

## A GREAT CHARITY REFORM.

THE pedestrian making his way along the broad sidewalks of Fourteenth street between Broadway and Fifth avenue, in New York City, thronged with well-dressed women eagerly bent on shopping errands, would scarcely notice, in the midst of the Parisian glitter of gilt signs which cover the fronts of the buildings, a modest tablet with the inscription "State Charities Aid Association." If, however, it should strike his eye, and curiosity or a real interest in charitable work should lead him to climb two pairs of stairs in search of the offices of the Association, he would find two light, large, airy rooms, tenanted by two or three serious, kind-faced ladies busily engaged writing amid piles of books, pamphlets, and letters. These ladies look as if they had found a work in life worth doing, and were doing it with all their might. The visitor would not imagine, however, unless he were informed beforehand of the character of this work, that it is one of the most far-reaching, practical, and successful efforts of genuine benevolence to be found in the United States—an effort admirable in principle, method, and details, carried on persistently year after year, ever-widening in its scope, and throwing off from itself like planets from a central sun many independent forms of kindred philanthropy. These ladies represent an organization that is grappling with the whole vast problem of pauperism in the city and State of New York, that has branches in thirty-two of the counties of the State, and that sends its visiting committees into the poor-houses, almshouses, asylums, and hospitals to bring the eye and conscience of public opinion to bear to secure needed reforms, to elevate and moralize the whole system of relieving poverty, to send comfort to the bedsides of the destitute sick, and to instruct and interest all who have charge of sick or well in the best methods of preventing and curing the great social disease of pauperism. The underlying idea of this comprehensive scheme of charitable work is, that all public institutions are almost sure to generate abuses, or at least to fall into routine ways that become almost as bad as abuses, and that to keep them up to a high standard of efficiency and open to the reception of improved methods, the constant watchfulness of enthusiastic, zealous, voluntary supervision is needed. The labors of the sanitary and Christian commissions during the war enforced this lesson, and it was to some extent the example of their labors which led

to the establishment of the State Charities Aid Association.

What was the origin of this peculiar society, which has no prototype, but is evidently destined to serve as a model for like organizations in other States? Its plan grew out of the thoughts, experiences, and benevolent purpose of one woman. Earnest helpers, men and women, were found to aid in putting the plan in practice, but the conception of the scheme is due to Miss Louisa Lee Schuyler.

About ten years ago, Miss Schuyler visited the poor-house of Westchester County, not far from her home. She was shocked at the condition of the institution. Sick and well, sane and demented, adults and children, the vicious and the merely unfortunate were huddled together, without proper sanitary conditions, or decent separation of the sexes, or any reformatory opportunities. She took hold of the work of renovating this institution, associated with her a number of ladies living in the neighborhood, and in the course of a few months accomplished a remarkable reform. While engaged in this effort, she was impressed with the thought that, to have a permanent effect, the sort of work she was doing must not be casual and intermittent nor regular and systematic. If vigilance were relaxed, old abuses or new ones would be sure to gain a foothold. Here was struck the key-note of the great plan of benevolence which she subsequently founded. A permanent visiting committee was formed to keep a constant oversight on the Westchester poor-house, and this committee became the model for the committees afterward started in other counties by the central society, which was soon to come into being.

Early in 1872 the Central Society was established, and received the name of the State Charities Aid Association. Its objects, as set forth in its constitution, were: "1st. To promote an active interest in the New York State institutions of public charities, with a view to the physical, mental, and moral improvement of the pauper inmates; 2d. To make the present pauper system more efficient, and to bring about such reforms in it as may be in accordance with the most enlightened views of Christianity, science, and philanthropy." The first president was Professor Theodore W. Dwight; Miss Schuyler was vice-president, and Miss R. B. Long, secretary. Three committees—on children, on adult able-bodied paupers, and on hospitals—were formed, to

which was subsequently added a committee for the elevation of the poor in their homes. Leading clergymen, physicians, and ladies of high social standing, well known for their philanthropic labors, took an interest in the movement. The membership was enlarged from month to month, and before the end of the year the Association was fairly equipped to begin its arduous undertaking.

Practical wisdom was shown at the outset by not trying to do too much at once. A much-needed work of reform was found close at hand, and for a time the efforts of the Association were chiefly concentrated upon its accomplishment. The great Bellevue Hospital in the city of New York is the omnium-gatherum of the waifs and dregs of society. The tramp, the drunkard, the outcast, the wanderer, and the honest workman who has fallen into destitution, when stricken by disease or prostrated by accident, are carried to its wards. There are hospitals in the metropolis sustained by church organizations or endowed by private charity, and upon the islands in the East River there are public buildings for incurables, the insane, and the blind; but Bellevue is the general receptacle of all cases for which there is no better provision, and the sorting-place for patients on their way to other institutions. A committee of sixty ladies and gentlemen was organized by the Association to make weekly visits to all the wards of this vast hive of stricken humanity. The work was done patiently and systematically. A radical defect was discovered at the start in the system of nursing. The nurses were ignorant, illiterate women, often intemperate (though not criminals as formerly) and utterly untrustworthy. As a result the patients died from neglect, as well as from disease, and doctors were obliged to refrain from prescribing certain remedies and methods of treatment, because the nurses could not carry them out. It seems incredible that the lives of sick people could have been left in such care. There was no lack of medical skill, for the physicians felt the pride of their profession; but it was not supplemented by the good nursing which is as important as good medical treatment. How to provide efficient nurses for Bellevue and to break up the miserable system fastened upon it, was the first great problem that the Aid Association undertook to solve. One of its members, Doctor W. Gill Wylie, volunteered to go to Europe and study the methods of nursing employed in the public hospitals there. He visited London, Paris, and Vienna. It was in London that he found what he was seeking in the training-school for nurses established by Florence Nightingale. His report on that school,

and on the work its pupils do in the London Hospitals, was made the basis of immediate action by the Association. The result of this effort was the establishment of the Bellevue Hospital Training-school for Nurses. Space is lacking here to describe the growth and workings of this admirable institution. A separate article would be required to give anything like a fair presentation of its successful labors in revolutionizing the system of nursing in the city hospitals, in bringing comfort and restored health to thousands of sufferers, and in sending abroad into the community hundreds of skillful, patient, gentle women, ready to answer the calls of private families for aid in the care of the sick.

In the second year of its existence, the presidency of the Association was accepted by Miss Schuyler by the desire of all its members, and she has held the position ever since. The roll of city members was considerably enlarged, studies of the problems of pauperism diligently prosecuted, and the visiting work extended to nearly all the institutions under the charge of the New York Commissioners of Charities and Corrections, except the prisons, which are the special care of the Prison Association—a well managed society of kindred character that has done admirable service in its peculiar field. But the Aid Association was not content with what it was doing in the metropolis. Its original plan was to extend its watchful eyes and helping hands all over the State, and this plan it early began to put into effect. County after county was visited by officers of the Association, and branch local visiting committees were formed. Sometimes, the reports of the work in New York City and in Westchester County stimulated a voluntary local movement, to which the central organization gave form and direction; but oftener a local interest had to be created by the efforts of Miss Schuyler and her associates. With rare exceptions, the county poor-houses were found in a wretched condition—buildings were not adapted for the purpose, there was no proper separation of inmates, children were contaminated by the vicious conversation of hardened reprobates, scanty provision was made for labor, miserable conditions for health existed, and no reformatory influences were at work, except an occasional sermon by some self-sacrificing clergyman. The people living in the vicinity of a poor-house were usually in total ignorance of what went on within its walls. They seemed to regard it as a sort of lazaretto to be avoided. The common opinion was that the place ought not to be made too comfortable, lest paupers should prefer to live in it to shifting for themselves. The Aid Association

held a different theory. They believed in providing for paupers every necessary condition of healthful, moral living; but they had an infallible safeguard against overcrowded poor-houses, and that was hard work. "Provide work for every one who is able to work," was the lesson they taught. Wherever it was heeded, the poor-house flock was speedily thinned of its black sheep, for the lazy and shiftless preferred to earn wages elsewhere for work no harder than that which in the county institution only got them board and clothes.

In the formation of local visiting committees, the officers of the State Charities Aid Association follow a method which rarely fails of success. They invite a number of influential people of high standing to meet and talk the matter over. Thus an interest is aroused, other gatherings follow, the best plans of visiting work, the cure of the destitute sick, the character and management of the local poor-house, methods of out-door relief, the tramp nuisance, what can be done for pauper children, etc., are discussed, and soon an active, zealous local committee is created, strong enough to bring the public opinion of the community to bear in support of its plans for reform. The aim is always to get the best people into the movement, so as to give it character and force, and enable it to overcome official opposition.

As early in its career as 1873, the Association found the need of State authority to open the doors of the public institutions to its visitors. In a few cases admission was refused, and in others it was granted in a grudging, unfriendly way. The Association consulted with the State Board of Charities, and a bill was prepared under which the two bodies could act harmoniously together. The bill, which was passed at the session of 1873, provided that visitors named by the State Board should at all times have the right to enter and inspect any of the State institutions. It was agreed between the Board and the Aid Association that the latter should nominate visitors, and that the former should give them the official authorization provided for by the new law. During seven years of coöperation between the two organizations, a great work was accomplished for the reform and elevation of the pauper institutions of the State. Fruitful of wise plans of improvement, and tireless in their efforts to remedy defects and vices, the zealous members of the Association accomplished far more than any official body could possibly have effected by itself. Indeed, their achievements were mainly quite out of the line of regular official effort.

One of the first great evils with which they

grappled was the rearing of pauper children in poor-houses. They asserted that, in the interest of the State as well as of humanity, the children of paupers should not be allowed to grow up in the atmosphere of pauperism, to follow in the footsteps of their parents. Even with the best management, a poor-house, they said, is no fit place for a child. In some of these institutions the visitors found three generations of the same pauper families. The taint of shiftlessness and dependence was no doubt in the blood, but society had done nothing to counteract it by proper education and surroundings. No self-respect nor ambition could be expected of a poor-house child, reared among outcasts and the wrecks of dissipation and misfortune, and despised by all the children of the neighborhood. The efforts of the State Board and of the Association, procured in 1875 the passage of an act which struck a great blow at the old poor-house system. This act, with some subsequent amendments, removed all children over two years of age from poor-houses and alms-houses, and forbade such institutions to receive them. Some were sent to reformatories, industrial homes, and asylums; but the effort of the Association was to have them, as far as possible, placed in families. Institution life in its best phases, the Society holds, cannot equip a child for independence and an honorable career nearly so well as the training of an orderly household. In their efforts to provide homes for pauper children, the Association has received valuable assistance from the Children's Aid Society of the City of New York—one of the noblest and most efficient of the great charities of the metropolis. The law does not execute itself, however, and the Association finds a great deal of work necessary to see that it is put in operation and kept in operation.

At one of the meetings of the Association, when the subject of preventing pauperism by giving a proper training to the children of paupers was under consideration, Dr. Elisha Harris related the terrible story of "Margaret, the Mother of Criminals." It has been published in the newspapers, but can profitably be read again to illustrate the great importance of one branch of the Association's work. Margaret was a pauper child left adrift in one of the villages on the upper Hudson, about ninety years ago. There was no alms-house in the place, and she was made a subject of out-door relief, receiving occasionally food and clothing from the town officials, but was never educated nor sheltered in a proper home. She became the mother of a long race of criminals and paupers, which has cursed the county ever since. The county records show two hundred of her descendants who have been

criminals. In one generation of her unhappy line there were twenty children, of whom seventeen lived to maturity. Nine served terms aggregating fifty years in the State Prison for high crimes, and all the others were frequent inmates of jails and almshouses. It is said, that of the six hundred and twenty-three descendants of this outcast girl, two hundred committed crimes which brought them upon the court records, and most of the others were idiots, drunkards, lunatics, paupers, or prostitutes. The cost to the county of this race of criminals and paupers is estimated as at least one hundred thousand dollars, taking no account of the damage they inflicted upon property and the suffering and degradation they caused in others. Who can say that all this loss and wretchedness might not have been spared the community if the poor pauper girl Margaret had been provided with a good moral home life while she was growing up to womanhood?

One of the most active and faithful of the Association's force of visitors engaged in the work of regular inspection of the public charitable institutions of New York City was asked recently to give an account of a day's visiting on the Islands. She said, in reply: "We leave home about nine in the morning, land at the upper dock on Blackwell's Island, and go first to the almshouse. Here are in round numbers one thousand inmates. The aged, infirm, epileptic and disabled fill the wards. Do not suppose that we merely pass through the wards. We must look into everything—see how the food is cooked, look at the supplies, examine the laundry, peer into nooks and corners, and talk with the officers about needed improvements. The sick of the almshouse are now cared for in pavilions a short distance from the main building, and thither we next bend our steps. Two of the long, low pavilions are for incurables, and in them there are usually about one hundred patients,—men and women in about equal numbers,—most of them old and suffering from diseases accompanying old age. For these poor creatures there is no real relief until death comes.

"Next in our tour comes the Insane Asylum for women. This week there are 1,270 inmates. A careful observer would notice at once the cheerless, dreary look of the corridors where the patients pass their time, the white walls, the utter absence of any bright colors, the lack of pleasant occupation. One might readily think the asylum a prison and the inmates prisoners. When they go out for an airing they go in groups, all clad alike, and move along at an even pace like so many

automatons. The dull, monotonous, hum-drum existence must have a depressing effect.

"The Retreat is a most melancholy place. The violent insane are kept here like so many animals behind bolts and bars.

"The next institution we visit is the Workhouse. This is another massive structure, very like a prison. The building is of stone and was built by convict labor. The cells open out on the balconies. In each cell there are two bunks—iron frames with canvass laced upon them. A single blanket is allowed to each bunk. In 1879 there were 16,408 commitments to this institution—most of them for drunkenness and disorderly conduct. A large proportion of the inmates belong to the army of 'repeaters,' or 'revolvers,' as the persons are called, who revolve back and forth between the work-house and their haunts in the city. Some have been here thirty or forty times. These people perform most of the hard work of the institutions as 'helpers.' The women are scrubbers, etc. The men have a tailor-shop, shoe-shop, carpenter and blacksmith shops. They also make brooms, chairs, and scrub-brushes. Much of the clothing and bedding is also made in the workhouse. The name of this institution is no misnomer; the inmates certainly work, but none too hard; the self-commitments prove this. The glaring fault here is the lack of proper classification. The hardened and vicious are in the constant companionship of those who come for the first time. Neither is there any system of rewards of merit to encourage good behavior. One great need, apparent to every woman who visits the institution, is a temporary home for friendless young girls to which they could go when discharged from the work-house. For the want of such a home, they drift back into their old vicious associations, and finally become hardened criminals. If they could be brought under good influences, in a temporary home from whence they could be sent to some employment, a large number of them would be saved.

"The work-house has its own hospitals, which we must inspect. Then we go to the great Charity hospital—a large stone building, five stories high, on the southern end of Blackwell's Island. The separate wooden pavilions are now used as lying-in wards. But the structure on the extreme point of the island we are not allowed to enter, for there are the small-pox cases.

"The day is not yet gone, and we take a boat for Randall's Island, where there is a frightful aggregate of human suffering. Not only the insane and the idiots are there, but the insane idiots—perfect monstrosities of men-

tal deformity. But strange to say, even these distressed creatures have a spark of harmony in their warped beings. Last Sunday they tried to sing and appeared to enjoy it when the missionary sang some hymns to them. They know enough to dress themselves and take their own seats at table, and to notice strangers. The brightest of the idiots go to school, and some of them are docile and behave themselves very well.

"A visit to the hundreds of poor sick and deformed children is touching enough. These suffering waifs appeal strongly to our sympathy. The one redeeming feature is that those who are able, go to school. The buildings for the children ought to be enlarged, and everywhere better nurses are needed.

"The Branch Charity Hospital on Randall's Island receives the surplus of the other Institutions, which are generally incurable cases. The sun is getting low now, but we have still another institution to visit—the Infants' Hospital for orphan babes and for mothers from the work-house with young infants. In a recent year one hundred and eighty of these women were sent here by the Superintendent of the Out-Door Poor, and seven hundred and eighty children were admitted, of whom three hundred and sixty-two were orphans and one hundred and thirteen foundlings. You may imagine that we find enough to do in looking after the welfare of all these poor waifs. Hart's and Ward's Islands are also under the supervision of our Association, but they do not come within my visiting range. I have sought only to give you a sketch of a day's tour of a member of one of our visiting committees. It is dark when we return to the city, tired out in mind and body, but comforted for all the dreadful sights of misery, suffering, and vice we have seen with the thought that we are doing something, however little, to lessen the appalling sum of human wretchedness."

How great the field of labor is in which the State Charities Aid Association engages in the single direction of poor-house and alms-house inspection and reform, will be understood by a few figures from the official statistics. In 1880 there were relieved in these institutions 137,777 persons, including more than 5,000 insane. The estimated value of the aggregate property was \$6,000,000, and the expenditures for the year \$2,300,000. There is another wide field in which the Association engages with intelligence and zeal—that of curing the tramp evil and improving local methods of out-door relief. Some startling exposures were made a few years ago by the committee of the Association on adult able-bodied paupers, of which Mr. George H. Forster was chair-

man. The reports of the visiting committees in many of the rural and suburban counties showed that the overseers of the poor were interested in entertaining as large a number of tramps as possible, as they made a profit on their board and lodging. Some of these overseers were paid at the rate of one dollar for two meals and a lodging for each tramp accommodated over night. Others were paid twenty-five cents a meal, on which they probably made a profit of ten or fifteen cents. Each overseer's house became a center of pauperism and vagrancy, and it was natural that the overseer should treat his boarders well so that they would stop at his place again. In short, he was a tramp's landlord, keeping a free hotel for vagrants at the expense of the county. The community, under this system, said in effect to the idle and vicious: "We will board you free of cost if you will only come and stay among us." As a result of these exposures, the Tramp Act of 1880, drafted by the Association, was passed by the Legislature, which punishes "tramping" with imprisonment at hard labor. Its effects have thus far been excellent. The leading idea of the Association in all its plans for dealing with able-bodied pauperism is to make the paupers work for their victuals and lodging. The same method that empties the poor-houses of half their inmates clears the roads of the stout and impudent beggars who start out to force society to give them an unearned living. "Make them work, insists the Association, even if their labor is unprofitable to the town. Set them to breaking stone or carting dirt on the highways—anything that will show them they cannot subsist upon the community without giving some equivalent in muscular exertion." Towns and counties that strictly follow this plan are soon shunned by the tramps, and enjoy a delightful immunity from this pest developed by careless habits of indiscriminate charity.

The conclusions reached by the Association on the subject of out-door relief, after years of study and investigation, will perhaps surprise those who think that generous giving is genuine charity. The members of the Association believe that there is too much, instead of too little, of this form of benevolence—that a vast amount of money is wasted, and a deal of evil done, by undermining the self-respect of recipients, fostering a spirit of dependence opposed to self-support, and interfering with the laws which govern wages and labor. In New York City there are more than sixty societies engaged in giving out-door relief to the poor, and besides almost every church goes to some extent into the same work. In a great city, a considerable amount of such relief must be

given to keep the unfortunate from suffering and death; but the Association urges that it should be given systematically and carefully, and only after a special investigation of the circumstances of each case. The motive, after relieving the most pressing necessity, should always be to help the poor to help themselves, and they should not be allowed to get into the way of thinking that whenever their affairs come to a tight pinch there is always a charitable society to fall back upon. A large number of families are kept constantly in the border-land between self-support and pauperism, passing frequently from one region to the other, by the ease with which they can obtain money, clothes, and food from charitable societies when they are in a strait; whereas, if aid were not so convenient to obtain, they would outgrow their shiftless habits and become permanently self-sustaining. Good results are anticipated through the recent establishment of the Charity Organization Society of New York. Coöperation of all the organized charities of the city and central supervision is the plan of this society, and it is already realized to an important extent.

About four years ago an active member of the Association, Miss Sarah T. Sands, basing her work upon one of the publications of the Association, formed the Loan Relief Association, of the Sixteenth Ward, the object of which is to lend to the worthy poor small sums of money to meet pressing temporary needs, and articles required in the care of the sick—money and articles to be promptly returned at the times agreed upon. The success of this modest little work of benevolence has been very gratifying. The Society provides medical treatment for the sick, and legal assistance to people who do not know their rights or cannot hire a lawyer to lay their grievances before a court. It has a small circulating library, and a system of giving out sewing to poor women to enable them to repay with work the money they borrow. Its work has shown that as keen a sense of honor may be found in the tenement house as in the Fifth avenue mansion. The care taken of borrowed articles, and the effort made to return money loans on the day promised, shows an integrity of character too often wanting in the rich. One of the admirable features of the Loan Relief Society is the small expense attending it. The office of the Society is in the basement of the manager's house, so no rent is paid; nor are there any salaries to officers.

The efforts of the Committee on the Elevation of the Poor in their Homes, which has in charge one of the most important branches of the permanent work of the State Charities

Aid Association, deserves special notice. The chairman is Miss Grace H. Dodge. A movement in favor of tenement house reform was started by this Committee in 1879. Important amendments to the Tenement-House Act were, in consequence, passed by the Legislature, which have brought about great improvements in the sanitary condition of the homes of the poor in the metropolis. Increased power and additional funds were given the Board of Health as a result, in part, of the agitation set on foot by the Committee. A pamphlet was printed for the use of the visitors of the Association, to enable them to instruct the dwellers in tenements as to their rights under the law in the matter of sanitary appliances required to be provided by landlords. Out of the general movement initiated by the Association and the wide-spread interest excited by several public meetings, grew the Improved Dwellings Association, of which Mr. W. Bayard Cutting is president—a commercial enterprise based on a humanitarian motive—and the Sanitary Reform Society, Mr. James Gallatin, president, which co-operates with the Health Department in securing the enforcement of the Health Laws. "One good turn deserves another," says the old proverb. One good effort stimulates another, is the experience of the Association. In the broad field of the humanities there is always enough to do, and every good work undertaken seems to open the way to others that are only waiting for earnest hands.

In 1880 the Aid Association was, by the unexpected action of the State Board of Charities, placed in a position where its usefulness would have been seriously crippled, if not destroyed, had it not speedily found a way of extricating itself. The two bodies, the official and the volunteer, had been working in harmony, as we have seen, the Association furnishing and instructing committees of visitors to the public institutions, and the Board arming them with its mandate for admission. The system was not a good one, but its defect was not strikingly manifested until it had existed for nearly seven years, when the essential differences between the methods of volunteer workers and those of officials, was brought home to the Board by the publications in the newspapers by members of the Association of facts relating to the management of public institutions of charity.

Thereupon the Board adopted rules for visitors receiving its legal appointments, which made all information obtained by the visitors the exclusive property of the Board, and not to be submitted elsewhere without its consent. This was in effect to tell the committees formed by the faithful and intelligent efforts of the Aid

Association that they could not report directly to the body to which they belonged, nor act under its guidance. Thus the whole system of volunteer inspection was threatened with destruction. The Association went to the Legislature for relief, but could accomplish nothing the first winter, the State Board of Charities being opposed to their bill. During the session of 1881 the effort was renewed. Devoted members of the central organization and of the local visiting committees went to Albany; a leading lawyer of New York, Mr. Joseph H. Choate, gave his services, and made a convincing argument before the committee having the subject in charge; the powerful city newspapers took up the cause of the volunteers, and finally, after a great deal of effort a bill was passed authorizing judges of the Supreme Court, on the application of the managers of the State Charities Aid Association, to give authority to such persons as might be designated in such applications to visit and inspect the poor-houses and alms-houses in the counties where the visitors were residing.

It was a great victory for the principles upon which volunteer inspection is based. It gave the Association an independent legal standing, greatly encouraged its members, by removing what seemed to be an insuperable obstacle from its path, and placed its future growth and usefulness beyond peril. It should be said here that the Association fully appreciates the great value of the labors of the State Board of Charities. It insists, however, that official work in the institutions of charity needs to be supplemented by untiring volunteer effort.

An excellent result of the joint efforts of the State Board and the Aid Association may properly be mentioned here. The law of last winter establishing a State reformatory for women was urged upon the Legislature by a member of the Board, and supported by petitions circulated for signatures by the local visiting committees of the Association. This measure is exactly in line with the Association's ideas. Society, it holds, should counteract the first open signs of a tendency toward crime and degradation. Prisons too often confirm criminal instincts; "reformatories," "refuges," and "homes," may eradicate them. Now that the Association has its own legal rights, and its own definite field of labor, it is believed a more cordial coöperation than ever will exist between its managers and the members of the State Board of Charities.

There are other interesting features of the Association's work which can only be briefly mentioned here. Who has not noticed, on coming to New York by rail or ferry, the capacious boxes in the depots and ferry-houses,

bearing a modest request for old newspapers and magazines for the use of the sick in the hospitals; and who has not felt, as he emptied his pockets of half-read dailies and periodicals, a thrill of pleasure in the thought that he was giving some poor patient, prostrated by cruel accident or lingering disease, an hour's respite from the sense of his misfortune. Every day the boxes are emptied by paid agents, who distribute their contents in the hospitals. This admirable little philanthropic plan, which does its good work as steadily and regularly as a clock, was devised by an invalid lady, and superintended by her from her sick room; at her death a fund was contributed by her friends to perpetuate the work in her memory. Books sent to the "Committee on Books and Papers" are distributed to public institutions through the Express Companies, free of charge. The Hospital Committees, of which Dr. Stephen Smith is chairman, and Mr. F. R. Jones is secretary, issues instructions to hospital visitors, and studies plans for hospital construction and systems of nursing and diet. The Bellevue Training-School for Nurses, as we have already seen, grew out of its efforts. It also accomplished the important reform of removing the maternity service from the old hospital wards of Bellevue. It is consulted about the erection of new hospitals in this and other States. In regard to hospital buildings, it insists on the separate pavilion plan, believing that large, permanent structures become lurking-places for the germs of disease. Its efforts have already largely influenced public opinion in this direction.

The Association has a valuable library of American and foreign books bearing upon its various lines of work, which are loaned to its members, and to the officers of charitable institutions. Any member of a local visiting committee, or any hospital physician, can procure books by paying the postage for sending and returning. A number of pamphlets have been published by the Association to meet special needs for information. The annual reports of the Association are also a mine of good and suggestive material, available to all who desire to engage intelligently in charitable work among the poor.

The future career of the State Charities Aid Association may be outlined from its past. It proposes to maintain and strengthen its central organization, for the study of the problems of pauperism, and as a focus of thought and practical effort for the improvement of the charitable institutions and the elevation of the poorer classes, and at the same time to extend its visiting system until it embraces all the counties in the State, and brings under its inspection all the county poor-

houses, city almshouses, public hospitals, and asylums. It hopes that its success in New York will tend to the early establishment of kindred societies in other States, and is ready to assist in the organization of such societies, and give them the advantage of its experience. Its plan of uniting the student element and the practical element in philanthropic work, by a double organization of central committees of research and visiting committees for diligent systematic work, is unique. Nothing like it is to be found in this or any other country, and it is attracting much attention from philanthropists in England. Its managers attribute its success to the excellence of this plan, to the association of ladies and gentlemen upon all the committees, to the classification of work,—not by institutions, but by persons,—and to the high character and genuine benevolent spirit of those who have formed the central and local committees.

In conclusion, it should be said that the managers of the Association believe that the most urgent reform now needed in all the charitable institutions is a civil-service system, to secure a permanent tenure to meritorious

officers and employés and put a stop to the vicious custom of appointments as a reward for political service. Nowhere else is there more need of experience, and of special natural fitness of character and mind, in those occupying public positions. Yet physicians, superintendents, nurses, and assistants, as a rule owe their places to their party services, or to the efforts of influential politicians, rather than to their own merit. This wretched system is not peculiar to New York. In Ohio, not many years ago, when supremacy passed for a time from the hands of one party to that of its rival, the entire personnel of the State benevolent institutions, from superintendents down to scrubbers, was ruthlessly changed, with brutal disregard of the welfare of the unfortunate inmates. Indeed, there are few States where the offices in such institutions are not treated as the legitimate spoils of the successful party. The State Charities Aid Association, through its corps of visitors, is constantly brought in contact with the evils that grow out of this system, and will spare no effort to develop such an enlightened public opinion as will reform it altogether.

*E. V. Smalley.*

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#### AFTER THE RAIN.

In mist yon summer range of hills is drowned;

Lost are the meadows and the feeding herds;

From cottage eaves the slow drops slip to ground;

The smoke quits languidly the chimney's throat,

Incurious of the sky as new-fledged birds

That only of the cozy nest take note.

Cooling her rose-red cheek against the pane,

My neighbor's child laughs at the weeping world.

The draggled rooster, strutting down the lane,

Is jester at her baby court; and though

The splendors of Queen Juno's bird are furled,

My lady laughs, as at a merry show;

For little knows her soul of woe or fears

Behind its tender shield of babyhood.

To me, whose shield is lost, the earth appears

A tear-stained face, its brightness overcast.

The mist is thinning from the highest wood,

And fir and hemlock stand, half-cloaked and vast,

Like errant spirits of the tombless Greeks,

That from some lonely rampart of the skies

Look on the busy plain and happy freaks

Of flesh-clad men; or are they exiled Moors,

Defiling through the mountain pass, whose eyes

The Vega's loveliness in vain allures?

Ah, baby neighbor at the pane, whose glee

Might rout the mists that muffle hill and field,

And coax sad Nature to be gay with thee,

The world's woe pierceth me,—lend me thy shield!

*Annie R. Annan.*