

THE MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE METROPOLIS.

The local administration of the metropolis is of so complex a character that attention should be drawn to it at the outset. There are:—1. Thirty poor-law parishes or unions in what is called the metropolitan area. In each is a board of guardians intrusted with the legal relief of the poor. 2. There is a Metropolitan Asylums Board, with practically the same area, intrusted with the care of asylums for imbeciles and idiots and hospitals for infectious diseases. 3. The metropolis is divided into twenty-three parishes, with vestries, and twelve district Boards of Works, for sanitary and other purposes. Besides these, there are (1) the Plumstead and Lewisham districts, and (2) the parish of Rotherhithe and the St. Olave's district, separate boards, but each combined to elect one member of the Metropolitan Board of Works. 4. There is a Metropolitan Board of Works—a body representative of the vestries and district boards. 5. There is the School Board for London; for purposes of which the metropolis is divided into ten parts. 6. There is the police. The metropolitan police district covers the area within a radius of twenty miles from Charing-cross. For police administration and for magisterial purposes the metropolis is divided into eleven police districts, each with its own police court. These courts are—Bow-street, Westminster, Marlborough-street, Marylebone, Clerkenwell, Thames, Southwark, Lambeth, Worship-street, Hammersmith with Wandsworth, Greenwich with Woolwich. Except the two latter, which are open half the day, a magistrate is in attendance daily from ten to five. Two magistrates are assigned to each court, excepting Bow-street, which has three. The city has an independent police administration and magistracy. 7. The metropolis is divided into the districts (generally coterminous with the parishes or unions) and sub-districts of the Registrar-General for statistical purposes, returns of health, deaths, births, &c. 8. In the City there are, instead of a vestry of district board, commissioners of sewers, who have powers similar to those of the Metropolitan Board of Works, and are independent of it. It is almost inevitable that an almoner should be brought into contact with most of these bodies, or should have to ascertain their duties on some points in order to endeavour to remove evils, and to assist cases which he will meet with in the course of his work.

The Metropolitan Board of Works was constituted by the Metropolis Management Act of 1855. Under this and subsequent Acts it has carried out several special works, such as the Main Drainage of London, the construction of the Victoria, Albert, and Chelsea Embankments on the Thames, the formation of Queen Victoria-street and Northumberland-avenue, the freeing of the Thames bridges in the Metropolitan area, the clearance of sites for Artizans' Dwellings in Drury-lane, Bedfordbury, &c. It has opened up or widened other thoroughfares, such as Garrick-street, Southwark-street, Burdett-road, Holborn (Middle Row), Park-lane, Skoreditch, Great Eastern-street, Harrow-road, Coventry-street, Tooley-street, the improved thoroughfare from Hart-street, Bloomsbury, to Shoreditch, &c.; formed Finsbury and Southwark Parks; and preserved open spaces, such as Hampstead Heath, Blackheath, Shepherd's Bush, Hackney Downs, Clapham Common, &c. Among the works now proceeding are a new street from Piccadilly to Hart-street, Bloomsbury, further clearance of sites for Artizans' Dwellings, new bridges at Battersea and Putney, and improvements in Deptford Creek, Hammersmith and Vauxhall Bridges. Its principal general duties comprise the control over the formation of streets and the line of buildings therein, the testing of gas and of gas-meters, the maintenance of the Fire Brigade (a force of upwards of 500), the maintenance of the Main Drainage system, and of parks and commons. It is the "Metropolitan Authority" under the Water, Tramways, Petroleum, Artizans' Dwellings, Contagious Diseases (Animals), Slaughter-houses, Explosive Substances, and other Acts, and regulates the construction of theatres and music-halls for the protection of persons from fire. It raises money (in Metropolitan Consolidated Stock) not only for its own works, but for advances to the School Board for London, the Vestries, the District Boards, and other corporations within the Metropolis. Members of the Board are elected by the respective Vestries and District Boards in the Metropolis. The Corporation of the City of London elects three members.

(Office, Spring-gardens.—Hours 9 to 4; Saturdays 9 to 4.)

Chairman—Lieut.-Colonel Sir James M. M'Garel Hogg, K.C.B., M.P.

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The Parochial Act 1883 provides for a better application and management of Parochial Charities of the City of London, and will put a stop to any misapplication of funds which can no longer be administered in accordance with the wishes of pious donors. The Act deals with a revenue of £120,000 a year, and for which there has hardly been any useful application. It will in future be devoted to promote education, and for the maintenance of libraries, museums, art collections, and other institutions opened in the interest of the working classes.

A YEAR'S TOTAL RECEIPTS OF THE METROPOLITAN CHARITIES.

The following Table gives the aggregate income, as returned by the secretaries of the several Metropolitan Charities for the year 1881-2:—

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
4 Bible Societies ... ..	206,948	0	0			
13 Book Societies ... ..	75,571	0	0			
56 Home Missions ... ..	508,134	0	0			282,519 0 0
13 Home and Foreign Missions ... ..	178,710	0	0			
23 Foreign Missions ... ..	799,787	0	0			
6 Church and Chapel Building ... ..	...	...	...	1,481,601	0	0
24 Charities for the Blind ... ..	55,872	0	0	30,871	0	0
8 Charities for Deaf and Dumb ... ..	16,692	0	0			
9 Charities for Incurables ... ..	36,447	0	0			
3 Charities for Idiots ... ..	55,724	0	0			
17 General Hospitals ... ..	274,159	0	0	164,735	0	0
8 Consumption Hospitals ... ..	53,070	0	0			
5 Ophthalmic Hospitals ... ..	9,434	0	0			
3 Orthopedic Hospitals ... ..	5,451	0	0			
4 Skin Hospitals ... ..	5,082	0	0			
20 Hospitals for Women and Children ... ..	64,704	0	0			
5 Lying-in Hospitals ... ..	7,285	0	0			
72 Miscellaneous Special Hospitals ... ..	109,042	0	0	528,000	0	0
33 General Dispensaries ... ..	25,206	0	0			
13 Provident Dispensaries ... ..	9,816	0	0			
2 Institutions for Vaccination ... ..	2,700	0	0			
5 Institutions for Surgical Appliances ... ..	14,130	0	0			
44 Convalescent Institutions ... ..	43,137	0	0			
16 Nursing Institutions ... ..	7,400	0	0	102,489	0	0
162 Pensions and Institutions for the Aged ... ..	...	...	...	431,770	0	0
93 Institutions for General Relief ... ..	505,692	0	0			
11 Food Institutions, Loan Charities, &c. ... ..	8,101	0	0			
94 Voluntary Homes ... ..	...	...	...	514,063	0	0
54 Orphanages, &c. ... ..	...	...	...	131,164	0	0
69 Institutions for Reformation and Prevention ... ..	...	...	...	154,675	0	0
101 Institutions for Education ... ..	...	...	...	78,654	0	0
35 Institutions for Social Improvement ... ..	...	...	...	427,148	0	0
20 Institutions for Protection ... ..	...	...	...	67,767	0	0
				57,169	0	0
1001				Grand Total	£4,452,802	0 0

PAUPERISM AND ITS RELIEF.

By the Poor Law Act of Queen Elizabeth the relief and chargeability of the poor were limited to the area of the parish. In the reign of Charles II. a law passed by which parishes, often of an unwieldy size, might be subdivided. This law was unfairly applied, in order to create what were called "close" parishes (sections of parishes in which there were few paupers), and hence low rates, while hard by were parishes with many paupers and high rates. The Poor Law Commissioners (1834) introduced the system of unions, by means of which, while each parish supported its own poor, the workhouse has been maintained by the parishes in union; each parish contributing its quota towards its cost.

Subsequently (1848) it was enacted that persons who acquired the status of irremovability, should be relieved out of the "common fund of the union," and, with some other classes of paupers, such as destitute wayfarers, become "union paupers." The basis upon which the common fund was assessed was also altered. It had been based on the average expense incurred by each parish in the relief of its own poor during the three years previous. It has since been based on the annual value of the rateable property of each parish. In 1865 another great change was made. The relief of all paupers was thrown on the common fund of the union. Concurrently with these changes, changes were made in regard to the position of the parish in questions of removability. It had heretofore been necessary that, to obtain irremovability by residence, the poor person should not reside outside the parish. Afterwards residence in one or more parishes, in a single union, was computed to make up the period of residence that conferred irremovability. Removability is now made to depend on residence in a union. In the enactments with regard to settlement, the words defining the local area are "parish," "parish or place," "parish or township"; and no change has been made in the law, similar to that with regard to removability, by which the union is substituted for the parish as the area of settlement. Nevertheless the distinction between parish and union has in a great measure lapsed. Many parishes, those not considered too small or otherwise unsuitable for administrative purposes, remained parishes—as Kensington, Islington, and others. Many, again, were made parts of unions—as St. Luke's, Clerkenwell, and Holborn, which have been formed into the Holborn Union. The latest Poor Law returns of 1883 showed a decrease in the number of paupers receiving relief in London had taken place compared with the corresponding period of 1882:—

TOTAL PAUPERISM OF THE METROPOLIS (Population in 1881, 3,815,000.)

	Number of Paupers.		
	Indoor.	Outdoor.	Total.
Fifth week of July, 1883 ... ..	49,932	34,593	84,525
" " 1882 ... ..	48,297	37,522	85,819
" " 1881 ... ..	47,502	36,803	84,305
" " 1880 ... ..	46,134	36,585	82,719

Vagrants relieved in the metropolis on the last day of the fifth week of July, 1883:—

Men.	Women.	Children under 16.	Total.
278	126	18	422