

CHAPTER 9: IS THERE NO HELP?

It may be said by those who have followed me to this point that while it is quite true that there are many who are out of work, and not less true that there are many who sleep on the Embankment and elsewhere, the law has provided a remedy, or if not a remedy, at least a method, of dealing with these sufferers which is sufficient: The Secretary of the Charity Organisation Society assured one of my Officers, who went to inquire for his opinion on the subject, "that no further machinery was necessary. All that was needed in this direction they already had in working order, and to create any further machinery would do more harm than good."

Now, what is the existing machinery by which Society, whether through the organisation of the State, or by individual endeavour, attempts to deal with the submerged residuum? I had intended at one time to have devoted considerable space to the description of the existing agencies, together with certain observations which have been forcibly impressed upon my mind as to their failure and its cause. The necessity, however, of subordinating everything to the supreme purpose of this book, which is to endeavour to show how light can be let into the heart of Darkest England, compels me to pass rapidly over this department of the subject, merely glancing as I go at the well-meaning, but more or less abortive, attempts to cope with this great and appalling evil.

The first place must naturally be given to the administration of the Poor Law. Legally the State accepts the responsibility of providing food and shelter for every man, woman, or child who is utterly destitute. This responsibility it, however, practically shirks by the imposition of conditions on the claimants of relief that are hateful and repulsive, if not impossible. As to the method of Poor Law administration in dealing with inmates of workhouses or in the distribution of outdoor relief, I say nothing. Both of these raise great questions which lie outside my immediate purpose. All that I need to do is to indicate the limitations – it may be the necessary limitations – under which the Poor Law operates. No Englishman can come upon the rates so long as he has anything whatever left to call his own. When long-continued destitution has been carried on to the bitter end, when piece by piece every article of domestic furniture

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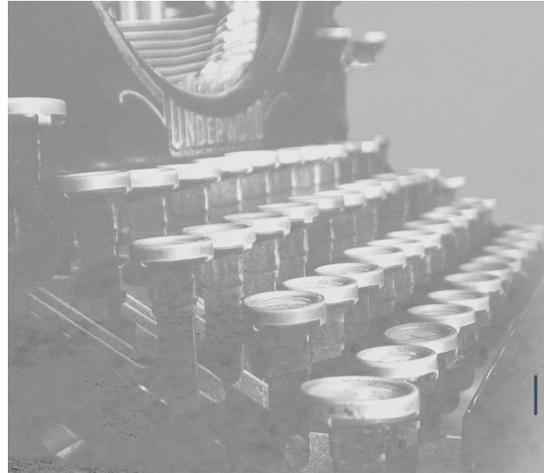
has been sold or pawned, when all efforts to procure employment have failed, and when you have nothing left except the clothes in which you stand, then you can present yourself before the relieving officer and secure your lodging in the workhouse, the administration of which varies infinitely according to the disposition of the Board of Guardians under whose control it happens to be.

If, however, you have not sunk to such despair as to be willing to barter your liberty for the sake of food, clothing, and shelter in the Workhouse, but are only temporarily out of employment seeking work, then you go to the Casual Ward. There you are taken in, and provided for on the principle of making it as disagreeable as possible for yourself, in order to deter you from again accepting the hospitality on the rates, – and of course in defence of this a good deal can be said by the Political Economist. But what seems utterly indefensible is the careful precautions which are taken to render it impossible for the unemployed Casual to resume promptly after his night's rest the search for work. Under the existing regulations, if you are compelled to seek refuge on Monday night in the Casual Ward, you are bound to remain there at least till Wednesday morning

The theory of the system is this, that individuals casually poor and out of work, being destitute and without shelter, may upon application receive shelter for the night, supper and a breakfast, and in return for this, shall perform a task of work, not necessarily in repayment for the relief received, but simply as a test of their willingness to work for their living. The work given is the same as that given to felons in gaol, oakum-picking and stone-breaking.

The work, too, is excessive in proportion to what is received. Four pounds of oakum is a great task to an expert and an old hand. To a novice it can only be accomplished with the greatest difficulty, if indeed it can be done at all. It is even in excess of the amount demanded from a criminal in gaol.

The stone-breaking test is monstrous. Half a ton of stone from any man in return for partially supplying the cravings of hunger is an outrage which, if we read of as having occurred in Russia or Siberia, would find Exeter Hall crowded with an indignant audience, and Hyde Park filled with strong oratory. But because this system exists at



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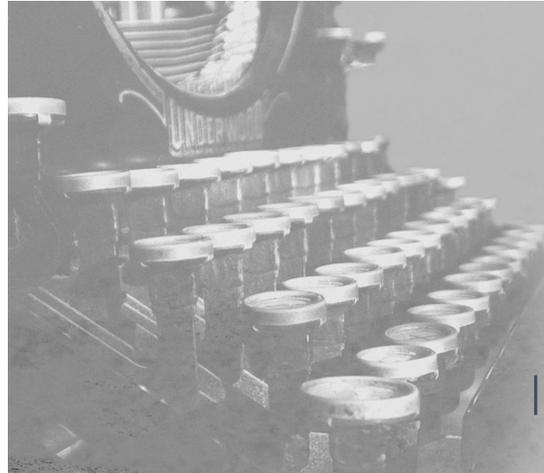
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our own doors, very little notice is taken of it. These tasks are expected from all comers, starved, ill-clad, half-fed creatures from the streets, foot-sore and worn out, and yet unless it is done, the alternative is the magistrate and the gaol. The old system was bad enough, which demanded the picking of one pound of oakum. As soon as this task was accomplished, which generally kept them till the middle of next day, it was thus rendered impossible for them to seek work, and they were forced to spend another night in the ward. The Local Government Board, however, stepped in, and the Casual was ordered to be detained for the whole day and the second night, the amount of labour required from him being increased four-fold.

Under the present system, therefore, the penalty for seeking shelter from the streets is a whole day and two nights, with an almost impossible task, which, failing to do, the victim is liable to be dragged before a magistrate and committed to gaol as a rogue and vagabond, while in the Casual Ward their treatment is practically that of a criminal. They sleep in a cell with an apartment at the back, in which the work is done, receiving at night half a pound of gruel and eight ounces of bread, and next morning the same for breakfast, with half a pound of oakum and stones to occupy himself for a day.

The beds are mostly of the plank type, the coverings scant, the comfort nil. Be it remembered that this is the treatment meted out to those who are supposed to be Casual poor, in temporary difficulty, walking from place to place seeking some employment.

The treatment of the women is as follows: Each Casual has to stay in the Casual Wards two nights and one day, during which time they have to pick 2 lb. of oakum or go to the wash-tub and work out the time there. While at the wash-tub they are allowed to wash their own clothes, but not otherwise. If seen more than once in the same Casual Ward, they are detained three days by order of the inspector each time seen, or if sleeping twice in the same month the master of the ward has power to detain them three days. There are four inspectors who visit different Casual Wards; and if the Casual is seen by any of the inspectors (who in turn visit all the Casual Wards) at any of the wards they have previously visited they are detained three days in each one. The inspector, who is a male person, visits the wards at all unexpected hours, even visiting



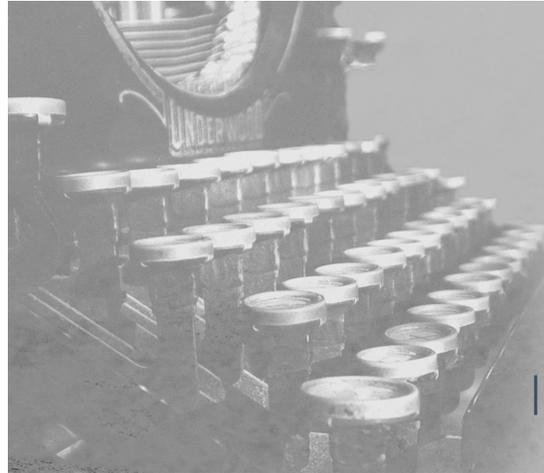
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while the females are in bed. The beds are in some wards composed of straw and two rugs, in others coconut fibre and two rugs. The Casuals rise at 5.45 a.m., and go to bed 7 p.m. If they do not finish picking their oakum before 7 p.m., they stay up till they do. If a Casual does not come to the ward before 12.30, midnight, they keep them one day extra. The way in which this operates, however, can be best understood by the following statements, made by those who have been in Casual Wards, and who can, therefore, speak from experience as to how the system affects the individual: –

J. C. knows Casual Wards pretty well. Has been in St. Giles, Whitechapel, St. George's, Paddington, Marylebone, Mile End. They vary a little in detail, but as a rule the doors open at 6; you walk in; they tell you what the work is, and that if you fail to do it, you will be liable to imprisonment. Then you bathe. Some places the water is dirty. Three persons as a rule wash in one water. At Whitechapel (been there three times) it has always been dirty; also at St. George's. I had no bath at Mile End; they were short of water. If you complain they take no notice. You then tie your clothes in a bundle, and they give you a nightshirt. At most places they serve supper to the men, who have to go to bed and eat it there. Some beds are in cells; some in large rooms. You get up at 6 a.m. and do the task. The amount of stone-breaking is too much; and the oakum-picking is also heavy. The food differs. At St. Giles, the gruel left over-night is boiled up for breakfast, and is consequently sour; the bread is puffy, full of holes, and don't weigh the regulation amount. Dinner is only 8 ounces of bread and 1 1/2 ounce of cheese, and its that's short, how can anybody do their work? They will give you water to drink if you ring the cell bell for it, that is, they will tell you to wait, and bring it in about half an hour. There are a good lot of "moochers" go to Casual Wards, but there are large numbers of men who only want work.

J.D.; age 25; Londoner; can't get work, tried hard; been refused work several times on account of having no settled residence; looks suspicious, they think, to have "no home." Seems a decent, willing man. Had two penny-worth of soup this morning, which has lasted all day. Earned 1s. 6d. yesterday, bill distributing, nothing the day before. Been in good many London Casual Wards. Thinks they are no good, because they keep him all day, when he might be seeking work. Don't want shelter in daytime, wants work. If he goes in twice in a month to the same Casual Ward, they detain him four days. Considers the food decidedly insufficient to do the required amount of



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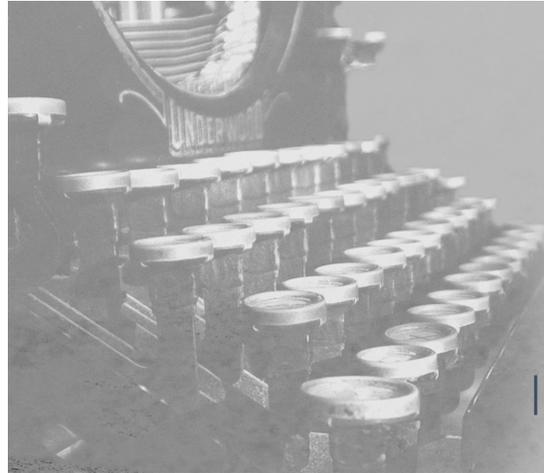
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work. If the work is not done to time, you are liable to 21 days' imprisonment. Get badly treated some places, especially where there is a bullying superintendent. Has done 21 days for absolutely refusing to do the work on such low diet, when unfit. Can't get justice, doctor always sides with superintendent.

J. S.; odd jobber. Is working at board carrying, when he can get it. There's quite a rush for it at 1s. 2d. a day. Carried a couple of parcels yesterday, got 5d. for them; also had a bit of bread and meat given him by a working man, so altogether had an excellent day. Sometimes goes all day without food, and plenty more do the same. Sleeps on Embankment, and now and then in Casual Ward. Latter is clean and comfortable enough, but they keep you in all day; that means no chance of getting work. Was a clerk once, but got out of a job, and couldn't get another; there are so many clerks.

"A Tramp" says: "I've been in most Casual Wards in London; was in the one in Macklin Street, Drury Lane, last week. They keep you two nights and a day, and more than that if they recognise you. You have to break 10 cwt. of stone, or pick four pounds of oakum. Both are hard. About thirty a night go to Macklin Street. The food is 1 pint gruel and 6 oz. bread for breakfast; 8 oz. bread and 1 1/2 oz. cheese for dinner; tea same as breakfast. No supper. It is not enough to do the work on. Then you are obliged to bathe, of course; sometimes three will bathe in one water, and if you complain they turn nasty, and ask if you are come to a palace. Mitcham Workhouse I've been in; grub is good; 1 1/2 pint gruel and 8 oz. bread for breakfast, and same for supper.

F.K. W.; baker. Been board-carrying to-day, earned one shilling, Hours 9 till 5. I've been on this kind of life six years. Used to work in a bakery, but had congestion of the brain, and couldn't stand the heat. I've been in about every Casual Ward in England. They treat men too harshly. Have to work very hard, too. Has had to work whilst really unfit. At Peckham (known as Camberwell) Union, was quite unable to do it through weakness, and appealed to the doctor, who, taking the part of the other officials, as usual, refused to allow him to forego the work. Cheeked the doctor, telling him he didn't understand his work; result, got three days' imprisonment. Before going to a Casual Ward at all, I spent seven consecutive nights on the Embankment, and at last went to the Ward.



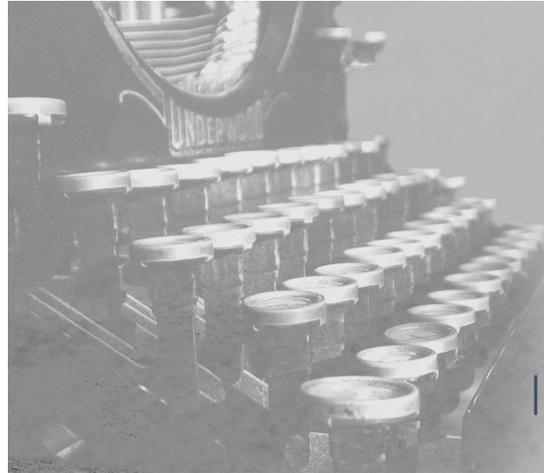
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The result of the deliberate policy of making the night refuge for the unemployed labourer as disagreeable as possible, and of placing as many obstacles as possible in the way of his finding work the following day, is, no doubt, to minimise the number of Casuals, and without question succeeds. In the whole of London the number of Casuals in the wards at night is only 1,136. That is to say, the conditions which are imposed are so severe, that the majority of the Out-of-Works prefer to sleep in the open air, taking their chance of the inclemency and mutability of our English weather, rather than go through the experience of the Casual Ward.

It seems to me that such a mode of coping with distress does not so much meet the difficulty as evade it. It is obvious that an apparatus, which only provides for 1,136 persons per night, is utterly unable to deal with the numbers of the homeless Out-of-Works. But if by some miracle we could use the Casual Wards as a means of providing for all those who are seeking work from day to day, without a place in which to lay their heads, save the kerbstone of the pavement or the back of a seat on the Embankment, they would utterly fail to have any appreciable effect upon the mass of human misery with which we have to deal. For this reason; the administration of the Casual Wards is mechanical, perfunctory, and formal. Each of the Casuals is to the Officer in Charge merely one Casual the more. There is no attempt whatever to do more than provide for them merely the indispensable requisites of existence. There has never been any attempt to treat them as human beings, to deal with them as individuals, to appeal to their hearts, to help them on their legs again. They are simply units, no more thought of and cared for than if they were so many coffee beans passing through a coffee mill; and as the net result of all my experience and observation of men and things, I must assert unhesitatingly that anything which dehumanises the individual, anything which treats a man as if he were only a number of a series or a cog in a wheel, without any regard to the character, the aspirations, the temptations, and the idiosyncrasies of the man, must utterly fail as a remedial agency. The Casual Ward, at the best, is merely a squalid resting place for the Casual in his downward career. If anything is to be done for these men, it must be done by other agents than those which prevail in the administration of the Poor Laws.

The second method in which Society endeavours to do its duty to the lapsed masses



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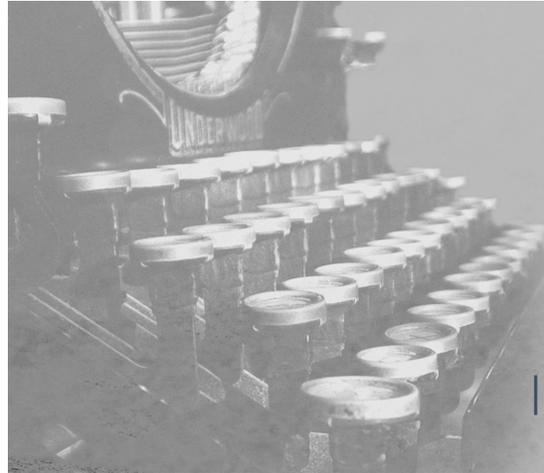
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is by the miscellaneous and heterogeneous efforts which are clubbed together under the generic head of Charity. Far be it from me to say one word in disparagement of any effort that is prompted by a sincere desire to alleviate the misery of our fellow creatures, but the most charitable are those who most deplore the utter failure which has, up till now, attended all their efforts to do more than temporarily alleviate pain, or effect an occasional improvement in the condition of individuals.

There are many institutions, very excellent in their way, without which it is difficult to see how society could get on at all, but when they have done their best there still remains this great and appalling mass of human misery on our hands, a perfect quagmire of Human Sludge. They may ladle out individuals here and there, but to drain the whole bog is an effort which seems to be beyond the imagination of most of those who spend their lives in philanthropic work. It is no doubt better than nothing to take the individual and feed him from day to day, to bandage up his wounds and heal his diseases; but you may go on doing that for ever, if you do not do more than that; and the worst of it is that all authorities agree that if you only do that you will probably increase the evil with which you are attempting to deal, and that you had much better let the whole thing alone.

There is at present no attempt at Concerted Action. Each one deals with the case immediately before him, and the result is what might be expected; there is a great expenditure, but the gains are, alas! Very small. The fact, however, that so much is subscribed for the temporary relief and the mere alleviation of distress justifies my confidence that if a Practical Scheme of dealing with this misery in a permanent, comprehensive fashion be discovered, there will be no lack of the sinews of war. It is well, no doubt, sometimes to administer an anaesthetic, but the Cure of the Patient is worth ever so much more, and the latter is the object which we must constantly set before us in approaching this problem.

The third method by which Society professes to attempt the reclamation of the lost is by the rough, rude surgery of the Gaol. Upon this a whole treatise might be written, but when it was finished it would be nothing more than a demonstration that our Prison system has practically missed aiming at that which should be the first essential of every system of punishment. It is not Reformatory, it is not worked as if it

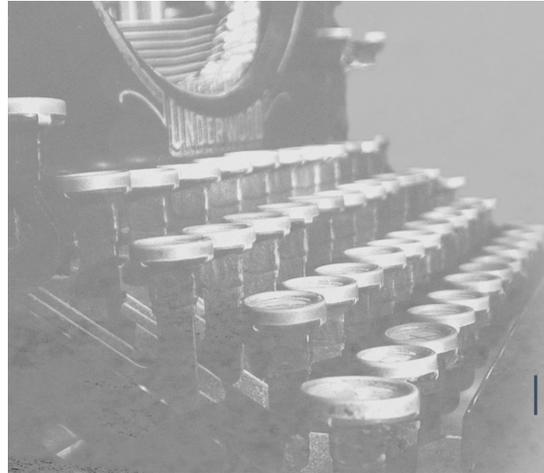


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were intended to be Reformatory. It is punitive, and only punitive. The whole administration needs to be reformed from top to bottom in accordance with this fundamental principle, viz., that while every prisoner should be subjected to that measure of punishment which shall mark a due sense of his crime both to himself and society, the main object should be to rouse in his mind the desire to lead an honest life; and to effect that change in his disposition and character which will send him forth to put that desire into practice. At present, every Prison is more or less a Training School for Crime, an introduction to the society of criminals, the petrification of any lingering human feeling and a very Bastille of Despair. The prison brand is stamped upon those who go in, and that so deeply, that it seems as if it clung to them for life. To enter Prison once, means in many cases an almost certain return there at an early date. All this has to be changed, and will be, when once the work of Prison Reform is taken in hand by men who understand the subject, who believe in the reformation of human nature in every form which its depravity can assume, and who are in full sympathy with the class for whose benefit they labour; and when those charged directly with the care of criminals seek to work out their regeneration in the same spirit.

The question of Prison Reform is all the more important because it is only by the agency of the Gaol that Society attempts to deal with its hopeless cases. If a woman, driven mad with shame, flings herself into the river, and is fished out alive, we clap her into Prison on a charge of attempted suicide. If a man, despairing of work and gaunt with hunger, helps himself to food, it is to the same reformatory agency that he is forthwith subjected. The rough and ready surgery with which we deal with our social patients recalls the simple method of the early physicians. The tradition still lingers among old people of doctors who prescribed bleeding for every ailment, and of keepers of asylums whose one idea of ministering to a mind diseased was to put the body into a strait waistcoat. Modern science laughs to scorn these simple "remedies" of an unscientific age, and declares that they were, in most cases, the most efficacious means of aggravating the disease they professed to cure. But in social maladies we are still in the age of the blood-letter and the strait waistcoat. The Gaol is our specific for Despair. When all else fails Society will always undertake to feed, clothe, warm, and house a man, if only he will commit a crime. It will do it also in such a fashion as to render it no temporary help, but a permanent necessity.



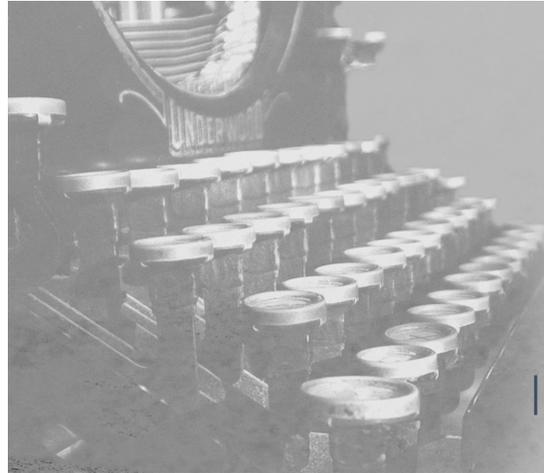
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Society says to the individual: "To qualify for free board and lodging you must commit a crime. But if you do you must pay the price. You must allow me to ruin your character, and doom you for the rest of your life to destitution, modified by the occasional successes of criminality. You shall become the Child of the State, on condition that we doom you to a temporal perdition, out of which you will never be permitted to escape, and in which you will always be a charge upon our resources and a constant source of anxiety and inconvenience to the authorities. I will feed you, certainly, but in return you must permit me to damn you." That surely ought not to be the last word of Civilised Society.

"Certainly not," say others. "Emigration is the true specific. The wastelands of the world are crying aloud for the application of surplus labour. Emigration is the panacea." Now I have no objection to emigration. Only a criminal lunatic could seriously object to the transference of hungry Jack from an overcrowded shanty – where he cannot even obtain enough bad potatoes to dull the ache behind his waistcoat, and is tempted to let his child die for the sake of the insurance money – to a land flowing with milk and honey, where he can eat meat three times a day and where a man's children are his wealth. But you might as well lay a new-born child naked in the middle of a new-sown field in March, and expect it to live and thrive, as expect emigration to produce successful results on the lines which some lay down. The child, no doubt, has within it latent capacities which, when years and training have done their work, will enable him to reap a harvest from a fertile soil, and the new sown field will be covered with golden grain in August. But these facts will not enable the infant to still its hunger with the clods of the earth in the cold springtime. It is just like that with emigration. It is simply criminal to take a multitude of untrained men and women and land them penniless and helpless on the fringe of some new continent. The result of such proceedings we see in the American cities; in the degradation of their slums, and in the hopeless demoralisation of thousands who, in their own country, were living decent, industrious lives.

A few months since, in Paramatta, in New South Wales, a young man who had emigrated with a vague hope of mending his fortunes, found himself homeless, friendless, and penniless. He was a clerk. They wanted no more clerks in Paramatta. Trade was dull, employment was scarce, even for trained hands. He went about from



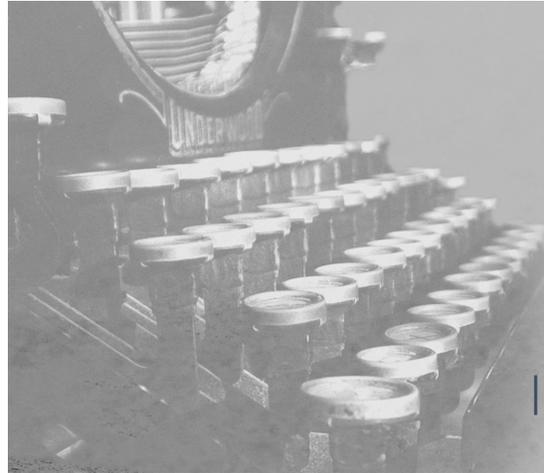
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day to day seeking work and finding none. At last he came to the end of all his resources. He went all day without food; at night he slept as best he could. Morning came, and he was hopeless. All next day passed without a meal. Night came. He could not sleep. He wandered about restlessly. At last, about midnight, an idea seized him. Grasping a brick, he deliberately walked up to a jeweler's window, and smashed a hole through the glass. He made no attempt to steal anything: He merely smashed the pane and then sat down on the pavement beneath the window, waiting for the arrival of the policeman. He waited some hours; but at last the constable arrived. He gave himself up, and was marched off to the lock-up. "I shall at least have something to eat now," was the reflection. He was right. He was sentenced to one year's imprisonment, and he is in gaol at this hour. This very morning he received his rations, and at this very moment he is dodged, and clothed and cared for at the cost of the rates and taxes. He has become the child of the State, and, therefore, one of the socially damned. Thus emigration itself, instead of being an invariable specific, sometimes brings us back again to the gaol door.

Emigration, by all means. But whom are you to emigrate? These girls who do not know how to bake? These lads who never handled a spade? And where are you to emigrate them? Are you going to make the Colonies the dumping ground of your human refuse? On that the colonists will have something decisive to say, where there are colonists; and where there are not, how are you to feed, clothe, and employ your emigrants in the uninhabited wilderness? Immigration, no doubt, is the making of a colony, just as bread is the staff of life. But if you were to cram a stomach with wheat by a force-pump you would bring on such a fit of indigestion that unless your victim threw up the indigestible mass of unground, uncooked, unmasticated grain he would never want another meal. So it is with the new colonies and the surplus labour of other countries.

Emigration is in itself not a panacea. Is Education? In one sense it may be, for Education, the developing in a man of all his latent capacities for improvement, may cure anything and everything. But the Education of which men speak when they use the term, is mere schooling. No one but a fool would say a word against school teaching. By all means let us have our children educated. But when we have passed them through the Board School Mill we have enough experience to see

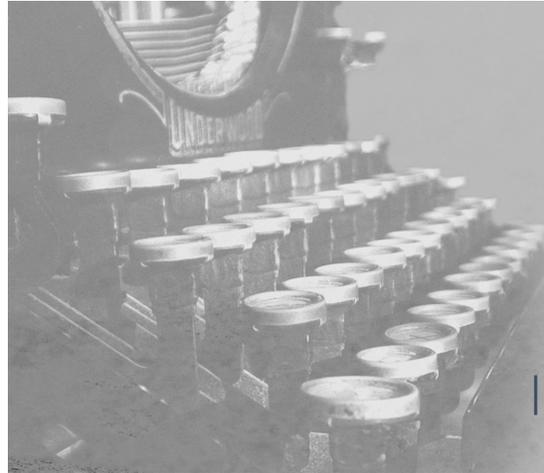


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that they do not emerge the renovated and regenerated beings whose advent was expected by those who passed the Education Act. The "scuttlers" who knife inoffensive persons in Lancashire, the fighting gangs of the West of London, belong to the generation that has enjoyed the advantage of Compulsory Education. Education, book-learning and schooling will not solve the difficulty. It helps, no doubt. But in some ways it aggravates it. The common school to which the children of thieves and harlots and drunkards are driven, to sit side by side with our little ones, is often by no means a temple of all the virtues. It is sometimes a university of all the vices. The bad infect the good, and your boy and girl come back reeking with the contamination of bad associates, and familiar with the coarsest obscenity of the slum. Another great evil is the extent to which our Education tends to overstock the labour market with material for quill-drivers and shopmen, and gives our youth a distaste for sturdy labour. Many of the most hopeless cases in our Shelters are men of considerable education. Our schools help to enable a starving man to tell his story in more grammatical language than that which his father could have employed, but they do not feed him, or teach him where to go to get fed. So far from doing this they increase the tendency to drift into those channels where food is least secure, because employment is most uncertain, and the market most overstocked.

"Try Trades Unionism," say some, and their advice is being widely followed. There are many and great advantages in Trades Unionism. The fable of the bundle of sticks is good for all time. The more the working people can be banded together in voluntary organisations, created and administered by themselves for the protection of their own interests, the better – at any rate for this world – and not only for their own interests, but for those of every other section of the community. But can we rely upon this agency as a means of solving the problems which confront us? Trades Unionism has had the field to itself for a generation. It is twenty years since it was set free from all the legal disabilities under which it laboured. But it has not covered the land. It has not organised all skilled labour. Unskilled labour is almost untouched. At the Congress at Liverpool only one and a half million workmen were represented. Women are almost entirely outside the pale. Trade Unions not only represent a fraction of the laboring classes, but they are, by their constitution, unable to deal with those who do not belong to their body. What ground can there be, then, for hoping that Trades Unionism will by itself solve the difficulty? The most experienced Trades Unionists will

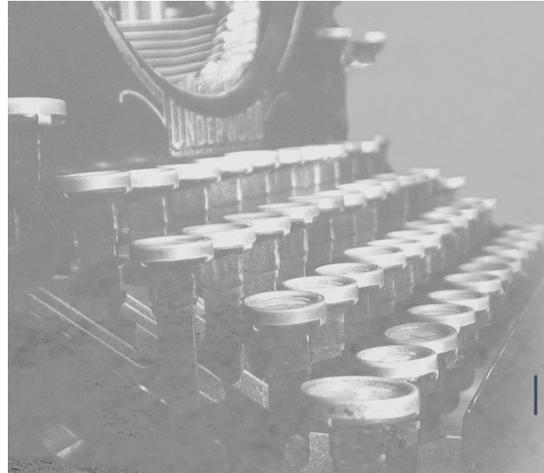


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be the first to admit that any scheme which could deal adequately with the out-of-works and others who hang on to their skirts and form the recruiting ground of blacklegs and embarrass them in ever way, would be, of all others that which would be most beneficial to Trades Unionism. The same may be said about Co-operation. Personally, I am a strong believer in Co-operation, but it must be Co-operation based on the spirit of benevolence. I don't see how any pacific re-adjustment of the social and economic relations between classes in this country can be effected except by the gradual substitution of cooperative associations for the present wages system. As you will see in subsequent chapters, so far from there being anything in my proposals that would militate in any way against the ultimate adoption of the co-operative solution of the question, I look to Co-operation as one of the chief elements of hope in the future. But we have not to deal with the ultimate future, but with the immediate present, and for the evils with which we are dealing the existing cooperative organisations do not and cannot give us much help.

Another – I do not like to call it specific; it is only a name, a mere mockery of a specific – so let me call it another suggestion made when discussing this evil, is Thrift. Thrift is a great virtue no doubt. But how is Thrift to benefit those who have nothing? What is the use of the gospel of Thrift to a man who had nothing to eat yesterday, and has not threepence to-day to pay for his lodging to-night? To live on nothing a day is difficult enough, but to save on it would beat the cleverest political economist that ever lived. I admit without hesitation that any Scheme which weakened the incentive to Thrift would do harm. But it is a mistake to imagine that social damnation is an incentive to Thrift. It operates least where its force ought to be most felt. There is no fear that any Scheme that we can devise will appreciably diminish the deterrent influences which dispose a man to save. But it is idle wasting time upon a plea that is only brought forward as an excuse for inaction. Thrift is a great virtue, the inculcation of which must be constantly kept in view by all those who are attempting to "educate and save the people. It is not in any sense a specific for the salvation of the lapsed and the lost. Even among the most wretched of the very poor, a man must have an object and a hope before he will save a halfpenny. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we perish," sums up the philosophy of those who have no hope. In the thriftiness of the French peasant we see that the temptation of eating and drinking is capable of being resolutely subordinated to the superior claims of the accumulation of a dowry for the



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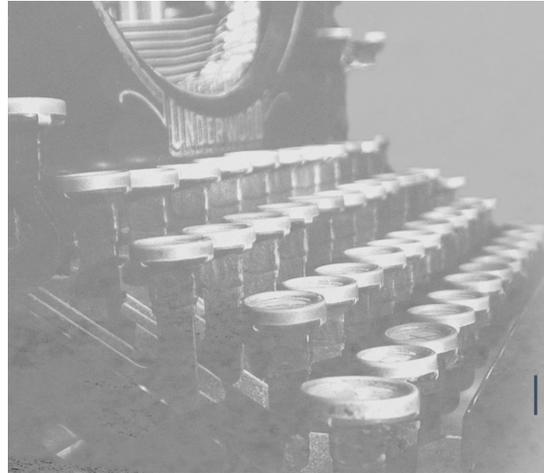
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daughter, or for the acquisition of a little more land for the son.

Of the schemes of those who propose to bring in a new heaven and a new earth by a more scientific distribution of the pieces of gold and silver in the trouser pockets of mankind, I need not say anything here. They may be good or they may not. I say nothing against any short cut to the Millennium that is compatible with the Ten Commandments. I intensely sympathise with the aspirations that lie behind all these Socialist dreams. But whether it is Henry George's Single Tax on Land Values, or Edward Bellamy's Nationalism, or the more elaborate schemes of the Collectivists, my attitude towards them all is the same. What these good people want to do, I also want to do. But I am a practical man, dealing with the actualities of to-day. I have no preconceived theories, and I flatter myself I am singularly free from prejudices. I am ready to sit at the feet of any who will show me any good. I keep my mind open on all these subjects; and am quite prepared to hail with open arms any Utopia that is offered me. But it must be within range of my finger-tips. It is of no use to me if it is in the clouds. Cheques on the Bank of Futurity I accept gladly enough as a free gift, but I can hardly be expected to take them as if they were current coin, or to try to cash them at the Bank of England.

It may be that nothing will be put permanently right until everything has been turned upside down. There are certainly so many things that need transforming, beginning with the heart of each individual man and woman, that I do not quarrel with any Visionary when in his intense longing for the amelioration of the condition of mankind he lays down his theories as to the necessity for radical change, however impracticable they may appear to me. But this is the question. Here at our Shelters last night were a thousand hungry, workless people. I want to know what to do with them? Here is John Jones, a stout stalwart labourer in rags, who has not had one square meal for a month, who has been hunting for work that will enable him to keep body and soul together, and hunting in vain. There he is in his hungry raggedness, asking for work that he may live, and not die of sheer starvation in the midst of the wealthiest city in the world. What is to be done with John Jones?

The individualist tells me that the free play of the Natural Laws governing the struggle for existence will result in the Survival of the Fittest, and that in the course of a few



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ages, more or less, a much nobler type will be evolved. But meanwhile what is to become of John Jones? The Socialist tells me that the great Social Revolution is looming large on the horizon. In the good time coming, when wealth will be re-distributed and private property abolished, all stomachs will be filled and there will be no more John Jones' impatiently clamouring for opportunity to work that they may not die. It may be so, but in the meantime here is John Jones growing more impatient than ever because hungrier, who wonders if he is to wait for a dinner until the Social Revolution has arrived. What are we to do with John Jones? That is the question. And to the solution of that question none of the Utopians give me much help. For practical purposes these dreamers fall under the condemnation they lavish so freely upon the conventional religious people who relieve themselves of all anxiety for the welfare of the poor by saying that in the next world all will be put right. This religious cant, which rids itself of all the importunity of suffering humanity by drawing unnegotiable bills payable on the other side of the grave, is not more impracticable than the Socialistic clap-trap which postpones all redress of human suffering until after the general overturn. Both take refuge in the Future to escape a solution of the problems of the Present, and it matters little to the sufferers whether the Future is on this side of the grave or the other. Both are, for them, equally out of reach.

When the sky falls we shall catch larks. No doubt. But in the meantime?

It is the meantime – that is the only time in which we have to work. It is in the meantime that the people must be fed, that their life's work must be done or left undone forever. Nothing that I have to propose in this book, or that I propose to do by my Scheme, will in the least prevent the coming of any of the Utopias. I leave the limitless infinite of the Future to the Utopians. They may build there as they please. As for me, it is indispensable that whatever I do is founded on existing fact, and provides a present help for the actual need.

There is only one class or men who have cause to oppose the proposals which I am about to set forth. That is those, if such there be, who are determined to bring about by any and every means a bloody and violent overturn of all existing institutions. They will oppose the Scheme, and they will act logically in so doing. For the only hope of those who are the artificers of Revolution is the mass of seething discontent and



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misery that lies in the heart of the social system. Honestly believing that things must get worse before they get better, they build all their hopes upon the general overturn, and they resent as an indefinite postponement of the realisation of their dreams any attempt at a reduction of human misery.

The Army of the Revolution is recruited by the Soldiers of Despair. Therefore, down with any Scheme which gives men Hope. In so far as it succeeds it curtails our recruiting ground and reinforces the ranks of our Enemies. Such opposition is to be counted upon, and to be utilized as the best of all tributes to the value of our work. Those who thus count upon violence and bloodshed are too few to hinder, and their opposition will merely add to the momentum with which I hope and believe this Scheme will ultimately be enabled to surmount all dissent, and achieve, with the blessing of God, that measure of success with which I verily believe it to be charged.