THE SUPPRESSION OF PAUPERISM.

It has been for some time apparent that the people of this country were not to be exempted from the social evils that have so long plagued their European ancestors. The breadth of fertile acres that fell to us, a heritage unequaled in history, has not availed, in spite of all our boasting, to maintain plenty in the homes of our citizens. It has not availed that we entered upon it at an era when liberty of thought and liberty of action were, for the first time, coming to be recognized as the inalienable rights of mankind, or that we have developed it in the light of all the amazing discoveries of modern science. All our wealth of advantages and opportunities has not averted the fate that is common to nations as well as individuals. To the most richly endowed of mortals, that sobering moment some time comes when the first wrinkle or the first gray lock awakens the consciousness that youth is not perennial; and, though a community may not die, it cannot escape the infirmities of increasing years.

That happy equality of condition for which our people were once distinguished is gone. The independent, self-respecting citizen is fast giving place to the truculent yet slavish employee. The rich are separated from the poor by higher barriers than in many an ancient aristocracy, while the kindly bonds of mutual obligation and respect, the redeeming feature of that form of society, have here no existence. There are more rich than of old; but there are infinitely more poor. Not that the material condition of the common people is now much worse than formerly, for this is not true. But the immense additions to the wealth of the nation have been so ill-distributed that the poor man of to-day is probably no better fed, not so well clothed, and little better housed than the poor man of twenty-five years since, and the number of poor to be cared for by charity has frightfully increased. There are no statistics of pauperism for the country at large that are of value,—statistics when incomplete being greatly given to misleading those who put their trust in them. But we know that the expenditure for the relief of the poor is now far greater than formerly. From 1850 to 1880 the population of the city of New York increased 134 per cent., while the payments for charitable purposes increased 539 per cent. These payments do not now fall much short of three million dollars per annum. We cannot tell definitely how much is expended by private charitable societies, but it is probably about four million dollars, rather more than less. This does not include the charities connected with the individual religious organizations, of which there are some five hundred in the city. It is a moderate estimate to put the churches and private individuals down as contributing at least one million dollars annually to the poor, making a total of eight million dollars. Roughly speaking, the expenditure in London is perhaps six times this amount for a population nearly four times as great. At the rate at which we are advancing, the New World promises to beat the Old in pauperism as well as in other things.

If we distrust the evidence of these figures, we shall not fare better with certain others. There are more than two hundred charitable societies, exclusive of branches, church societies, and public institutions, now in operation in the city of New York. In 1850 only forty-five of these were in existence, and their expenditure was less in an even greater proportion. It would seem as if there were hardly so many human needs as would afford scope for all these organizations. There are societies for the relief of the poor of the different nations that have contributed to our population. There are societies for the different sexes and ages and for all sorts and conditions of men. There are societies for the relief of sickness in general and of the different sicknesses in particular. There are societies for the comfortable ushering of the pauper into the world; for his aid during early youth; for his education in certain rudiments of learning, and for the prevention of his education in certain other rudiments of learning whereto he is prone; for his assistance in transferring his superfluous presence to other regions; for supplying him with medical advice, medicine, and food in his own abode or in special hospitals provided for his use; for his maintenance at the public expense when he cannot make shift for himself; for the supervision of this maintenance, and for the supervision of these supervisors; for keeping him out of prison; for looking after him while in prison and when he emerges; and, finally, for his assistance in decently leaving a world which seems never to have wanted him, to have done as little as it could for him at

the greatest possible expense, and to have gotten back from him in service and gratitude perhaps even less than it deserved.

This immense body of charitable institutions is certainly an impressive monument of the generosity of our people, but it is also, unfortunately, a proof of the vast growth of the evils with which these societies contend. It is even maintained, by some persons well qualified to judge, that the labors of these societies in relief of suffering have actually ended in increasing its amount. One of the wisest and noblest of the workers for the uplifting of the London poor grimly remarks: "Our object, *i. e.*, my rector and self and some others, is to put a stop as much as possible to all benevolence"; and those who have had the widest experience seem generally the most inclined to adopt this view. To understand the reason for this opinion, it is necessary to consider the manner in which charitable enterprises are carried on. The general aim being to better the condition of the poor, we may say that all benevolent labor is directed either to the relief of suffering or to the removal of the causes of suffering. The relief of suffering is simple, intelligible, and naturally delightful to every one. To feed the hungry and heal the sick are the first impulses of the heart; but to ascertain the reasons for the hunger and sickness, and to form and carry out plans for their prevention—these are difficult and tedious labors, the mention of which is generally enough to check the benevolent impulses at the very outset. The heart is here, as always, the motive power, but the demands upon the judgment and the patience are too severe for such charities to be popular. Hence the immediate relief of suffering, although merely palliative in its effects, has always constituted by far the largest part of all benevolent work, and has in fact monopolized the name of charity.

Among those charities that are devoted to relief rather than prevention there is still an important distinction to be observed. There are two great sources of suffering—accident and misconduct. That is to say, we can generally find some one who is to blame for the suffering, or we cannot. Either the individual sufferer, or some one connected with him by family ties, has brought about the suffering by improvidence, vice, or other misconduct; or the suffering could not have been prevented by ordinary human virtue or forethought.

Benevolent people, acting under the desire to give immediate relief to suffering, have not been much disposed to ponder upon this distinction. The result has been sufficiently deplorable. The distribution of charitable relief, without regard to the origin of suffering, has had about as satisfactory results as would follow from administering the same antidote in all cases of poisoning. The Elizabethan poor-law was designed to relieve the poor, and came near pauperizing the English nation. Yet no profound reflection is needed to discover that the effects of relieving suffering caused by accident may be, and must be, greatly different from those of relieving suffering caused by choice. It is obvious enough that, besides the immediate relief, there are remote effects upon the individual relieved and upon the community that knows of his relief. When suffering is the result of accident, we may say with reasonable certainty that to relieve it will not tend to increase it. Men do not habitually expose themselves to accident or loss, more than they otherwise would, because they know that their sufferings may be lessened by charity. It is true that such charity may have some remote effect in encouraging improvidence; a man may not be at the same pains to save money for life insurance if he believes that his family will be cared for by charity in the case of his accidental death; but we cannot say that public opinion really considers a laborer improvident who does not invest in life insurance. On the other hand, it is plain that relief of this kind can have no effect in removing the causes of suffering. Accidents are not prevented by the existence of ambulances, and hospitals, and orphan asylums.

But, when we undertake to relieve suffering caused by misconduct, it is evident that a fundamental and, doubtless, beneficent provision of nature is interfered with. When we suffer in consequence of our own willful acts, the natural effect is to deter us from repeating those acts. When this suffering is relieved by others, the natural effect is to encourage us to repeat those acts. The mass of mankind will repent of their sins, whether of omission or commission, only under the influence of actual present pain—either felt by themselves or most clearly set before their eyes. Take away this pain, and they will go on sinning and to sin until the day of judgment. Moreover, all those who are tempted to sin, observing that if they yield they shall not surely die, feel their power of resistance thereby greatly weakened. The testimony is conclusive in repeated cases that, where relief has been most generously bestowed, there has been a permanent increase of vice and poverty. As a London missionary said, after a winter when the sufferings of the poor had been unusually severe and alms-giving correspondingly profuse, every gift of a shilling ticket had done four pennyworth of good and eight pennyworth of harm. The fourpence

represented the food that went into the stomachs of the wretched population; the eightpence, the premium given to their wasteful and improvident habits.

It is sometimes hastily said that it is the truest benevolence to leave people to suffer the consequences of their own misbehavior. Granting this, the real difficulty of the problem is untouched. Altogether, the most harrowing perplexities occur when we consider cases of suffering caused, not by the misconduct of the individual sufferer, but by that of those with whom he is connected by family ties. The most profound social questions are here involved and presented in the most distressing concrete forms. The appeals to compassion are sometimes so irresistibly touching, that it is not surprising if clear views on these subjects are not prevalent. The calm calculations of reason as to what may result in the remote future have little chance of being listened to when the ears are filled with the wails of sick women and starving children. Nevertheless, experience sternly teaches that even here the hasty yielding to sympathetic impulses only multiplies suffering. What is more repulsive to contemplate than an ill-assorted marriage? Life cannot seem worth living when the future offers only long years of quarrel, neglect, and disgust. But to enable those who are dissatisfied with the result of their contract to dissolve it at will, is to loosen the bonds of society. It means the destruction of the family,—the institution, above all others, upon which the happiness of mankind depends.

But what is to be done when we find a wife suffering from the idleness or improvidence of her husband? If her sufferings are relieved by charity, the result is, almost certainly, to encourage the husband to continue in his bad habits. Not only this, but other husbands in like circumstances are encouraged to believe that charity will relieve them from the difficulties in which they have involved themselves. Even more must be added, for those who are contemplating matrimony without any assured income will be encouraged to carry out their intentions. Difficult and painful as such cases are to deal with, they are far less so than those where children are involved. Marriage is not contracted until the parties have reached what are called years of discretion. They may be presumed to have contemplated the natural results of their deliberate action. But the doctrine of original sin, in its most extreme form, never went so far as to maintain that infants were consciously present in the deliberations of Adam and Eve, and common sense instinctively refuses to hold human beings responsible for what they never had anything to do with. Nevertheless, it is undeniably true that, if charity undertakes to do the work for children that the vice and improvidence of their parents have left undone, parents will furnish charity with more work of that kind than it can attend to. Such relief is not only an encouragement to reckless marrying, but, what is still more deplorable, to illicit unions. The enormous mischief wrought by the great foundling institutions of Paris and Vienna has long been notorious. The inhabitants of New York City are required by law to support similar institutions, and to extend their influence as widely as possible by paying a certain sum for every infant and every mother to which those institutions may afford shelter!

There is probably no charity more widely known or more generally beloved than that conducted among the poor children of New York. It has so recommended itself that it receives donations from all parts of the country. It has undoubtedly saved thousands of children from death and tens of thousands from degradation. It has removed vast numbers from conditions which would, in all probability, have converted them into criminals, and distributed them throughout the land so that they are subjected to wholesome and reformatory influences. It has given a modicum of education to those who would otherwise have had none, and has at least alleviated an enormous amount of misery that it could not wholly remove. It seems reasonable to give credit to the statements of its agents, that those children who have been removed from the city have almost without exception done well. It is therefore open to no strictures, so far as its influence upon these recipients of its bounty is concerned. Nor can it be doubted that its influence upon the children that have received its aid and have remained in the city has been highly beneficial.

Yet, what is the significance of a fact like this? In a single room in a cellar, in the city of New York, almost destitute of furniture, destitute even of bed-clothing, there lived last winter a family of seven—father, mother, and five little children. Poor as they were, they had shared their wretched shelter with a family still poorer than themselves, although they had no food to share with them. The children, being without shoes and almost without clothing, were, of course, unable to attend the public schools; and when an industrial school was suggested the mother approved, saying that she herself had attended one before her marriage. Obviously, the parents could not care for five children. They were not vicious nor lazy. They were honest, well-meaning, ignorant people, who were glad to

work when they had a chance, but who could find no work to do. The man was a common laborer, earning a dollar and thirty-five cents a day during that part of the year only when outdoor labor is not interfered with by frost. He had been without work for four months. The average income of the family, including what the mother could earn by occasional washing or scrubbing, was probably not a dollar a day. The rent of their cellar was seven dollars a month, so that the daily allowance to each member of the family for food, fuel, clothing, furniture, etc., was about ten cents. The father was advised to answer an advertisement calling for men to clean old brick. He was too late. The men previously employed in this work had struck for an advance upon the dollar and a half that they had been receiving. Their places had been immediately filled by Italians at a dollar a day.

There is nothing peculiar about this case. It differs happily from many others in that it is not complicated with sickness. But it suggests the query whether this society that cared for the mother twenty years ago and that is now to care for her five children, will not stagger under the burden when these children's children in their turn need relief. Thirty years ago the population of New York was about five-twelfths what it is now; that is, since that time it has somewhat more than doubled. The number of poor children sent out of the city in 1854 was about eight hundred. Last year it was four thousand. The expense of caring for poor children in 1854 was about $10,000. Last year it was $236,000. What will these figures be thirty years hence? Noble as the aim of the society is, honorable as its management has been, and fruitful as are its labors, the evils with which it deals have a capacity of increase greater than any palliative agencies. The supply of friendless children will keep pace with the demand. As parents find that others will care for their children if they do not, the sense of parental responsibility, already deplorably weakened, will still further diminish, and with it there will disappear all those qualities that lift man above the brutes. The godless, soulless, reckless, hopeless life of the Parisian *canaille* is fast becoming the life of the populace of New York.

As matters stand now, we are met with a horrible dilemma. Either we may harden our hearts to the cries of innocent children, homeless and starving—at which humanity revolts; or we may relieve their suffering, well knowing that present relief but increases the future evil—whereat reason rebels. But there is no need that matters should stand as they now stand. It is entirely practicable to administer so much relief as mercy demands, and at the same time to let suffering have its wholesome effect. As to confirmed wrong-doers, their sufferings are their own choice, and it is vain for charity to interfere. As to wrong-doers who may be capable of reformation, a noble work may be done, but not by charitable corporations. The saving influence must come straight from a human heart. Soul must speak with soul, the watchful guidance of friendship must be ever at hand, or relief will surely bring more harm than good. As to those whose suffering is caused by the misconduct of others, they must indeed be relieved; but at the same time the misconduct that has caused them to suffer must be sternly punished. What maudlin charity is this that encourages parents to drop their helpless offspring into the cradle of a foundling asylum, to be cared for at the public expense! What imbecile legislation that compels the public to pay for the farming out of the care of these wretched infants! It is impossible to conceive a system more depraved than that which practically offers to parents who will desert their children a bounty of ten dollars a month, provided they again assume their care. Yet such is the system that now prevails in New York. A single institution, founded scarcely a dozen years ago, now draws from the public treasury about $240,000 per annum, has under its care about 2500 infants, and annually receives about three per cent. of all the children born in the city of New York.

It seems the plainest dictate of common sense that parents who would desert their offspring should have their way made hard and not easy. If they are reduced to poverty by causes beyond their control, they should be encouraged and assisted to maintain their homes. If they are able to support their children, and will not, they should be compelled to set apart such portion of their wages as will suffice for such support in the various children's homes, under penalties severe enough to insure obedience. If they are so improvident, so vicious, so dead to parental affection, that they will not work for those whom nature has made dependent on them, if they will not display so much feeling of responsibility as the humblest of the brutes show to their young, they should be punished as criminals, that their example may be a warning to all that stand in need of such teaching.

Without such restraining measures, most of our existing charities have a future entirely without hope. Their labor is as vain as that of working the pumps of a leaky ship. The vessel may be kept for a time afloat, but the leak is widened by the very efforts to undo its effects; the water is pumped back to its

source, and the crew are worn out with their Danaïdean task. The alarming nature of our situation has happily aroused the intelligence of the charitably disposed to the need of action, and considerable attention has recently been directed to preventive work. The names of the more recently organized societies themselves indicate the change, their general aim being to keep people from falling into a condition where they will need relief. It is too soon as yet to expect any considerable unanimity as to the methods to be employed, or even any very distinct views as to the true purpose of these efforts. Nevertheless, it may not be unprofitable to state some of those conditions, upon compliance with which success depends.

The great need of our modern civilization —at least in those communities where a military organization is unnecessary—is to maintain the highest possible standard of living among those citizens who are supported by their daily toil. To bring about this end, influences of two distinct kinds must be employed. On the one hand, people are to be taught to do as well as possible with what they get; on the other, it is to be provided that they get as much as possible. Into this great field of future labor we can do little more than glance; but if, as we maintain, the State should punish parents for not bringing up their children to habits of industry, it should certainly do its best to deprive them of excuse for their negligence. Free education has not a pauperizing tendency. The knowledge that children will be educated at the public expense has an entirely different effect from the knowledge that they will be supported at the public expense—at least, when parents are compelled to support their children while they are receiving education. There is no encouragement to either idleness or vice in such a system. But the education given in our primary schools is merely rudimentary, while that of the higher schools is to a great extent of value to the pupils only as fitting them to teach what they have been taught. It may seem a startling proposition, but it is nevertheless true, that if, instead of spending a quarter of a million dollars annually in the indirect encouragement of illicit unions, the city of New York should spend the same sum in giving instruction in working in wood and metal, in cooking, in dress-making, in drawing, even in washing and sewing, much more suffering would be prevented than is now relieved. But so long as a majority of our citizens are of the opinion that a foundling asylum is a more beneficent establishment than the Cooper Institute, there will be no surplus revenue to devote to such purposes.

Under this head must be classed those enterprises, now rapidly growing in number, that are directed to the improvement of the homes of the poor, and to the removal of the causes of vice and improvidence. The resulting legislation has unquestionably had an immense effect in improving the condition of the tenement-houses of New York and in checking the spread of disease. There are not wanting those who regard with apprehension the effect of the paternal legislation by which these changes have been brought about, as tending to undermine the spirit of independence, which under our form of government it is so important to maintain among the poor. However it may be in the future, the immediate result has been to better the conditions of living.

As to the second of these great ends, the maintenance of a liberal reward for labor, there is one difficulty so formidable as to dwarf all others. We shall therefore not dwell upon the fact, which has been proved in London and is susceptible of proof elsewhere, that a liberal distribution of alms has, in addition to the effects already mentioned, two others that are seldom thought of. One is to lower the rate of wages, the other—which amounts to the same thing—to raise rents. Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Where the soup-kitchen is established, there the poor will swarm, underbidding one another for work and outbidding one another for shelter. The remedy is here so obvious that there is nothing discouraging in the situation.

But there is an evil, vast and far-reaching in its effects, that defies all charitable labors, and nullifies every effort for the elevation of the poor. If, with infinite pains, the lowest stratum of society be raised somewhat, a vacuum is created into which all Europe stands ready to pour her degraded population. If, by miracles of legislative wisdom and prodigies of charitable zeal, our present poor should have their self-respect so far developed as to scorn the vile living that may be had out of the refuse of the rich, and for a season the ash-barrels and garbage-pots of New York should stand in peace, straightway a new brood of harpies would scent their food and fly to these shores to renew the disgusting feast. The poor that we have with us may be uplifted, but we cannot uplift the poor of the world. Whosoever lifts upon that which exceeds his lifting power by but a pound weight moves it not at all, only converting his energy into useless and uncomfortable heat. In the end nothing has been gained; rather, ground has been lost, for the average condition of the poor is lowered. In any

society, the rate of wages depends finally upon the standard of living set for themselves by the common laborers. Bring in upon them a host of strangers used to lower wages and poorer fare, and an influence is at once set at work to reduce the prevailing rate of wages and therewith the standard of living.

It may be fortunate that a considerable feeling has been expressed—perhaps, too, really exists—upon this subject of the competition of foreign with American labor. Certain of the community have demanded protection to our laborers and got what passes for such. Whether laborers can be protected, —that is, whether their high wages can be maintained by duties upon imported goods,—is a question which it is needless here to ask or answer. But that their wages can be reduced by importing foreign laborers is not to be denied, while importations of this kind are made for this avowed purpose and with this actual result. It should seem that those who sincerely desire to secure to American labor a generous reward would heartily support measures to check both the immigration of paupers and the importation of debased and ignorant laborers, while those whose sincerity may be questioned could not consistently oppose such measures.

What is needed is a provision of the following character: Every person not a citizen entering the United States should be required to produce a certificate of deposit in his own name, or exhibit funds owned by him, to the amount of at least one hundred dollars, suitable arrangements being made for the representation of families by their head, and for the exception of first-class passengers and temporary visitors. It would be a harsh measure to impose a tax upon immigrants, as it would be necessarily collected at a time when its payment would be most onerous to them. But if a foreigner wishes to become a citizen of this country, it is not only a mercy to him, but an act of justice to ourselves, to require him to come provided, either by his own exertions or through the aid of friends, with such a capital as will enable him to make advantageous shift for himself, and render it improbable that he will become a charge upon the community. In this way we should draw to ourselves only such thrifty and provident material as good citizens can be made of, for the amount named would seldom be saved without the exercise of some virtue. The competition of such laborers need not be dreaded, for the standard of comfort implied by the possession of such a capital is not a low one. The degraded, the beggars, the incapables, would be excluded; and those foreign communities that have shrewdly reasoned that it costs them less to pay the passage of their paupers to our shores than to support them at home would find their calculations seriously disturbed.

This is not a matter in which the city or the State of New York is alone interested, although they are primarily liable for the support and assistance of five or six thousand wretched wanderers every year. New York is the great organ of distribution, not only of merchandise, but of men. Whatever improves the quality of either is a very direct benefit to the vast interior of our country. But, unless something can be done in the direction suggested, the burden upon the charitable people of that city will become greater than they can bear. The rates of ocean passage will never be higher and are likely to be lower. There is no end to the supply of foreign poor. It is not lessened by any draughts that can be made upon it. New sources are continually opening,—Italy, Bohemia, Poland, Russia, have recently been added,—and in these countries there is a wealth of poverty that is perennial. Population presses hard on its bounds, and any relief from emigration is quickly followed by a corresponding increase. It is not a hopeless task, considering the charity and intelligence of our people, to provide for our own poor. It is otherwise if we have to deal with the paupers of the world.

D. McG. Means.

BYRON AT THE CELL OF TASSO,

ST. ANNA'S HOSPITAL, FERRARA.

THOSE tears become thee, Byron! Wandering free
As wind and sunlight over Italy,
O'er every land of beauty and renown,
Yet stamping oft a satyr's hoof-mark down;
How could'st thou view the cell where, undefiled,
Impassioned, pined the sun-god's elder child,
And not weep for lone Tasso? Woe for thee,
In seeming freedom, heavier chained than he!

Mary Stacy Withington.