to get along, at first with occasional help, and finally with none. Coffee, soap, cocoa, and sugar were added to the stock-in-trade; and when we last saw him he was clearing over 20s. a week, with a growing business, had added to his stock money, and was looking forward to the time when his wife need no longer go out to work. To do this for him cost only £16 in money, but a great deal more in time. It would, no doubt, have been far less trouble to have spent the same £16 in "sprinkling charity," in 6d. grocery tickets or free dinners, and so to have added some hundreds to the number of cases nominally "assisted"! but this would have done

absolutely nothing towards curing the poverty around us. There is one out of the many charities at work in our district which reports that in one year it has given away 18,000 free breakfasts, and other thousands of articles of clothing and quarts of soup and loaves of bread. The same amount of "charity," if it had been concentrated and wisely applied, might have lifted at least a few families beyond the need of receiving doles at all.

Some of the most difficult cases to deal with are those of the women who ask us for work, and have never learned any trade. "What can you do?" we say. "Oh, *anything*," is the eager reply; and our hearts sink, for we know that anything in this connection invariably means nothing. "Can you work a machine?" "No." "Can you iron and wash?" "No." "Do you understand cooking? waiting? nursing?" "No, no, no."

Frequently the difficulty is increased by a family of small children, or an invalid husband to support, which makes it necessary that they should earn tolerably good money. They never have any ideas to offer, except that they would like a mangle, or that two or three days' charing would be a help. The first step in these cases is almost invariably to persuade the poor woman that to start a mangle when there is one next door, another over the way, and two more down the street, is sheer waste of time and money; the next to convince her that two or three days' charing at 1s. 6d. a day won't suffice to pay the rent and keep a family. That done, the ground is clear for action. The children can be sent to the day-homes, and the woman taught a trade or put into regular daily work; but it too often happens that the case

breaks down at the first stage. The woman would rather "muddle along," as she expressively calls it, and with the help of stray "tickets," and perhaps a little relief from the Poor Law, the family drifts into more and more helpless poverty. It should be one of the first principles in charitable work, that if a woman *is* to be the bread-winner, she should be put in a position to discharge this function properly.

Of our pension work I have written elsewhere ; but it is too full of interest and difficulties to be passed over here. It seems simple enough, when the primary difficulty of raising the money has been got over, to make some worn-out old toiler happy with 5s. a week for the term of his natural days ; but those who have tried know what constant care and watchfulness are needed even here.

The first difficulty arises when we have to select our cases. There are so many nice old people whom we come across, and whose last years we should like to make easy for them ! But here as elsewhere we must be guided by the principles we have accepted. A. is a charming old man, full of yarns about his past life and an adept at making a favourable impression upon his visitors ; but we find that throughout his life he has persistently neglected or ill-used his wife and children, and that the latter are really almost justified in their neglect of him now ; A. is certainly not a type to encourage. B., again, seems at first in every way a model pensioner ; he has been careful, sober, and industrious all his life, his wife is devoted to him, his only son does what he can to help ; the pension is begun and continued for some weeks, when his conscience pricks him, and he reluctantly divulges that

they have some £90 in the bank and that the account is slowly growing at our expense. Thrift is a virtue ; but it may be cultivated at too great a cost, and B. is struck out of our list as "not needing assistance." Of C. who drinks, and D. who has gambled himself into poverty, we need say little ; the workhouse is the only safe place for them ; but E. is more difficult to refuse. He has no positive vices, but has drifted carelessly through life, earning good money until latterly, but always spending every penny as it came in, and hoping—when he thought about it at all—that "something would turn up" before he came to want ; in the same easy-going way he has allowed his sons to grow up without learning a trade, although he himself was a skilled artisan, and as unskilled labourers they are not in a position now to keep their father. If any large proportion of the people pursued this course the result would be disastrous ; we must not put a premium upon the type by giving it special assistance, and E. must go to the Poor Law for the help he needs. F. and G., again, are too old and infirm to be capable of looking after themselves ; they need waiting upon constantly, and possibly nursing ; they must be persuaded to go into the infirm ward, where they will be kept clean and comfortable till the end comes.

And so, as we come to look into the matter thoroughly, the number of these old people whom we can really help dwindles until it becomes manageable, and we can handle each case thoroughly and efficiently. Taking the whole of London, we have under our care 1,088 old people ; in our district between thirty and forty. Every year sees some added to the list, and though every year also sees some drop off, yet the number increases. In the majority of cases the grant-

ing of an allowance seems to give a new lease of life ; and many an old couple who seemed to have reached the last stage of decrepitude have grown comparatively young and strong again under the combined effects of security and plenty to eat. One old widow lady has been so smartened up and rejuvenated that at the age of sixty-seven she has received and accepted proposals of marriage, and is about to start life anew. She certainly has qualities deserving of any one's admiration. When she first applied to us she was struggling bravely to maintain an unfortunate brother, who is deaf, dumb, blind, and lame. He was born deaf and dumb, and at the age of five broke his knee-cap and has been lame ever since ; still he managed to support himself by cigar-making until seven years ago, when he became blind through some whitewash falling into his eyes. Then his sister took up the burden of his support, and maintained him until her own sight became too weak for tailoring. She can "talk" to him by writing in German with her finger on his hand, and she is his only medium of communication with the world ; and in order to keep them together an allowance of 12s. a week was raised for them.

The pleasure of successfully providing for our old people compensates us for many disappointments and failures ; but the work is only begun when the pension has been granted. It is found to be a quite indispensable condition of success that the old people should be seen at least once a week, and if possible visited in their homes. In no other way are we able to insure that our gift does not simply make them more capable of suffering. S. J. was nearly starved one winter because she did not like to tell us that a sister who had

been helping her had stopped, and the 3s. which she had from us was therefore miserably inadequate. The visitor who had undertaken to look after her had sent the money instead of taking it, and had so lost touch with her needs. E. S., again, developed a mania for patent medicines; and it was only from seeing the bottles in her room that the visitor found she was spending all her money on them, instead of on food. And in times of illness much extra help may be needed in the way of doctor, nurse and invalid's food, which only the visitor will know of. Her visit is looked forward to as the event of the week; she shares all their little confidences, cheers their melancholy, and brightens their days with gifts of flowers, and loans of books and papers. One benefactor of our old people sends them periodically a gift of rabbits straight from the country, which are welcomed eagerly—"so different from the shop things," said one old lady.

The question sometimes arises whether it would not be better to gather the old people together into some institution. No doubt it would be easier for the visitor to deal with her people all under one roof, and done on a large scale it would be cheaper. But experience seems to show that it is better to keep to the plan of dealing with them apart. There are some small "Homes for Aged Poor" scattered about London, which answer well for picked cases; but from what I can hear of larger institutions the old people, however well looked after, are not happy in them. Jealousy, and bickering, and gossip seem inevitable; the failings of old age are intensified by bringing many old people together without any of the healthy atmosphere of youth and energy, and the infirmity of each is aggravated by that of his neigh-

bour. Moreover, our pensioners often regard it as their greatest blessing that the allowance enables them to prolong their natural life amongst its familiar surroundings, instead of being forced at the most conservative period of life into new ways and grooves.

In such work as I have been describing it is obvious that we need to know a great deal about the people we are trying to help. To us each "case" is an individual or family, with its own eccentricities and peculiarities, its own vices and virtues, its own past behind it and future before it. If we are to help to mould the future we must know enough of the past to make our work intelligent and our help effectual; and this getting to know about our people needs the greatest skill and insight. In many ways it is like a doctor's work; he has to ask many questions before he will discover the real cause of illness, and only when he knows this will he be able to cure. But a doctor's work is in many ways easier than ours. His patients are apt to be rather proud than otherwise of their complaints, and will glory in telling the history of their development and symptoms; they will seldom resent his enquiries, however bluntly they may be put, and will recognise the necessity of telling frankly all they know. We make our enquiries for exactly the same purpose; we want to know the evil in order that we may apply the remedy, but our difficulty in getting at the necessary knowledge is apt to be greater. It is comparatively seldom that people will tell us of their own failings, though they are voluble enough about their misfortunes, and we generally have to look elsewhere for information. Long intimacy with a family is, of course, the best

way of getting to know its needs ; but it must be real intimacy. Mere appearance at church, or mothers' meetings will give nothing of the knowledge that is needed ; and yet this is often made the ground for most glowing recommendation for relief. Curates are frequently guilty in this way, and will give letters recommending the bearer as eminently respectable and deserving of all help, whom they have only seen perhaps once or twice in a most casual way, and about whom they have made absolutely no enquiry. The arrival of a new curate or district-visitor in the district is generally followed by a crop of these letters, which have to be taken by charitable societies and individuals for what they are worth. Some agencies even advertise it as a recommendation that they give relief to all who ask without enquiry, which should in itself be enough to condemn them in the eyes of all sensible people. Who would support a doctor who professed to cure all comers without asking questions ? He would be condemned as a quack, but would probably be less mischievous than these.

Insist, then, in all you do, upon working with your eyes open ; if people ask your aid and refuse to take you into their confidence unreservedly it is quite sufficient ground for refusing it. Probably they are deceiving you in some way ; in any case you cannot do good and may do harm by acting ignorantly. And remember that it is no hardship, but the truest kindness, to make yourself acquainted with all the circumstances of distress. It is the people who have been spoiled by careless charity who do not recognise this, and will resent your enquiries ; and even they will soon come to appreciate the sympathetic visitor who is willing to take pains.

Though our enquiries are all instituted with a view to revealing hopeful features, we must be prepared to find them showing us much that we would, for our own sake, rather not know; but if we are to be of use in the world we cannot go through it with our eyes shut to all its uglier facts. We shall find by degrees that there are hundreds, probably thousands, of impostors, living among the poor, but not necessarily of them, who make their living by deceiving simple-minded and carelessly benevolent people. The invention of the postal-order facilitates the maintenance of a whole tribe of "begging-letter writers," who have discovered that the rich man can ease his conscience of his duty to the poor by sending 5s. or 10s. in answer to an appeal from some one whom he knows nothing whatever about. We have large collections of these letters, and the ingenuity with which the writers will adapt their style to their conception of the person they are writing to is worthy of a better cause. The same man will be religious, or literary, or frankly business-like, according as his prey is a clergyman, an author, or a statesman; the possession of a medical directory will convert him into a decayed medical man appealing to the sympathies of his former fellow-students, and when this *rôle* is exhausted he will become his own widow left with a fabulous number of small children to support.

To attempt to reclaim such a one is hopeless; why should he work when he can get all he wants with so little trouble? Indeed, one hardly knows whether it is he or his foolish "benefactors" who are most in need of reclaiming. But a bad record in the past does not *necessarily* make a case hopeless; it only tends to do so, and we have to weigh the chances of encourag-

ing a man in his evil ways against the hope of helping him to break with them altogether. This was the question before us not long ago, when a woman came to us whose husband was in prison. The guardians had refused to help her, unless she took her children into the workhouse, and thus broke up the home. Clearly it will not do to make the way of transgressors easy, but private charity—working cautiously and with full knowledge at every step—may sometimes safely achieve what would be impossible for the Poor Law. The first step was to ascertain the nature of the man's offence, and whether he was an habitual offender; we could not stir without *enquiry*. The officer of the police-court and the man's employer were seen, with the result that the apparent tragedy turned out—as so many of our tragedies do—to be a semi-comedy. The man was a good worker, belonging to his union, honest, and steady while at work, but given to “a glass on Saturdays.” While having his glass the Saturday before, news had come to him that his brother was in custody on a charge of stealing sausages; his family pride was stirred, and hurrying to the courts he assaulted one of the witnesses. This, it appears, is a serious offence in the eyes of the law, and he was sent to prison for two months in which to work off his excessive zeal. Now the question was whether we could prevent it from becoming a real tragedy, as it inevitably would if this were the first downward step in the man's life. What would be the effect of coming out to find his home gone and his wife and children in the workhouse? On the other hand, what would be the effect of finding that they could get on just as well whether he worked for them or not, and that he could resume his position in life

without any difficulty? After much deliberation we hit upon a compromise which has worked admirably. Through the medium of the prison chaplain we offered to the man to keep his home and family for him if he would undertake to repay us when he came out; he wrote a grateful letter promising to do this, and we made his wife an allowance of 18s. a week. He came straight to see us on leaving gaol, looking very well in health though rather cropped as to the hair; we improved the occasion with a few casual remarks on the disadvantages of Saturday glasses, and since he got back to work he has been steadily repaying the loan. By the time he has any money to spare again we hope he may have broken the habit of visiting the public-house, and his experience may really prove to have been no more than a useful, if somewhat severe, check to the growth of self-indulgent ways.

Even when there is no bad record or deliberate imposture, enquiry may show that there is no real need for charitable help, and that what is really wanted is a better distribution of the income. A Church-worker came to me the other day about a family of little children, concerning whom he was greatly distressed. He had visited them for months, and found the woman honest, striving, and clean, but as usually happens he knew very little of the man. He assured me over and over again that the family was in a pitiable state of poverty, and in urgent need of help; and we at once set to work to ascertain the real financial position. Result: man earning 35s., giving 20s. to his wife and keeping 15s. for pocket-money. Obviously if charity steps in here, it will not necessarily improve the state of the wife and children at all; it will merely enable the man to keep a still

larger proportion of his wages for pocket-money. In this case all the enquiry needed was one straightforward question to the wife as to her husband's earnings, but that one question the visitor had never put. If he had he might have used his influence in quite a different direction and with much better results.

There are those amongst us whose talents and ability fit them rather for wider issues of administration and deliberation, than for detailed work such as I have been describing. Their knowledge and experience enable them to realise the tendencies of any branch of social work, or any scheme, and to explain its influence upon the community as a whole, in a way difficult if not impossible to those engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle against some particular species of poverty, disease, or woe. They are the generals surveying the whole battlefield, without whose instructions no individual bravery on the part of the combatants can ever prevail; but with whom, if all would but combine in one great army, we might hope to win many a noble battle. For those who are prepared to qualify for this work of generalship, there is work enough and to spare. The great department of medical aid is crying out for organisation; instead of standing shoulder to shoulder in the common cause, and apportioning the work amongst them, hospitals and Poor Law infirmaries and medical men and provident dispensaries and medical missions are all at cross purposes; in one district out-rivalling each other in competition for patients; in another leaving the work almost untouched. Or take the regiment of charities enlisted on the behalf of children. Here,

again, hospitals and Sunday schools and Ragged School Unions, and the Associations for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, for School Dinners, for the Aid of Invalid Children, the many Children's Holiday Funds and the free-lances who enlist under no banner—all these and many others are strong enough for all purposes if they were but working in concert and following the same general policy; instead of fighting, at best independently of each other, and at worst in miserable rivalry. What is needed are counsellors of weight and wisdom who can bring order into confusion, and influence public opinion in the direction of a wise policy.

But whether we enlist as foot-soldiers in the great crusade, or whether we assume the heavier responsibility of generalship, we need to strengthen our hands in two ways. In the first place we must keep in touch with actual facts, and in the second we must keep our minds open by the study of wider issues. Too many of those in the field are swamped by their own little bit of experience which fills their horizon to the exclusion of the universe; and too many of those who write and preach are so far removed from any real contact with facts that they are the blindest leaders of the blind. The only safety for both lies in a continual process of intercourse and mutual correction. To interpret the facts of to-day in the light of experience, and to re-cast and enlarge experience by help of the facts of to-day, this is the only path of progress.

One word of encouragement to those who have lent an ear to the false prophets of Pessimism. On the

cover of a popular tract, issued by a popular society which revels in dramatic misrepresentations of industrial conditions, I find the quotation "Hell is a City much like London." If this were so I would cheerfully accept a sentence which should doom me to hell, and would play my part as a citizen to the best of my power; for it would be a city full of pathos and humour, where much that is bad is mingled with all that is human and lovable, where the very fiends who are represented as tormenting the lost are really engaged in works of mercy and brotherly love; a city above all where justice and straightforwardness and manly effort never fail to make their influence felt.

## READING

THE following books and papers will be found useful as giving detailed information in particular branches of work.

### MACMILLAN AND CO.

- Our Common Land : Octavia Hill.
- Homes of the London Poor : Octavia Hill.
- Life and Labour of the London People : C. Booth.
- Aspects of the Social Problem : Bosanquet and others.
- The State and Charity : T. Mackay.
- The Poor Law : T. W. Fowle.

### SONNENSCHNEIN AND CO.

- The Better Administration of the Poor Law : W. Chance.
- Children under the Poor Law : W. Chance.
- The Feeble-minded.
- The Assistance of School Children.
- Insurance and Saving.
- The Epileptic and Crippled.
- Charity Organisation : C. S. Loch.

### LONGMANS AND CO.

- How to Help Cases of Distress : C. S. Loch.
- Charities Register and Digest.

CHARITY ORGANISATION SOCIETY: 15, Buckingham  
Street, Strand.

Papers: 1*d.* each.

Why is it wrong to supplement Outdoor Relief?

The Assistance of School Children.

Two Methods of Relieving Distress.

Private Charity and Pensions.

NATIONAL UNION OF WOMEN WORKERS: 59,  
Berners Street, London.

Papers: 1*d.* each.

Sanitation.

Legal Difficulties of the Poor.

Children's Country Holidays.

Those who are interested in the wider bearings of charitable work and economic movements, should see the *Charity Organisation Review*, published monthly by Longmans, and the *Economic Journal*, published quarterly by Macmillan and Co.

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