SOME OF OUR NEIGHBOURS.

HAT one half of the world does not know how the other half lives, is decidedly true of those who dwell in large towns. Of all London's inhabitants, but few probably know the condition in which the poorest of their brethren exist. Come with me. A quarter of an hour's walk from the Bank of England will bring us within the sphere of as much want, misery, and crime as even London can show.

Eastward, then, we go, until busy Aldgate is merged into Whitechapel. Now down this turning, and we dive into the streets of Spitalfields. It is no longer the Spitalfields of olden times, with its aristocracy of silk-weavers, but a changed place, teeming with Jews, criminals, and that large class of unemployed who are always hovering on the confines of crime.

Into this street with me. There are two policemen standing at the corner, but we shall not need their protection. We are, perhaps, safer amongst them than if we were one of themselves. They will rob one another, and very curious are the expedients resorted to for protection. In common lodging-houses the wise often sleep with their clothes beneath the pillow. One man, whose boots had once been stolen from that place of security, found at last the following plan to be the safest. Every night, on removing his boots, he placed them each under a leg of the bedstead. To steal them they must have lifted the bedstead, and awaked the sleeper. But they know our intentions are friendly, and we shall be safe.

Ugh! what an atmosphere—thick, heavy, and hot! The roof is low, and the light scanty. Ventilation seems to be out of the question. Presently our lungs grow accustomed to the stifling vapour, and our eyes to the semi-darkness. We descry at one end of the kitchen an enormous fire. Before it some scraps of meat are toasting, jealously guarded by their hungry owners. An old woman crouches on the ground at one side, eyeing the food with wolfish looks, and spreading her skinny hands towards the generous heat. It is a cold afternoon, and the place is well filled. Men are here of all ages, lean and hungry-looking, with pale, colourless faces, and dim eyes which have a look about them altogether different from that of an honest, prosperous man. Some crowd curiously around the strangers, as though they were visitors from another world. Others sullenly turn their backs. This is a house for men and their families only, so we are spared the sight of the younger women.

Whence do these young men come? Some were born to this life; others have brought themselves to it. A certain proportion are sure to have fallen from higher stations. Broken-down clergymen, solicitors whose names have long since been struck off the rolls, bankers' and other clerks are seen with more or less frequency. The lodger yonder, whose clothes are still arranged with an air of better times, was until recently a merchant of good credit. Not far from him sits a man who, only a few years ago, was a clerk in Lombard Street receiving £400 per annum. Last winter he was glad to beg sixpence for the purchase of a broom when an eligible crossing fell vacant.

Imposture? Yes, that is frequent enough. For originality of conception and boldness of execution their plans are sometimes most striking. The case of Simon P. is one in point. A well-dressed young foreigner of good manners, giving that name, applied to an institution for such an allowance as would enable him to pursue theological studies, with a view either to ordination or service as a Scripture reader. Could he give references? Most certainly. The Rev. —— of ——, with whom he had once spent six months, knew him well. Pending inquiries might he have a small loan? With some regret the official explained that this was impossible. The applicant then respectfully bade him "good morning" and withdrew. The references were written to. The clergyman replied that the story of Simon P. having stayed with him was quite true, as he was chaplain to the county gaol, and Simon P. had undergone six months' incarceration there. Simon P. never returned to ascertain the result of these inquiries.

William M. was a young man of like ambitious projects. To be accepted by the London City Mission was the object of his desires. In the meantime assistance was urgently needed. He, too, could procure an excellent character, for he was well known in two cities. In one a subscription had been made to set him up as a book-hawker. Illness (he came from the infirmary) had brought him to his present state. The references were written to, and in due course replied. The clergyman in the North said that William M. was indeed known to him, but only as a professional beggar. He knew nothing of any subscription having been set afoot for him. It was, however, true that he had obtained possession of a collecting card for a charitable society, had gathered a good sum of money, and decamped with it. The other references replied that they knew only too much of William M., and would be heartily glad to hear no more of him.

But of course all cases are not so disappointing. Many a man has been raised by judicious help from such places, and in time has recovered his former position.

But enough of lodging-houses. You would like to see how they live who can boast a furnished room. This way, then. A still narrower street. A filthy doorway, in which a group of ragged children are huddled together. The stairs are little better than a ladder, and there is no light. We stumble up three flights, and arrive at the garret.

"Come in," cries a feeble voice, in answer to our knock. We stoop, and enter something like a shed. It is the attic, and in the middle we can just stand upright. On either side the roof slopes to meet the floor. The occupants are a man and wife

crouching over a scanty fire of chips. A lad stands between them, and a young child, covered with an ancient patchwork quilt, lies upon an apology for a bedstead. This bedstead, a broken chair, and an upturned basket complete the furniture of the room.

At our entrance Smith and his wife rise. The latter dusts with the skirt of her dress the damaged chair and basket. Upon these we are hospitably invited to sit. But, distrusting our ability to balance ourselves thereon, we prefer to stand.

"No work again, Smith?"

No, Smith has not had anything "regular" since the weaving became so bad. How do they live? Well, sometimes Smith gets a shilling at the Docks or in the market. Joe, the lad, brings in a little by selling matches in the City. Now and then the wife does some "cleaning." "But it's mostly bad times."

And so it seems. All are clearly enough in the first stage of fever. We leave them happier a good deal for our visit.

A larger room in another street. There is more furniture in the room, and a clean blind to the window —a somewhat patched and mended one, but still a blind. Mrs. Lagg is in, and, whilst we talk, industriously stitches away at a pair of trousers.

Yes, Lagg had been a weaver in old times. Now he did anything, which meant that on three weeks out of four he did nothing. He was at home now, nursing the last baby. Mrs. Lagg, you see, is a needlewoman, and works for a wholesale clothier. By working all through one night in the week she manages to keep the family head above water. Brave little woman! Struggling against continual ill-health, she toils on, the bread-winner of the family. But we must leave her.

A smaller room, but still a tidy one. A young girl is dusting it as we enter.

The husband out? Yes, he was gone to the hospital, and the lad from up-stairs had gone to lead him. These young people, aged respectively twenty and nineteen, had been married some three months when the husband went blind. The doctors give but little hope of his sight returning, and the wife knows no trade. The workhouse in prospect at twenty years of age! Can nothing be done to prevent the marriages of mere children? The Registers of numberless parishes prove that lads and lasses, still in their teens, are too much given to entering on wedded life. The husband belongs to no club, and the wages barely meet each week's expenses. When sickness comes, or work is slack, they must live on private charity or "go into the house." The subject notoriously calls for attention.

There are many other cases at hand, but time presses, and we must separate.

A. R. BUCKLAND, B.A.

WAS IT WISE TO CHANGE?

By the Author of "A Hard Case," &c.

CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH.

BY the end of May the party at Stanwick had dispersed again—Fred Carey had recovered strength, and gone to Yorkshire, where his presence was needed in order to re-arrange the mismanaged estate, which had been long neglected from the incapacity of one brother and the idleness of the other. George Leighton had returned to London, whither Claudia also had gone to stay with relations for the rest of the season. That Agnes should remain at Stanwick with Mrs. Leighton was an arrangement equally convenient to her and to every one concerned. If she found her life a little dull, and Mrs. Leighton's endless talk of unknown people a little wearisome, she would not have confessed it; and, indeed, the comfort and good taste of the well-ordered house, the beauty of her surroundings, and the charm of Mrs. Leighton's ease and refinement were advantages so great that she was more than contented, and almost persuaded herself that she could wish to live for ever in this quiet world of beauty, where pleasure and pain seemed alike forbidden to enter.

But before midsummer a change came. Fred Carey wrote to ask his aunt to spend a month with them at Careysford, and bring Miss Baring; and Mrs. Leighton, without hesitation, decided to go. Agnes was delighted. It had been pleasant enough to make acquaintance with all the beauties of Stanwick inside and out, but Careysford was far grander, and the very journey was a pleasure to one who had seen so little; and as Fred had sent her a kind message, saying that he looked forward to her helping him again as she had done at Stanwick, she had no fear of being in the way.

She felt an additional interest in Careysford from the hope she secretly indulged that it might one day be Claudia's home. Fred in good health, and heir to this fine estate, was a very different person from the invalid with no prospects whatever, who had scrupulously refrained from hinting at his wishes; and though she knew that Claudia would be little influenced by riches, the case was now entirely different, and without presumption Fred might now put forward a claim.

SOME OF OUR NEIGHBOURS' CHILDREN.

MUCH of late years has been done to ameliorate the condition of children amongst our poor. That there is yet ample scope for judicious action is only too apparent to such as know the lives led by the children of our lowest classes. Those laws, for example, which should insure each receiving some education are often systematically evaded by parents, or by those standing *in loco parentis*. In many other ways are the objects of benevolent legislation frustrated.

The life of a child born of vagrant parents in the purlieus of Spitalfields, Wapping, and like places, is in most cases a very sad one to portray. Often enough the child is unloved at its birth and unregretted at its early death. Over the grave of many might truthfully be set up a similar epitaph to that at St. Ives, in Cornwall :—

> " Here lies Sir John Guise :
> Nobody laughs, and nobody cries.
> Where he's gone, and how he fares,
> Nobody knows, and nobody cares."

Yet it would be wrong to say that love for their offspring is infrequent amongst this class. A woman has been known to peril her own life by resolutely walking to the funeral of her fortnight-old infant. More passionate grief the writer never saw than was shown by the mother of a young burglar at his open grave. True, he had always been a trouble to her. Whilst a mere lad he had been arrested as one of a notorious gang of young roughs in South London ; but none the less he continued to be "her darling boy."

But all the children do not die young. Of a fine summer's evening the courts and narrow streets swarm with them. Yet, living where they do, their earliest experiences are degrading. The baby-in-arms must needs be much in its mother's company. So with her it goes to the gin-shop, and there the glass is held to its lips. It will sleep very soundly after that—the drunkard's sleep before it can talk ! Amongst a small crowd who issued from the doors of a London "public" a little while ago, a bystander counted five women, each carrying an infant.

With increasing intelligence the children become of some use. There are cases in which a family of four or five cadaverous little ones forms, in a way, the stock-in-trade of their parents. For eight or ten hours a day they parade the quiet streets, singing some mournful ditty, or perhaps a popular hymn, instruction in which has cost some few pence. When the time for work is over, the kitchen of a common lodging-house awaits the children. The weary parents, after a hearty meal, retire to the "Seven Stars" or the "Frying-pan," to recruit themselves after the labours of the day. These families are sometimes of a very composite character. The woman, it may be, has no "marriage-lines." One or two of the children may be her own ; others she may be "taking care of" for their parents ; some, it may even be, have been kidnapped. Let none think that child-stealing is a very infrequent crime. The careful reader of police reports must remember several recent cases. One lies before me now. The prisoner was found by the police "sitting on a doorstep at one o'clock in the morning," the little boy of four beside her. When families are thus remarkably constituted, it is not surprising that the children are regarded very much as goods and chattels. Hence it is that, when times are bad with them, one sees the parents strip the shoes and stockings or the dress from a child at the pawnbroker's door, pledge them at once, and then enter the adjoining public-house with the proceeds.

The value of children for begging purposes is but too well understood. For this reason widowers and widows will often stoutly resist any effort to get one of their children away from their influence. The prospect in life which the change would place before them may be most promising ; the propriety of the step may be beyond all dispute. But, no. They love their children too well, they will tell you, to let one go out of their power.

Take a case in point. An ill-conditioned woman, accompanied by two sickly girls, aged about nine and eleven respectively, went to a parish clergyman, and asked for assistance. He declined to give her anything as the case stood, but offered to do something for the children if she would give up the custody of them. This offer she indignantly declined, and roundly abused the proposer of it. Day after day she was met in the streets, a child in each hand, begging when opportunity offered. At last the agent of a London society was moved to give her substantial aid. In her gratitude, she allowed him to take the younger child into his house. He took off its rags, and procured some decent clothing. Night came—a wet, windy, miserable night. The child was placed in a clean warm bed, a comfort long unknown. All in the house had long retired, when, about midnight, there was a furious ringing at the bell. This went on for some time. Then the agent went down-stairs, and incautiously opened the door. In stumbled the girl's mother—drunk. "I want my child ! I won't go till I have my child !" was her cry. Persuasion and all expedients failed. There was nothing for it but to take the child from her comfortable bed, put on the filthy old rags, and send her out into the wind and rain with the creature she called mother.

Sometimes one meets with cases in which the children are the bread-winners of the family, the

parents remaining at home in dignified idleness. Here is a case, the correctness of which is vouched for by the secretary to a ragged school. A child of six was daily sent out by his parents to sell matches. Unless he brought back at least eightpence by 10 p.m., he was severely beaten for his presumed laziness, and then turned out to spend the night in the streets. The child was twice taken up by the police, and sent to Homerton Union. But on each occasion he was at once claimed by his anxious relatives, who had no wish to lose their son and slave. Is this a solitary instance? Far from it; it is only one of many, and very far from the most brutal or revolting.

Children are often tutored to assist the imposture of their parents. A notable instance of this may, perhaps, be familiar to some; but it will bear repetition. A lady, well known in London for her interest in the poor, had been helping a family, the husband of which was ill. One morning the little girl came with the message—

"Please, ma'am, mother says father's dead; and would you please come and see her?"

Although a little surprised at the unlooked-for end of the sickness, the lady speedily set out for the house of mourning. Toiling up-stairs to the room, she found the man laid out as dead, and the mother in tears with the family around her. She sat down, and ministered consolation to the widow. Finally, she laid down two sovereigns as a contribution towards the funeral expenses, and then retired. At the bottom of the stairs, the visitor remembered that she had left her umbrella above. She quickly ran up again, and entered the room without knocking. Imagine her surprise at beholding the *pseudo*-dead man sitting up in bed, and tossing the sovereigns through the air from one hand to another with the dexterity of a juggler! Now, in this little comedy the children had a not unimportant part to play; and they seem to have filled it with success. If they, in future life, turn out accomplished rogues, can we marvel thereat? What wonder if the children who are early brought up to lie and steal for others, early learn to lie and steal for themselves? And what wonder if their mature years fulfil the evil promise of their childhood?

Is there any remedy for this? There is, perhaps, a partial remedy in our hands. Let us beware of indiscriminate charity. To give money to men and women who drag a group of half-starved children through the streets is putting a premium on vice, subsidising hypocrisy, and depriving the honest poor of their due. Experience tells the householder that food offered to such is sometimes rejected, sometimes taken and then thrown away. Money is what they want—money to provide a juicy steak for the evening meal, money to procure a night's carouse afterwards. To obtain that, they care little if the children perish body and soul. Children are cheap enough, although this is England. A penny for the poor man out of work, and for his starving family! Happy, thrice happy, in comparison with their victims, are those children whose early misdeeds or misfortunes have brought them to an industrial school or a similar institution. Bright futures are in most cases before them, whilst thousands of children, whose misfortune it is to escape the hand of the law, linger on in hopeless poverty and woe.

A. R. BUCKLAND, B.A.

THE GATHERER.

A Locomotive Gas-Engine.

A locomotive emitting neither smoke, sparks, nor cinders, was recently tried on the Erie Railway in the United States. The power was derived from the ignition of hydrogen gas, after the manner of a gas-engine; and the hydrogen was produced by the chemical decomposition of water by means of burning naphtha. In this way a very high speed was maintained throughout the trip, at a cost of one-third that of coal burned in an ordinary locomotive. The advantage of such an engine in city railways is obvious.

New Life-saving Sea-Anchor.

This most important invention was exhibited at the late exhibition of life-saving appliances at the Alexandra Palace. It is intended to enable disabled vessels to ride out heavy gales and storms, and for other similar purposes. It will be seen from Fig. 1 to consist of an oblong raft, which may be made either of well-seasoned wood carefully caulked, or of iron or steel possessing sufficient buoyancy to enable it to support the stout steel-wire towing hawser in front, and the series of chain-connected canvas bags or "drogues" behind. The front of the raft carries, in addition to eye-bolts for the secure attachment of the towing hawser, a strongly-hinged flap, which, when the

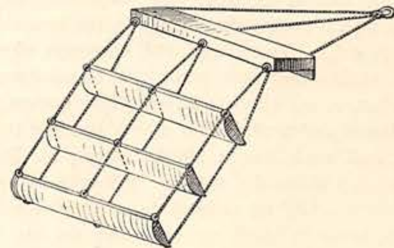

FIG. 1.

anchor is in use, drops perpendicularly into the water, thus giving an increased resisting force in dragging. The bags are made of stout canvas of the same length and breadth as the raft, and are kept extended by a bar-iron rim at the mouth of each bag, and are further