

All our social problems—charity, land-nationalisation, sanitation, Protection, education, come to nothing more than this: How far is it safe and salutary to suspend the former in favour of the latter—*i.e.*, to be good-natured at the expense of justice? Our circumstances have stimulated our good-nature to an unnatural degree, and we are now in the midst of the reaction. We are beginning to find that we cannot shelter our weakly plants from the wind of selfishness by any hedge that does not induce the still more deadly blight: nay, more, finding the hedge inefficient, must we not pray for the abolition of the wind itself, and demand prohibition of all temptation, because we are too weak to stand it?

Precisely thus we are situated with regard to the problem of poverty, and how to deal with it. Inheriting the outdoor-relief practice of England, with the circumstances magnified and intensified by the good-nature resulting from our magnificent estate during the period of spending the money we have borrowed on it, we have done our best, by lavish, official, and vicarious charity, to abrogate the fundamental law of Nature in favour of our idle and vicious classes, with consequences sufficiently alarming to all who have eyes to see.

The figures I have given above explain the whole process; but it must be borne in mind that the tables showing the expenditure from 1876 to 1886 show only the amount of public money expended in charity, and take no account of the equal if not larger amounts which, at any rate in some districts, were voluntarily contributed.

The introduction of the Hospitals and Charitable Institutions Act marks the first step towards returning rationality in this business. So long as the central Government was willing to find the money, men, women, and children were taught to disbelieve the scripture, "He that will not work, neither shall he eat;" and we mortals have the capacity to consume the solar system on such terms.

What is the remedy for all this? After much consideration and study the following is the best answer I can give to that question: I believe the system of outdoor relief, as at present conducted, to be contrary to first principles in two ways—it violates the first law, of Nature, that he who will not or cannot work, neither shall he eat, which is Nature's provision for mere being or existence; and it does not obey the second law, of human society, or on which human society is based, which says, "Love thy neighbour as thyself," which is Nature's provision for well-being or happiness. Society attempts to cheat both God and the Devil by giving money out of the taxes, and soothes its conscience by thinking it is providing for the poor; whereas in sober fact it is merely drugging itself and poisoning them. Once for all, it is not possible to leave the care of our poor to State officials distributing taxes. The charity that is divorced from human sympathy and fellow-feeling both curses him that gives and him that takes. Our outdoor-relief system is an attempt to separate cause and effect, and is therefore for ever impossible, and must be abolished. Experience also demonstrates what theory indicates regarding outdoor relief. Wherever it has been tried it has failed, and produced incalculable evils. "All experience shows that a large amount officially expended in outdoor relief does not indicate a large amount of suffering requiring relief, but a large amount of laxity on the part of officials, and an amount of willingness indefinitely increasable on the part of able-bodied idlers to be fed at the public cost." The maxim of all intermediary agency, *Quod facit per alium facit per se*, however applicable elsewhere, is here fatally misleading. It is absurd to call that charity which is not free, voluntary, and sympathetic. All our existing machinery, therefore, is condemned. It is simply a device by which a general tax is made to relieve us of a duty laid upon us individually, and it is a device foredoomed to failure.

To stop it at all costs is clearly our duty; but how are we to replace it?

1. We must assume that in a civilised community no one must be allowed to starve, however degraded, improvident, or vicious he may be. The State must, without regard to desert, provide bare subsistence and no more, under a rigid workhouse test, whose principle must be that no State pauper can be better treated than the poorest of the people who are taxed to support him.

2. The following classes of cases ought to receive relief that is based on a thorough knowledge of their circumstances, and is adequate: Old people who, through no fault of their own, have become objects of charity, and have no friends; widows with young children, each case of which must be treated on its merits under the kindly eye of a judicious and discriminating visitor; cases of temporary lack of employment or sickness, and persons who are convalescents. All these should be taken in hand by a Charity Organization Society in each of our centres.

3. The third class contains all those where the poverty and consequent suffering of innocent wives and children arises from immorality and misconduct on the part of the breadwinner; and the question is, shall we permit the innocent to suffer with the guilty? In the case of the drunkard, for instance, shall we encourage him to persevere in his vicious indulgence, and expose his wife and children to the miseries and evils of *such a home*, by aid of charity? And so with regard to deserted wives who may have driven away their husbands by neglect or misconduct, expecting, reasonably enough, that they will be quite as well off "on the Benevolent," and receive all the more consideration the more numerous the family, besides being free to eke out their receipts in more questionable ways. Other cases I have met with where the husband deserts the wife, knowing she will be better off in his absence, or where the two may be in collusion, he working at a distance while she and the family get, say, £1 a week and her rent. These and all similar cases require the most constant and vigilant oversight during the time they are in receipt of aid, and nothing but a voluntary organization of charitable persons can do any good in dealing with them.

For the first class the State must provide in each centre, or near it, a workhouse, managed under the most stringent provisions. For the second and third classes what is needed is a Charity Organization Society that shall bring to a focus all the existing benevolent agencies in our large towns, so as to provide against overlapping. I believe that if twenty philanthropic ladies and gentlemen in each of our towns were to band themselves together on the model of the societies of