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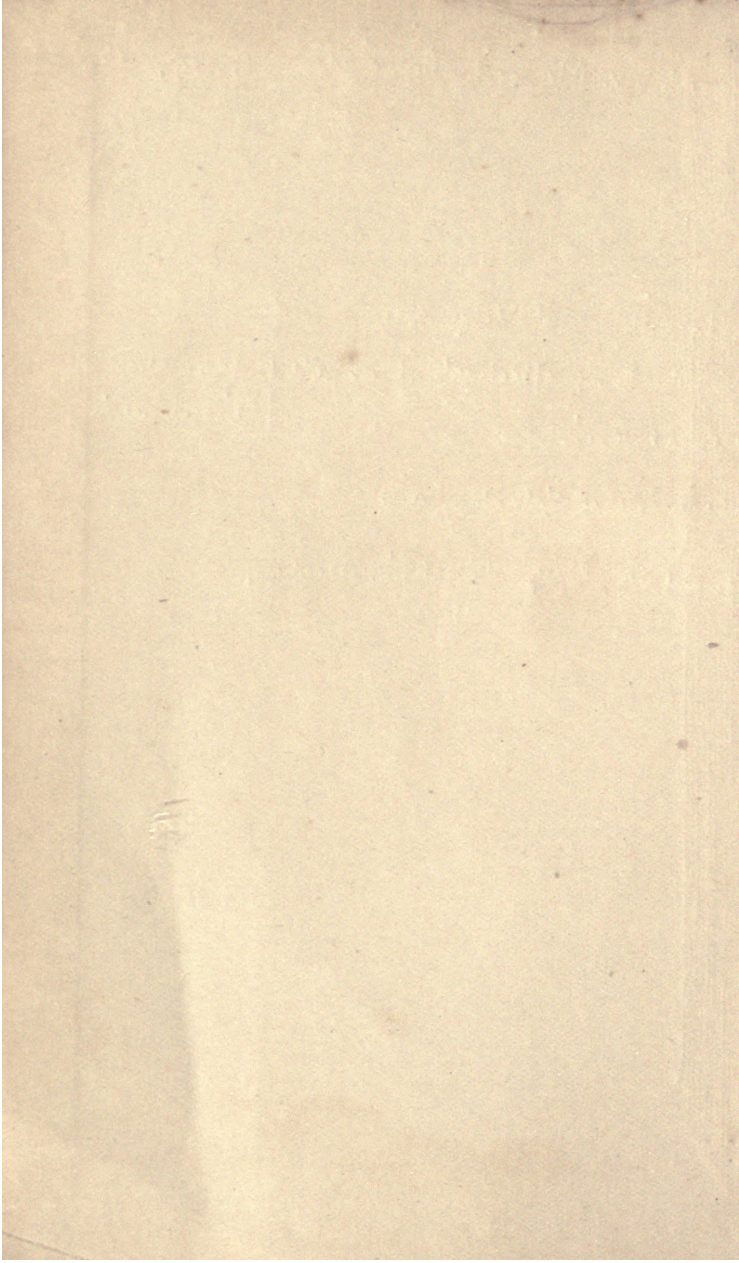

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THE
POOR LAW REPORT
OF 1909

A Summary Explaining the Defects of the Present System and the Principal Recommendations of the Commission, so far as relates to England and Wales.

BY
HELEN BOSANQUET

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PREFACE

In attempting to summarise and explain within moderate compass the main recommendations of the Report of the Poor Law Commission and the grounds upon which they are based, it has been necessary to make considerable omissions. In order that the reader may know in general what has been omitted I have appended a table showing the contents of the Report itself, but will also call attention to the chief points here. In the first place, I have refrained from introducing many technical details, which, however important in themselves and to those actually engaged in administration, seemed not essential to the understanding of the general position. In the second place, I have also refrained, and this time with more reluctance, from attempting to summarise those sections of the Report which are mainly historical, or descriptive of conditions outside the immediate sphere of the Poor Law itself. More especially of importance are Chapter 1 of Part VI. and Part VII. The first of these contains in a concise and interesting form a mass of information

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concerning industrial developments since 1834, which is here for the first time made accessible in a consecutive narrative, and is of special significance in connection with the history and present position of unemployment. The second, Part VII., which is a comprehensive survey of the charities of the country and their administration, is no less important from the point of view of the charitable relief of distress; and if the reader of the following chapters fails to find them convincing, he may confidently look for their fuller justification in the Report itself. The marginal references are to the Parts, chapters and paragraphs of the Report.

Notwithstanding all omissions, however, I hope that I may have succeeded in making clear the main intention of the Report. That intention, in few words, is to substitute a vital and organic system of combined public and voluntary assistance for the mechanical routine of the Poor Law on the one hand, and the confused chaos of charity on the other. If this intention is to be carried into effect it can only be by the combined effort of all who are interested in bringing help and strength to the poorer and weaker members of the community.

OXSHOTT,
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THE POOR LAW REPORT OF 1909

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

WHAT is the Poor Law, and who are the people to whom it applies?

Every civilised country has a different answer to give to this question, but in their main outlines all answers will coincide.

In the first place, the law which we in England call the Poor Law, but which receives more appropriate names in other countries, is that law which regulates the administration or distribution of assistance from public funds to private individuals on the ground of their failure to provide for themselves.

In the second place, the ultimate fact upon which all systems of public assistance are based is the fact that there are in every country persons who, for one reason or another, are found to be without the necessaries of life, whether provided by their

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own exertions or by their friends and relations. In the absence of any legal provision, these persons either die or are maintained by the charity of the benevolent. In most Christian communities it has originally been considered that the charity either of private persons or of religious communities should be sufficient to meet the need, and under these conditions begging has become a recognised means of obtaining a living. In a small community, where begging is only an appeal from one neighbour to another, the arrangement may serve well enough ; but it leads to intolerable evils, both of fraud and neglected suffering, where it prevails in larger communities ; and sooner or later it has always been considered necessary for the law to intervene and regularise the situation. That has been done by defining where the responsibility for the maintenance of these people lies, and by making the responsibility one to be enforced by law.

In England the duty was laid in the first instance upon the family, and failing this upon the parish, until at the beginning of last century it was found that for many reasons the parish was too small an area for effective administration. Under the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 parishes were then grouped into unions, and each

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union of parishes became responsible first for administering, and finally for providing, the necessary funds within their area. Since then the responsibility of *administration* has remained with the union, but there has been a constant tendency to widen the area of financial responsibility by means of subsidies from various sources until at the present time the percentage of expenditure on poor relief which is not met from local sources is about 20 per cent. In London the tendency has been pushed so far that 70 per cent. of the total expenditure by Boards of Guardians is now borne by the grants made out of sums raised by Imperial taxation or other receipts in aid, or by rates levied throughout London in the proportion of the rateable value of the unions.

IV. 4, 177

IV. 4, 178

Thus the legal responsibility lies in the first place upon the individual—if capable—to maintain himself; in the second place it lies upon his family; and failing both these it lies ultimately upon the ratepayers of the union and county, and the taxpayers of the country.

Now at first sight it seems obvious that it is to the interest of the community that the number of those who are dependent upon public assistance should be as small as possible. And ultimately, also, this is indisputable: the community, from an

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economic point of view, is only the sum of its members, and if half of these fail to maintain themselves, the other half will have twice as many to maintain. But the statement needs modifying in its immediate application. It pays the community far better in the long run to gather in the waifs and strays of children for whom no one is caring, than to leave them to grow up as loafers and criminals. It would pay it far better, again, to maintain its loafers and vagrants in labour colonies, where they could be made to do some work before eating, than to leave them to maintain themselves by begging and theft. But unless a community is to become bankrupt it must keep steadily in view the importance of enforcing upon the individual the primary duty of being self-supporting.

It is this which constitutes one of the chief difficulties of any scheme of public assistance. The mere fact that a provision exists for those who fail in this primary duty causes many to fail who might otherwise have succeeded. It is difficult for anyone not intimately acquainted with Poor Law administration to realise that many of those who claim relief are suffering from sheer laziness. The workhouse inmate who declared that "So long as I can get sixteen ounces of pie

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for my dinner, and my two children kept for life, and they don't ask me to do any more than polish the stair bannisters, I'm not going to work," was perhaps more outspoken, but not more lazy, than many another of his kind. Nor is it widely enough known how many who are incapable are so through their wilful violation of the laws of sobriety and morality. It is not of course true that poverty is always a crime; the sternest administrator has never thought or said so. But the poverty which is due to excess or self-indulgence *is* a crime, and should be more frankly recognised as such.

Thus the problem of public assistance presents itself as the problem of offering help in such a way as to diminish rather than to increase the number of those requiring it. There are two lines of policy which offer a solution of the problem—the one to make the conditions of assistance so disagreeable that no one will accept them who can possibly help it; the other to make the assistance so effective that it will ultimately remove the cause of distress. There have been times in the history of the Poor Law when both these considerations were practically in abeyance, when relief was given on easy terms to anyone who demanded it, while yet there was no effective assistance such as could restore the recipients to independence.

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But the true test of good administration is the degree of success which it achieves in combining a policy which shall not encourage laziness and self-indulgence with one which shall be really remedial in the assistance afforded. It fails when it is attractive to the profligate, but it fails no less when it is deterrent to those who might be restored by its services to health and independence.

How far does the Poor Law, as administered in England to-day, satisfy this test?

The answer will be given more in detail in subsequent chapters. Here we may note certain broad conclusions from facts which have revealed themselves in the course of the enquiry.

1. With respect to certain classes of the children the administrators of the Poor Law may claim a very remarkable success, in the sense that those of whom they have taken entire charge, and for whom they have made special provision, have been almost entirely rescued from the pauper class and given a fair start to a healthy and independent life. There are, however, other and larger classes of children dependent upon public assistance for whom little attempt has been made to secure that they are properly brought up, and it is to be feared that many of these will contribute to the pauperism of the next generation (see Ch. 4).

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2. With regard to the sick, again, very marked success has attended the constant efforts of the Poor Law authorities in many places to improve the treatment of patients who enter their institutions. If the treatment of out-door patients has been less emphatically successful, it has been largely due to the difficulty of enforcing proper conditions in the home (see Ch. 8).

3. In our treatment of the aged, also, both success and failure have to be recorded. Of those in institutions some find comfort and luxury far beyond the attainment of the independent members of their own class, others lead monotonous and dejected lives in costly buildings under extravagant management, and others again are dreary in dreary surroundings. Amongst those receiving out-relief the discrepancies are even greater; many are half-starved on an utterly inadequate allowance, while many more who have no need of public assistance at all receive allowances at the expense of neighbours who are more independent but hardly better off (see Ch. 3).

4. The most serious failure in recent years has been in dealing with the able-bodied. Here the policy of the authorities has aimed at being deterrent, and its failure has been twofold. It has failed conspicuously to deter the idle and worthless

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who are indifferent to humiliation so long as they are well-fed; while its failure to make separate provision for the more respectable has given rise to the spasmodic and ill-regulated attempts of amateur agencies to supply the deficiency (see Ch. 5).

The fact that success and failure are so mingled suggests that the defects to be remedied must be sought more in the administration of the law than in the law itself; hence it is the administration which the Commissioners in their recommendations mainly seek to improve. If all Boards of Guardians had been working as well as the best, there would probably have been no demand for an enquiry, and little need of change. But in a subsequent chapter we shall see how very far that is from being the case, and what imperative need there is in many places to find administrators who will be more disinterested, more honest, and more intelligent.

There is no doubt that the work is one of great difficulty. The population which comes within the scope of the Poor Law is made up of the most heterogeneous elements. Individuals of every age, of every shade of character, of every degree of physical or moral incapacity, with every variety of disease or disability, are all brought together by

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the one common fact that they demand to be maintained at the cost of the community. It has been argued by some members of the Commission that the differences are so great as to outweigh the common element, and that the responsibility for providing for each particular need should be assigned to a special authority, regardless of whether the people to be provided for were to be maintained by the ratepayers or not. Thus, the children would be assigned to the Education authority and the sick to the Sanitary authority. The majority of the Commission hold, on the contrary, that the common element is so important as to justify—indeed, to necessitate—the existence of a special law to authorise and regulate the relief of these people, and of a special authority to apply and to administer that law. When an individual claims to be maintained at the cost of the community, it is clear that the claim cannot be an unconditional one. No State has ever yet offered, or ever can offer, free maintenance to everyone who likes to apply for it, whatever his circumstances may be; and it becomes necessary that every claim should be immediately submitted to a judicial authority which will decide whether the applicant is entitled to receive public assistance. Upon this authority there naturally devolves also the duty of

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(2) the Separate Authority shd be a non-specialised one

deciding what form the assistance to be given shall take. In doing this it has to bear in mind the interests both of the recipient and of the community at whose expense he is asking to be maintained. It does not follow that the man who asks for help necessarily knows what will help him most; the fact that he has failed to maintain his independence often means that he does *not* know. What is needed is a disinterested authority, practised in looking at all sides of a question, and able to call in skilled assistance. The specialist is too apt to see only what interests him to be a safe guide in the first instance. For the community, again, the paramount interest is that those who are incapable of maintaining themselves should be as few as possible; and, as we have already said, it is the duty of the administrator on the one hand to endeavour to remedy real incapacity, on the other hand to discourage wilful incapacity. By wilfully incapable persons we mean those who wantonly destroy their powers of work by self-indulgence, or wilfully refuse to exercise them because they prefer to be kept by the work of others. The number of those persons is increased at once by a relaxation in the vigilance of the

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administrator. Hence arises the necessity both of employing skilled officials to ascertain the true circumstances of every applicant, and of guarding against the danger that dependence should be made more attractive than independence. The majority of the Commission are convinced that it would be quite impracticable for the Education authority and the Sanitary authority to carry out these duties of discrimination and adjudication effectually, and that it is necessary that there should continue to be a special authority for the purpose. Moreover, and this should be carefully noted, it is more than doubtful whether the "specialised services" would do the work even as well as it is now being done in many unions. It is very largely due to failure of the Education authorities to train the children under their care that so many seek help in after life from sheer incapacity to do anything useful. And it is very largely due to grave neglect of the Sanitary authorities to fulfil their present duties that so many victims of ill-health are reduced to pauperism. It would be folly to throw back upon proved incompetency the task of restoring the victims of that incompetency. It needs highly-skilled workers, practised in dealing with specially difficult cases, and qualified by

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training and experience for the task of restoration; it needs, in short, officers such as those in charge of the best Poor Law schools and infirmaries.

Since 1834 the special authority for administering the Poor Law has been the Board of Guardians in each union, elected by the ratepayers, and working under the general supervision and control of the Local Government Board. The Commission recommends great changes in the constitution of this authority, and in order to understand their recommendations and the reasons for them it is necessary to describe in more detail the actual work done by the Guardians and the condition of the people under their care. In ascertaining this the Commissioners have not been content to take the evidence of other people only; they have been at great pains to see for themselves so far as that was practicable in the limited time at their disposal. They have visited unions in all parts of the country, they have attended Board Meetings and Relief Committees, they have seen institutions of all types, and have talked with the recipients of out-relief in their own homes. Thus they may fairly claim to have a first-hand general knowledge of the working and effect of the Poor Law as at present administered.

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CHAPTER II

STATISTICS AND CAUSES OF PAUPERISM

THE population dealt with yearly by the Poor Law is large, and constantly changing. It is generally reckoned for the purposes of official statistics by returns from each union, which are combined to show the total number of persons relieved on certain selected days. Of these returns, the most detailed are those which give the numbers relieved on January 1st and July 1st in each year. The summer pauperism is always considerably lower than the winter, and in order to obtain an estimate of the general level of pauperism throughout the year, the practice is to take the mean of these two returns as representing the average pauperism for the year to which they relate. The result obtained in this way for 1907 by combining the January and July counts was 793,519: a population considerably larger than

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AVGE
1907 ¾ million paupers = 2¼ % of pop E.W.

that of Liverpool, and representing 22·7 per 1,000 of the whole population of England and Wales.

But a return so obtained does not tell the whole story. To a large extent the pauper population is a changing one; many people go off the relief lists during the year, many others come on, a considerable number are constantly going off and coming on again. Thus it happens that a "day count" shows only how many are being relieved at a given time, and not the whole number who at one time or another during the year obtain relief.

In order to get fuller information for the Commission as to what proportion of the population belongs either continuously or intermittently to the pauper class, a special record was kept in 1907 giving full particulars of every case dealt with during the whole year by each Board of Guardians. The results of this record are of great interest in many ways, and show amongst other facts that the number of persons dealt with throughout the year is more than twice as great as the number obtained by the day count. During the year 1907 the number of those who received relief of one kind or
II. 5 another was 1,706,592, or 47 per 1000 of the total population.[1] Thus we may say that while

[1] These figures are subject to possibly slight modification owing to errors of duplication, &c.; also they exclude casual paupers and certain lunatics.

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at any given time the proportion of paupers to population will be between two and three in every hundred, yet the proportion liable to become paupers some time during the year will be between four and five in every hundred. It is this four or five out of every hundred which constitutes the population to be dealt with by means of public assistance.

Many interesting facts as to the different classes of whom this population is constituted are brought out in Part II. of the Report: "Statistical Survey of Poor Law Problems." A few of them may be noted here. In the first place, it appears II. 6 that nearly half of the paupers on any given day are women; the other half including both men and children. But this discrepancy tends to disappear on the year's count, by which the rate of pauperism for women is shown to be only slightly in excess of that for men. The conclusion is that the average duration of relief is longer amongst women than amongst men. The men, that is, apply more for short periods of help during temporary disability; while the women, especially the widows with young children, if they need assistance at all, need it for a considerable time.

Perhaps the most striking difference between men and women is shown in the kind of relief

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they receive. Of the whole population receiving
II. 16, 17 assistance on January 1st, 1908, rather less than a third were in institutions, and rather more than two-thirds were receiving out-door relief. But while more than half the men were in institutions, four-fifths of the women and three-fourths of the children were receiving out-door relief. To a small extent this may be due to reluctance to grant out-door relief to able-bodied men, but the excess was mainly amongst the old. The greater facility with which elderly men enter the workhouse than do elderly women is very striking; when visiting the workhouses we nearly always found in them twice as many old men as old women. The explanation was generally the same—that the old men gave up sooner, while the old women could keep their little homes nice, and even earn a few pence to supplement the out-relief, to a much greater age.

II. 24 To some extent this excess of men in Poor Law institutions is of recent growth. A table in paragraph 24 of Part II. shows that while female and child pauperism have both decreased during the last thirty years, male pauperism has actually increased. Several causes are suggested which may have contributed to this increase, but the only one which would apply solely (or mainly) to

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men is the series of Workmen's Compensation Acts, which have made it increasingly difficult for a man to get work as he advances in years. It is probable also that the large amount of relief provided outside the Poor Law for the unemployed has reduced some to pauperism by causing them to rely upon other than their own resources.

Some interesting facts are brought out in connection with the "period and recurrence of relief." Nearly one-third of the whole number relieved in the year 1906–7 were practically permanent paupers, receiving relief throughout the whole year. This class is made up chiefly of the aged, the chronic sick, and orphan and deserted children. II. 31 *sq.*

Another large class consists of those who are relieved for very short periods. "Over 200,000 persons were relieved for less than one week, and a further 320,000 for less than a month. The two groups comprise nearly one-third of the total number of persons relieved, and embrace cases of very differing character. The vast majority are cases of the most temporary destitution and were relieved but once during the year, but a considerable minority were relieved for short periods on two or more occasions. If any considerable and permanent reduction in pauperism can be effected II. 34

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it should be more easily accomplished amongst the persons included in these groups."

II. 35 Another large class consists of those whose relief exceeded one month in duration, but was not continuous over the whole year. Of these, 431,801 persons were relieved only once during the year. "Amongst them are those who are generally in receipt of relief, but who manage in one way or another, probably during the summer months, to regain a precarious independence for a very limited period. Some again are seasonal paupers, persons whose occupation lasts for a portion only of the year, and who . . . resort to the Poor Law during the vacant periods."

A smaller, though still considerable, class consists of those who are constantly on and off the

II. 36 relief lists. "There were 26,179 persons who received relief on at least five different occasions, and those of them who were relieved in the workhouses belong to the class known as 'ins-and-outs.' Cases have been brought to our notice of persons who have been in and out of the workhouse more than fifty-two times during the year. . . . Mr. Lockwood mentions two cases, one of a woman of eighty-one who had been in and out of the workhouse 163 times in the year 1901, and the other

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of a man who has been in and out 593 times since 1884."

The rate of pauperism—*i.e.*, the proportion of paupers to population—differs very much in different parts of the country and in different unions. There are various reasons why this should be so; the policy of the Guardians always affects the rate one way or another, and in some districts the occupations of the people or the sanitary conditions under which they live may contribute largely to pauperism. It would even II. 70, 71
seem as if racial characteristics could be traced by the figures which tell the story of dependence and independence, for the northern counties show a rate markedly lower than prevails in other parts of the country. In Yorkshire, for instance, the rate for the West Riding is only 15·7 per 1,000 as against 38·5 in Norfolk, and 37·3 in Dorset.

The divergences between particular unions are II. 72
still greater, and the proportion varies from 8·5 per 1,000 in the Fylde Union (Lancashire) to 73·1 per 1,000 in the Strand Union, 56·8 per 1,000 in the Poplar Union (London), and 56·7 per 1000 in the Thingoe Union (Suffolk). The Poplar Union

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is unfortunate in combining two of the causes of high pauperism which we have mentioned—an extreme Socialistic administration with low-class industries.

Thingoe is a rural union, and is illustrative of the fact that pauperism is, generally speaking, higher in the rural unions than in the urban. Apart from causes peculiar to certain localities, there is no doubt that the higher rural pauperism is largely owing to the drift of the younger and stronger members of the population into the towns, leaving a large proportion of aged and helpless people in the country. This seems to accord ill with the almost unvarying evidence we have received to the effect that in country districts there is little or no real poverty. The discrepancy is only to be explained by the attitude of country Guardians towards out-relief to the aged; both givers and recipients regard it as an old-age pension, to be given irrespective of other considerations to those who attain a certain age.

See Diocesan Reports

Another point to note is that though the rate of pauperism is higher in country districts than in towns, nevertheless it is decreasing faster; and presumably its rate of decrease will be still further accelerated as more of the old people become eligible for old age pensions.

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The greatest problem for the administrator which is revealed by the statistics is the problem of London. Amongst other things, they show "that London is maintaining 15,800 more paupers than it was in the 'eighties,' that the rate per 1,000, which was generally below that for the rest of England and Wales, has risen above it, that the larger numbers maintained in London chiefly consist of men relieved indoors, the increase being relatively greater than elsewhere, and that this increase is not due to a transference from the outdoor lists. There is, thus, abundance of statistical evidence to show that the present position is more serious in London than in any other part of the country." II. 81

Finally, before proceeding to consider in detail the particular causes of pauperism, we may note what has been the general tendency of pauperism. It is a matter for congratulation that since 1834 there has been an almost continuous decrease in the proportion of paupers to population; between the period 1871-2 to 1879-80 and 1907-8 there has been a decrease from 31·2 per 1,000 to 22·1 per 1,000. But it is a matter for grave consideration that the rate of decrease is diminishing very rapidly, and that in some years there has been an actual increase. II. 22

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Total yearly expdre 1905-6 £14m 8/3 per head pop

II. 44 The situation is the more serious because this check to progress is accompanied by a largely increased expenditure, especially since 1889. The total yearly expenditure has increased from £8,440,821 in 1887–8 to £14,035,888 in 1905–6; while the amount per head of the total population has increased from 6*s.* 0¾*d.* to
II. 67 8*s.* 2¾*d.* over the same period. "Summing up the general situation in regard to the increase in expenditure, we find that, whilst the expenditure per inhabitant has increased from 7*s.* 0¼*d.* to 8*s.* 2¾*d.* since 1871–2, and is only 7¼*d.* less than it was in 1834, the expenditure per pauper has increased from £7 12*s.* 1*d.* to £15 12*s.* 6*d.* in the same period. The country is maintaining a multitude of paupers not far short of the number maintained in 1871–2, and is spending more than double the amount upon each individual. . . . Such advance as the nation has made has been accomplished at an enormous cost, and absorbs an annual amount which is now equivalent to nearly one-half of the present expenditure upon the Army."

This tendency, as revealed by statistics, for Poor Law relief to become at once more costly and on the whole less effective, has been corrobor-

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ated by evidence of a more concrete and detailed kind. It gives the clue to the policy elaborated by the Commissioners and expressed in their recommendations. "While the rise in expendi- IV. 10,584
ture was accompanied by a diminution in pauperism it was possible to regard it with some degree of acquiescence. It is worth while to pay highly for the restoration of paupers to independence. But there are indications that the present administration has reached the limits of its remedial powers, and needs once more to be reinforced. It must, we are convinced, extend its policy both of cure and of prevention still further, and it is in this sense that we have made our recommendations."

If this policy of cure and of prevention is to become a reality, it is essential that far more account should be taken in future of the causes of pauperism than has been done in the past. The Commission have not been able to make a detailed study of this branch of the subject—that can only be done by local administrators in actual touch with the people. But they have received a large amount of evidence on the question from persons well qualified from various points of view to form a judgment; they have also caused special investigations to be made on certain points, and they have

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IV. 10 brought together the main results of this evidence in their Report.

Perhaps the cause most often assigned for pauperism is old age. In itself this is hardly a cause of pauperism; only a very small percentage
IV. 10,522 of old people are paupers. "But when combined with, or following upon, other causes, such as low earning power, drink or thriftlessness, it becomes a very large factor in the situation. And when old age appears, it naturally tends to obscure the previous causes which have played their part and disappeared."

The Commission note, however, certain industrial conditions which tend to give a special importance to old age, "or rather increasing age," in this connection. They have found a very general opinion that the development of industry is such as to make increasing demands upon the worker, and thus cause him to drop out of the
IV. 10,523 industrial ranks at an earlier age. "The movement is intensified in the first place by the necessity of earning the Trade Union minimum, since employers will not pay the standard wage to slow or inferior workers; and in the second place by the operation of the Employers' Liability Act and the Workmen's Compensation Acts." Attention has constantly been drawn to these difficul-

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ties in the evidence, and the following extracts are typical of many other statements to the same effect. The first is from a relieving officer :—

"From time to time a considerable number of middle-aged men have applied for assistance, who have stated that they have been unable to get work, employers giving the preference to younger men as being less likely to make any claims for compensation under the Act. These men have been mostly able-bodied, and, in my opinion, capable of doing a fair day's work."

The next is from the Report of the Peterborough Diocesan Conference :—

"The following is a sample statement from a very large factory parish, which reveals what the Committee fear may be an increasing cause of unemployment as time goes on :—

"'There are workmen who are willing to work, but who are not quite as quick, strong, or capable as others, and the manufacturers are willing to employ them, but they cannot, or will not, pay them the fixed minimum. I have known also of several cases of worthy men, with slight heart trouble or other defect, *discharged* since the "Liability" Act came into force.'"

The evidence has come from so many and such independent sources that it is impossible not to attach much weight to it. But as a cause of pauperism the tendency is beyond the influence of Poor Law administrators. The remedy rests

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partly with the Trade Unions, which should make universal their occasional practice of allowing older men to earn a lower wage than the young; and will partly have to be found in a system of insurance against unemployment.

The causes of pauperism are generally fewer and simpler in the country than in the towns, where the greater complication of life gives rise to industrial and moral evils which may be hardly known in the country. The following statement from a relieving officer at Leeds illustrates the diversity of evils which have to be combated in the towns before we can hope to diminish greatly the number of those who sooner or later inevitably fall into dependence:

IV. 10,529 "The most important causes of pauperism are: (*a*) Old age; (*b*) the early marriage of persons dependent upon casual labour. Large families are the rule. Owing to the low wages earned no provision can be made to meet such contingencies as non-employment, sickness, or of imprisonment for debt. The latter is a crying scandal, and I have had to relieve the families of hard-working respectable men who have been committed for long periods on non-compliance of a county court judge's order for a few shillings. . . . (*c*) Imprisonment for criminal offences is a large factor in pauperism; (*d*) venereal disease also contributes largely; much of the misery entailed by this disease would be obviated if it were made notifiable. Its ramifications are appalling. (*e*) Intemperance is another

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contribution, and in this I find females to be the worst offenders. Many men are perforce paupers by the intemperance of their wives. . . . (*f*) Indiscriminate relief by private persons and religious bodies also contributes largely to pauperism, and cases have occurred where relief has been in the first instance given in this manner and the recipients eventually become confirmed paupers. (*g*) Cases are not wanting to show that pauperism is hereditary—two generations being quite common, and third generations occasionally occur."

One cause which is common to both town and country, and which would appear from a great weight of evidence to be the most potent and widespread factor in the creation of pauperism, is drink. "Some witnesses also indicate gambling as a serious and growing cause; but gambling, though it wastes the resources of its victims, does not lead to such physical and moral degeneration as drink." One inspector furnished us with the following details as to the inmates of two workhouses in his district: IV. 10,531

1. "At the time the information was obtained, there were in the body of the workhouse, as apart from the infirmary, and excluding children and imbeciles, 170 men and 109 women, total 279. Of these 279 persons, seventy-four men and thirty-six women were in the workhouse as the direct result of intemperance. Of the above, twenty-six men and twenty-seven women could not be allowed out for a day's leave without fear of their returning IV. 10,532

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and detention a) of inebriates, 29 b) venereal, 30

the worse for drink. The master of the workhouse reports that twenty-nine of the latter inmates continually take their discharge and return to the workhouse inebriated."

2. "Taking the same data as in the case of Bath Workhouse; there were in the body of this workhouse 258 men and 158 women, total 416. Of this number, there were 175 men and twenty women in the workhouse as the direct result of intemperance. The master also stated that of the 416 inmates in the body of the workhouse, 205 of these could not be allowed out for a day's leave without fear of their returning the worse for drink."

Unfortunately it is not only those who indulge in excessive drinking themselves who suffer from their intemperance. A case is quoted as showing the far-reaching effects of this habit:

"Widow, four children. Eldest boy, thirty-one, now in the union infirmary, an imbecile. Daughter, weak, bad eyes for years, and been sent to the Ophthalmia Hospital and partly recovered and now in service. Son living at home, carter, but drinks. Son aged ten at school. Father, dead some years, was a notorious drinker, constantly before the magistrates and fined. Was an invalid the last seven years, and he, or his wife and family, on out-relief list for sixteen or seventeen years. I estimate this one case has cost from £250 to £300, and is, in my opinion, due to the drinking habits of the father, though to anyone not knowing the history it would not be so classed. I believe this is typical of many."

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Striking evidence to the same effect is to be found in the unanimity with which the Diocesan Conferences have reported to us that drink is one of the chief causes, often that it is *the* chief cause, of poverty. The Report quotes as typical the summary of replies from 445 parishes in the diocese of Peterborough :

"The chief *moral* cause of poverty in town and country alike is said to be excessive drinking—want of thrift, and bad management often, early and improvident marriages or gambling sometimes, accompanying it ; in fact, in many parishes the reply on this point is practically that what little poverty exists is almost solely due to the drinking habits of the few whose families suffer in consequence. Even when there is little actual drunkenness, the proportion of weekly wages regularly taken to the public house is said to keep many families always poor."

It is clear that here again the main remedy must come from other agencies than that of Public Assistance, and must take effect in the greater self-control of the people themselves. But the administrators of Public Assistance can contribute towards this end by refusing to condone habits of intemperance, and in certain cases by the compulsory detention of inebriates (see Ch. 9).

Another cause which contributes largely to pauperism is sickness, and there is one class of

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Want

disease which is closely akin to intemperance in its degrading and far-reaching effects. Medical witnesses have given evidence to show how large is the amount of pauperism directly and indirectly due to this cause :

V. 156 "During the past twenty-five years the number of inmates treated in the Leeds Union Infirmary for early venereal disease has been fairly constant, 120 to 140 cases annually, and an average of sixteen to twenty at any one time under treatment . . . and having been patched up they do not stay, but discharge themselves long before they have had sufficient treatment. Such people are a public danger before admission and continue to be so after discharge."

It is clear that in the interests of the community it is even more imperative than in the case of inebriates that the Public Assistance Authority should have power to detain such people until they are less dangerous to the public.

Another witness states :

"These (venereal diseases) exist to a larger extent and in worse form than is usually supposed ; they constitute one of the greatest evils of the age. . . . I am convinced the greater majority of children born in the poorest districts (slums) are tainted with syphilis ; and that this taint added to the conditions of environment . . . is largely responsible for the awful mortality amongst children in these districts. Even if these children sur-

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vive they become an expense to the community. They are mostly feeble in body and mind, possess no inhibitory power and readily give way to the vices by which they are surrounded. It is difficult to call them immoral because they do not know what morality is. It is from this class that paupers and criminals are made, and that prisons, asylums and workhouses are filled."

Another disease which contributes largely to pauperism, and which is greatly aggravated by the conditions of life amongst the very poor, is consumption. One witness who had examined 4,000 cases of consumption in the wards of a Poor Law infirmary came to the conclusion that nearly 60 per cent. were paupers because they were consumptives. He adds :

"There are at present in England and Wales over 200,000 men afflicted with tubercle, the majority of whom will ultimately have to resort to the workhouse, unless released by death. The sad part of it is that highly respectable people in all ranks of society are dragged down to destitution by this fell disease, finally becoming chargeable with their families to the Poor Law." V. 196

It is only recently that it has been generally recognised to what a large extent the transmission of this disease can be guarded against by simple precautions, and it is certain that it can be greatly reduced if the Public Assistance Authority make

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it a condition of their assistance that those precautions shall be taken.

Speaking generally, any form of illness which is severe and prolonged tends to exhaust the resources of the family, especially when it is the wage-earner who suffers. But how far provision might be made, and is made, against illness without having recourse to the rates will be considered in Chapter 8.

Indirectly, as giving rise to illness, bad housing conditions and bad sanitation are amongst the causes which conduce to pauperism. But houses are often insanitary more from the habits of the people living in them than from any structural defect, and it is not easy to assign the chief weight of the responsibility. The investigators appointed to report to us on the Relation of Industrial and Sanitary Conditions to Pauperism sum up on this point:

IV. 10,537 "Housing conditions produce or aggravate certain illnesses. From persons sick with such illnesses many applications are received for relief. Again, housing conditions produce or aggravate certain demoralised types of character, as it is demoralised persons of such a kind who form a large proportion of paupers. Beyond this it is difficult to go in the matter of direct proof. . . . At the same time our conviction as to the importance of housing remains unaltered."

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It is perhaps not generally known how much IV. 10, 538
flagrant evil, leading directly to pauperism, is encouraged by the existence of unregulated or insufficiently regulated common lodging houses and furnished rooms. The latter are a "conspicuous evil" not only in London but in many provincial towns; they are habitually overcrowded, and are used for immoral purposes:

"The relieving officer for this district gave us a great deal of information about these furnished rooms, and from him we learnt that they are nearly always in a filthy state. They are occupied by one tenant after another without any cleansing, and the bedding is found in a shocking condition. The rent paid by the landlord is about 17*s.* a week, and he received from 28*s.* to 35*s.* a week from the occupiers of the rooms.

"It is probably correct to say that the lowest class of the community resort to these sub-let houses—lower and more degraded than the *habitués* of our common lodging houses. In addition to the obvious liability to insanitary conditions, these houses offer convenient residences for those persons of the working-class who are absolutely careless and reckless as regards their rights of citizenship. Their only possessions are the clothes they wear; not even the towels, cups or saucers, kettles or saucepans in the house belong to them. Men and women live together, only to separate on the slightest excuse; indeed, in the majority of cases these houses harbour the profligate and most reckless class of our cities."

A relieving officer states that from one lodging

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house containing 200 to 300 beds he has received forty applications in a day.

Perhaps nowhere more easily than in the effects of lodging houses and shelters upon their inmates can one read the lesson that to make life too easy is as fatal a policy for human beings as to make it too difficult. It is by offering the possibility of a life at a very low standard, and so encouraging the lowest form of casual labour, that
IV. 10, 539 these institutions contribute to pauperism. "They encourage and foster a life cut off from all natural relations, calling for the least possible amount of self-control and energy, and leading almost inevitably to the workhouse."

Amongst industrial causes of pauperism casual labour stands foremost. Long hours of work,
IV. 10, 549 if regular, are far less harmful. "The great example of an occupation where long hours are worked is that of railway employés, and they are pre-eminently not pauperised." Low earnings in certain occupations contribute a certain amount of pauperism. But from every quarter where much casual labour is employed the same story is told of its evil effects. Our investigators lay special stress upon it:

IV. 10, 540 "In an analysis of application and Report books the cases of pauperism among men which are the combined

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effect of casual work and drink are so numerous as to outweigh and obliterate altogether those caused by the most dangerous of occupations unless the class of case to which they belong is carefully isolated and analysed. The same fact is revealed in the abundant testimony of relieving officers and others."

It must not be concluded that all who have resort to casual labour are degraded by it into pauperism, nor that the many casual labourers who become paupers owe their downfall to the nature of the work. One witness "believes that the casual trades do not more demoralise the people than that demoralised people go to the casual trades." Nevertheless, there is little doubt that to regularise the casual trades would go far to diminish pauperism of the worst type: "Take away casual labour and drink and you can shut up three-quarters of the workhouses."

In Chapter 5 on the able-bodied, we refer again to this question of casual labour, and also to the very serious question of the extent to which the ranks of casual labour are recruited by boys from the elementary schools. The Commission was strongly impressed by the evidence showing how "boys leaving the elementary schools were drafted into work which lasted only a few years and then flung them out, unskilled and untrained, into the casual IV. 10, 545

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labour market." It is in this connection that we must probably seek the reason why our enormous expenditure upon elementary education has had so little effect in checking pauperism.

II. 139. "In the year 1871, the expenditure upon elementary education was slightly in excess of two millions, of which some £550,000 was met by school fees. In 1905–6, the latest year for which the particulars are available, the expenditure had risen to about twenty millions, whilst approximately another three millions were expended upon various forms of higher education. A generation has elapsed since elementary education became universal, and the benefits to be derived from the system should now be accruing to the nation. Persons now above fifty years of age have not, it is true, participated in the advantages conferred in 1870, but of persons below that age we have shown that there is no diminution in the number coming upon the Poor Laws."

Another cause of pauperism which cannot be omitted is the prevalence of a great amount of harmful charity. When wisely administered, charity should be, and sometimes is, of the greatest value in rendering timely assistance which may prevent the recipients from falling into permanent dependence. Unfortunately it too often has

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the opposite effect. Much evidence as to this may be found in the Reports from the Diocesan Committees, of which the following is typical :

"Another cause is the irresponsible giving of alms. IV. 10, 551
It comes under both the economic and moral heads. The Ripon Diocesan Committee submits that this practice is a lazy way of avoiding responsibility, which puts a premium on professional begging and canting hypocrisy, to the detriment of the honestly unfortunate worker, and very rapidly causes widespread deterioration of character. The committee urges that every means—religious, moral, and legal—be used to stop this harmful Social evil, and that corporate responsibility for the cure of poverty be put forward strenuously as infinitely more beneficial than the temporary relief of individual distress by means of such a baneful habit. . . . A certain class of people both in the rural and urban parishes, look upon the alms from charity endowments as their right and count on such bequests in calculating their possible income ; and it is more than probable that this form of charity—unless very rigidly and carefully administered—becomes enervating to the healthy self-reliance of many people."

Our investigators note the same mischievous effects :

A similar demoralising effect was assigned to lax and undiscriminating charity. Extreme instances were narrated. Thus a lady after hearing a sermon on the conditions of life among the poor, drove down, we were informed, in a carriage to a very poor street in the neighbourhood and there distributed promiscuously a dozen

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half-bottles of champagne and a dozen half-pound bunches of grapes. It was, however, from the multitude of less absurd acts that the great harm resulted in those unions where prosperous and poor districts were in juxtaposition.

A West End Union furnishes similar cases in point. One working family earned 30*s.* per week by steady work, and the wife said to our informant:—

"Can you expect us to go on doing this when last week the couple next door, doing no work but begging, brought home £2 in gold in one single day, together with a quantity of food?"

The Commissioners consider at some length in their Report the very controversial question as to how far the administration of the Poor Law is itself a cause of pauperism.

IV. 10, 557 "Technically, of course, if there were no Poor Law there would be no legal paupers; and there are those who take the superficial view that by abolishing the Poor Law and assigning its functions to other agencies, we could abolish pauperism. But we wish here to raise the question in a deeper sense, and to ask how far it is true that actual poverty and dependence may be increased or decreased by the way in which the Poor Law is administered."

It was impossible in face of the evidence before them to avoid the conclusion that much of the existing pauperism is due to the way in which the

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Poor Law has been administered. It has had in some places the same effect which we have just attributed to badly administered charities; it has tempted people away from their natural resources; "it has destroyed the qualities of independence and mutual helpfulness, and substituted the desire to make out a good case for the relieving officer." The Commission do not, of course, maintain that this is always and necessarily the case:

"There are, of course, many to whom these considerations do not apply. There are some who are physically or morally incapable of independence under any administration; and there are many who are not to be tempted from it by anything less than sheer necessity. But there are also very many who simply follow the line of least resistance, who are quite capable of earning their living, and will do so in the absence of any temptation to the contrary, but who are easily drawn into loafing and thriftlessness by the prospect of relief. It is to these people on the borderland that an unwise policy of relief on easy terms is fatal; they quickly lose the habits of energy and foresight, and become in the true sense of the word pauperised." IV. 10, 559

These effects of unwise administration are best illustrated from the history of particular unions. Under the present system of triennial elections it

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not unfrequently happens that a new Board of Guardians, being without any experience to guide them, will greatly increase the pauperism in their district until they have learned wisdom. The following instance was mentioned by a Guardian:

"... one ward in the Leeds Union doubled its outdoor relief during the first year after the present board came in. There was some exceptional distress, but not anything in proportion to the increase of outdoor relief. The same ward has gradually been diminishing its out-relief for the last two years, although worked by the same guardians—and they themselves have acknowledged that the policy of the first year was unwise."

Another case in point is that of Bermondsey:

V. 10, 565 "There was there a steady rise in the number of paupers from 4,274 in 1891, to 5,552 in 1896, and 6,416 in 1901, while during the same period the outdoor relief increased from £11,200 to £23,000. In 1902 the Board appointed a superintendent relieving officer, since when:

"There has been a gradual decrease in outdoor relief, due principally to the diligent inquiries made by relieving officers into the applications for relief, the aid of the case-paper system, and the more efficient administration."

Sometimes the harm is done, not by inexperience, but as the result of a deliberate policy. This has been the case in Poplar, where between 1895 and 1905 the number of paupers was increased from

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5,000 to 11,600. It is significant of the attitude of the Guardians that task work was abolished in the workhouse, and out relief given to able-bodied men without any labour test. In 1906 the number of indoor paupers had increased 36 per cent., that of outdoor paupers had increased 249 per cent., and the Poplar rate of pauperism stood at 68 per 1,000, as against 28 per 1,000 for all London. L.G.B. Report

These figures as to indoor and outdoor paupers illustrate the fact that to give outdoor relief lavishly does not diminish, but rather increases, the number of those who finally enter the workhouse. The converse is also true, that to restrict outdoor relief and administer carefully does not result in driving people into the workhouse, but tends rather to diminish the number of those who have recourse to it. This is illustrated by the following table showing the progress of Poor Law administration in the Bradfield Union : IV. 10, 567

	1871.	1881.	1891.	1901.	1906.
Indoor . .	259	151	120	107	123
Outdoor .	999	202	29	18	91
Total . .	1,258	353	149	125	214

"It is especially to be noted in the above table that so long as the number of out-paupers were

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diminishing, the number of indoor paupers diminished also; *i.e.*, *the poor were not driven into the house.* In 1900, Mr. Chaplin's Circular appeared; in April, 1901, the Bradfield guardians resolved to give out-relief on the lines indicated in the circular, the number of outdoor paupers rose, and simultaneously the *number of indoor paupers rose also.*"

Many other causes of pauperism have been brought to the attention of the Commission.

IV.10, 553 Amongst those which are important, though less widespread than those already dealt with, they note:

1. The failure of unsound Friendly Societies or dividing clubs.

2. Insufficiency of housing accommodation, especially in rural districts.

3. The payment of pensions at long intervals.

4. Domestic ignorance and incapacity on the part of women.

IV.10, 556 Of course there have not been wanting witnesses who have regarded the question from a political point of view, and have assigned the existence of pauperism to such causes as Capitalism, Free Trade, and the system of Land Tenure. The Commission felt it to be beyond their reference either to endorse or to controvert such suggestions.

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CHAPTER III

THE AGED

THE most permanent, as well as the largest, section of the pauper population, consists naturally of the aged and those permanently incapacitated for work. For these there is seldom any prospect of regaining their independence if they have once become dependent upon Poor Law relief. By degrees a certain number of the old will be transferred to the list of pensioners, but this is only transference from one form of public assistance to another; and old age pensions will not affect those who are permanently invalided at an earlier age. The only method by which this class can be helped to retain independence is by a scheme of invalidity insurance which would cover all inability to work, whether due to sickness or old age, up to the pension age. For this purpose we should need to know the number, not so much of the "aged" as of those incapacitated from work.

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Aged = nearly half Avge No of paupers

The ordinary official returns do not distinguish between the "aged" and other adults; but the census of paupers taken on March 31, 1906, shows that the number of paupers over sixty on that day was 379,902, nearly half the total number of paupers (46·5 per cent.). The number
IV. 7, 359 is large, but it forms a small proportion of the whole population over 60; only 14·8 out of every hundred. It is impossible to say in detail of the other 85·2 per cent. how they are maintained. Many are still able-bodied and working, with occasional help, it may be, from Poor Law and other sources; many, no doubt, subsist on their own savings; a considerable number have pensions or allowances from various sources; the majority are probably maintained by their children. But whatever the alternative may be, it is clear that, taking the country as a whole, it is not the normal or inevitable fate of the aged to be forced to apply for Poor Law relief. Still less is it true, as so often asserted, that the working-man will probably end his days in the
IV. 7, 347 workhouse. Of the 15 per cent. over 60 who receive relief, less than one-third are in Poor Law institutions; and of those who are, many are not in the workhouse, but in the infirmary.

In what manner, we may now ask, are those

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who do receive relief dealt with under the present administration? Here there is no comprehensive answer to be given. In the words of the Report: "It is impossible to generalise about it (*i.e.* the condition of the aged), owing to the great want of uniformity in administration. In some places it is thoroughly satisfactory, and the administration both wise and kindly; in others it is unsatisfactory, and the administration either careless or stupid. Even in the same Union, owing to the application of a fixed scale, one pauper may be in a condition of want approaching to destitution, while another would be in comfortable circumstances without any relief at all." IV. 7, 356

This want of uniformity manifests itself in many ways. In the first place it may depend largely upon peculiarities of local administration whether or not the relief given will be by way of maintenance in an institution, or by way of an allowance in the home of the recipient. In some Unions it is almost entirely the former, in others almost entirely the latter. On March 31, 1906, the number of paupers over 60 years of age who received indoor relief was 114,964, while the number of those who received outdoor relief was 264,938; but comparison with previous returns shows that the number who receive indoor relief

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is increasing rapidly. This is more especially true of the towns, and the difference is not always wholly due to the policy of the guardians; where, *e.g.*, house accommodation is scarce and rents high, the old people may be forced to take refuge in the workhouse for lack of suitable house-room outside. Generally speaking, however, it may be said that in some Unions, according to the habit of the Guardians, an allowance will be given almost for the asking, while in others careful enquiry will be made into the circumstances of the applicant, and if it is thought wiser help will be offered in the form of maintenance in an institution.

The distribution of old-age pauperism itself depends partly upon this question of the policy (or habit) of the Guardians. Naturally there tends to be more paupers in a place where relief is granted easily and as a matter of course, than in a place where the applicant is expected to prove his need. But other conditions have also to be taken into consideration. The fact that the greatest proportion of old age pauperism is to be found in rural districts is largely due to the fact that the greatest proportion of old people is to be found in rural districts. The young have moved away to seek work in the towns, and have neglected to provide for the parents they have left behind.

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Statistics show that in London the old people over 60 form 66·9 per 1,000 of the population; in other Unions which are wholly or mainly urban they form 67·3 per 1,000; while in Unions which are wholly or mainly rural they form no less than 102 per 1,000. IV. 7, 348

In the towns, again, there is more likely to be charitable provision for the old people in the shape of doles or almshouses, or private help from church and chapel and benevolent individuals. But in the country "the parish" tends to be the most obvious source to which they can turn for help, and so much is this the case that in many places the parish allowance is looked upon as a right, to be claimed and granted as a matter of course, as an "old-age pension," and often irrespective of any real need. "... in rural districts in all parts of the country outdoor relief is practically regarded as an old-age pension. There is no reluctance in applying for relief, and it is not confined to destitute cases, but given to all comers of a certain age." One witness said: IV. 7, 332

"In this Union no old people are offered the workhouse so long as they can take care of themselves or other people take care of them. When they do go into the house they are almost always infirmary cases—our out-relief, too, is practically a pension list. It seems all

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nonsense to me about the difficulty of old-age pensions—our people have had it for years and it is just wonderful what a little people can live upon and reach a fine old age. There is no fear of any of the poor wanting the necessaries of life in the country places."

Another told us :

"You will find in the agricultural districts that every old servant of everybody in the neighbourhood is practically on outdoor relief at anything from 1*s.* 6*d.* to 2*s.* 6*d.* Of course they ought to be pensioned as old servants, not as paupers. You cannot get at the motive ; you never know why the outdoor relief is given. You see a most improper case come up, and you suggest that there is something wrong in the family, either there is drink or immorality, or something or another, and it is very undesirable that outdoor relief should be given ; nevertheless it is given."

And another speaking of a different part of the country said :

"Outdoor relief has become a habit of the country in the rural districts, and if you could only get the administrators and the recipients out of that habit, you would do a very great deal to restore proper administration. I have heard cases where the Chairman will say : 'Oh, what have you come here for?' and the man will say : 'I have come for my allowance.' It is a matter of course."

Thus it comes about that whether an old person will receive relief from the Poor Law, and if he

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does whether it will be maintenance in an institution or an allowance in his own home, depends at present very largely upon whether he lives in the town or in the country, and upon what town or what part of the country he lives in. That is to say, it depends upon considerations which are largely irrelevant to the question of his needs.

A similar lack of uniformity appears when we examine into the circumstances of those actually in receipt of relief. If we consider first those to whom the relief given takes the form of maintenance in an institution we find that in most places their position has been greatly modified and improved since the movement in favour of old-age pensions. Indeed, the principal effect of that movement, dating from about 1890, and until the Pension Act of 1908, was to press forward the differential treatment of the old people in the workhouses. Not only have the local authorities been constantly urged to treat the aged with greater leniency than the able-bodied; they have also been at considerable pains in some places to classify them according to their character, in the hope that only congenial spirits might share a common life. The classification is often accompanied by special privileges for the higher classes, such as cake for tea, a carpet in the sitting-room,

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greater freedom of egress, etc. In Sheffield they
IV. 7, 337 have a classification in as many as four classes, based on a combination of length of residence and character. It is very doubtful whether such elaborate classification as this can be carried out without favouritism or injustice. It is no doubt very desirable to separate those who are noisy and objectionable in language and habits from the more respectable and quiet; and it is a useful aid to discipline to be able to degrade a refractory inmate to a lower class; but it is probable that too great weight has been attached to "classification" of the old on moral grounds. Certainly the happiness of the old people appears to depend far more upon the nature of the administration—the kindliness of the master and matron, or the interest taken in them by the Guardians, than upon any scheme of classification, however elaborate.

Another important factor in the happiness of the inmates is that the institution they inhabit should be small and home-like. It is not in the large and expensive institutions that the old people are most at home and comfortable. An old couch on which the more frail may take an occasional rest during the day has far more real luxury than glittering electric lights and lengths of shining corridors; and a bright fire in a small

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room, even if it does get too hot at times, is more homely than a spacious saloon scientifically heated with hot water apparatus. And more important than all is the skill of master or matron in finding congenial occupation for the inmates. Here the interests of economy and humanity are really identical. There are innumerable little tasks which the old people can do and are all the happier for doing, but which tend to be taken out of their hands in the large and expensive institutions. It is for these reasons that the Commission IV. 7, 354 have recommended that in future the institutions for old people shall be separate from those of other classes, and shall be small and simple.

In some places where these conditions were not observed, we found that the old people, without being subject to any actual unkindness or harshness, were nevertheless leading most dreary and even miserable lives. The following instances from the records of our visits to different places illustrate both good and bad :—

(1) "I saw the women's day wards in the workhouse. IV. 7, 326 They are old, but bright and fairly comfortable. I was struck by the pleasant relations between the inmates and the matron, an exceptionally pleasant woman. I also saw four cottages built for married couples. There is no demand for these, one is occupied, one is empty, and the others converted into the female tramp wards."

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(2) "The Homes for the Aged and Deserving Poor were erected to comply with the urgent recommendations of Mr. Chaplin's Circular. They may be described as adequately supported almshouses, under disciplinary conditions, such as obtain and are enforced among the passengers of a mail steamer. The swing gate of the institution is always open. The inmates go out when they please, but we understood that they seldom go beyond the garden: they prefer that their friends should come and see them and, we were told, not a few look in for a 'cup of tea.'"

(3). "The building includes a number of cottage homes for aged couples. They were quite simple in character, but bright, and the inmates seemed very happy. The meals are served to them in their own rooms, and they make their own tea."

(4) "A street of four cottages with gardens has been bought for £1,200, and converted by inmates' labour into cottage homes for four married couples, and thirty-two old men of good character; the cost thus being £30 a head. The inmates of these homes seemed very happy, and we understood were free from all the more irksome regulations of workhouse life."

(5) "The inmates, over 900 in number, were congregated in large rooms, without any attempt to employ their time or cheer their lives. There was a marked absence of any human interest, and though the superintendent and matron impressed us favourably, it was impossible to avoid feeling that the lives of the inmates were not merely wanting in colour, but were aimless and listless. On more than one occasion there have been offers from outside to brighten the Sunday service, but

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they have been refused by the Guardians owing to religious difficulties. It could not be better described than as a 'human warehouse.' The dormitories, which in some cases accommodated as many as sixty inmates, were so full of beds as to make it impossible to provide chairs, or to walk, except sideways, between them."

(6) "The . . . 'Home' which we visited in the afternoon seemed to us defective in every particular. It is rented by the . . . Union and used as an overflow house for the aged inmates from . . . The rooms were low, ill-lighted, and hopelessly overcrowded. The men were, in many cases, lounging in the bedrooms, there being no chairs except in the dining-hall, and there was a total absence of books or newspapers—as far as we saw—and it is impossible to conceive a more dismal and hopeless asylum for age. The administration consists of but two officers for 268 inmates. The officer in charge, however, stated that they had no difficulty in enforcing such discipline as was necessary. The only outdoor space available for the inmates was an asphalted roof-yard, some 35 feet by 25 feet, up so many flights of stairs that a large proportion of the inmates were unable to mount to it."

There is another reason of no small weight for advocating greater simplicity in the provision made for the aged. While the large institutions do not really afford a happy life for the old, there is no doubt that they exercise a considerable power of attraction. The mere size of the buildings and grounds makes them in many places the most con-

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spicuous edifices in the neighbourhood. The expensiveness of the equipment, the number of the officials, the cost of maintenance get talked about, and serve as an advertisement of the Poor Law to those who are not unwilling to transfer their moral or legal responsibilities to the ratepayers.

Nor is it an unimportant matter that the small homes can be provided at a very much less cost than is incurred in many of the large institutions.

IV. 7, 354 At Kingston-upon-Hull cottage homes were provided at a cost of £30 a head, and at Woolwich a home for forty-two aged women has been provided at a cost of £51 10*s.* 11*d.* per bed; while at Hammersmith a new workhouse has cost £286 a bed. It would be the height of administrative perversity to continue a policy which combines the maximum of cost to the ratepayer with the minimum of benefit to the old people.

To sum up:—Everywhere there is the desire now to deal gently with the old people in the workhouses; but the success with which they are handled varies greatly in different places, according to the wisdom of Guardians and officials. It requires not only good-will, but special capacities to keep a number of old men and women happy and contented, especially when a large proportion of them have been forced to take refuge in the

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workhouse owing to defects of character or temper which have made them unwelcome in the homes of their children. Experience has shown that small institutions under kindly management are the most successful ; and it is obvious that it will be much easier to select the right kind of person to supervise them when he (or preferably she) can be chosen for that task alone, and not for the management of a large general institution containing all classes. If these recommendations are carried out it will be comparatively easy to ensure a uniformly wise and humane treatment of the aged throughout the country.

One source of prejudice against the Poor Law is the quite mistaken belief that old couples who go into the workhouse are separated. Notwithstanding constant explanations of the law this belief is so widely spread, and so encouraged by opponents of everything connected with the Poor Law, that it is worth while repeating again, that an old man and wife over sixty have a right to live together in the workhouse, and that the Guardians are bound to provide married people's quarters for the old people who desire them. That they are so seldom desired is difficult of explanation except on the ground that the type of people who end their days in the workhouse

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are those who have wearied each other with faults of temper and character.

IV. 7, 347 But the old people over sixty who are relieved in institutions form less than one-third of the whole number of those over sixty in receipt of relief, 69·7 per cent. being relieved in their own homes on March 31st, 1906. Amongst those we found even greater divergency of treatment than in the institutions. When in an institution the old people are at least sure of sufficient food and clothing. For those relieved in their own homes this is unfortunately not the case. It is true that very frequently old people are receiving allowances who are in no real need of them; but frequently also they are receiving allowances which are quite inadequate to their needs. This anomaly arises from the fact that in most Unions the Guardians make their allowances according to a fixed scale which they have laid down for themselves, and to which they adhere without taking into account what other resources the recipient may have. As we have seen, in many country districts an allowance from the parish is regarded as an old-age pension of fixed amount to be claimed by almost anyone who chooses. When the amount is varied it is generally on quite other grounds than the ascertained needs of the recipient; sex, or length

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of residence in a neighbourhood, or greater age, or character, may all be found as pretexts for giving sixpence more or less. In some cases we have found that an allowance already quite inadequate has been reduced by half because the recipient drank or was suspected of drink :

"A man and wife, aged 78 and 61 respectively, in receipt of relief, 5*s.* a week. Both drink, and the woman had recently been found dead drunk. It was suggested that the best method of dealing with this case was that they should come into the house ; but this was considered too costly, and ultimately the merits of the case were held to be met by reducing the relief to 2*s.* 6*d.* No other sources of income were known." IV. 7, 335

In comparatively few Unions is it the practice to ascertain all the circumstances of the case, to determine in view of them whether it was desirable to give relief in the home or in an institution, and if the former to make an allowance which should ensure a decent maintenance.

As illustrating the great difference of practice on different Boards the Reports quote the following instances noted during our visits : IV. 7, 336

(1) "It is a rule to give 2*s.* 6*d.* to an aged person, sometimes 6*d.* less, but rarely ever more than 2*s.* 6*d.* One case was that of a widow, 67 years of age, living alone ; the rent was 2*s.* 6*d.* ; they granted only 2*s.* ; there was no other known income."

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(2) "Old couples would be given 7*s.* 6*d.*, 8*s.* or 10*s.*, and single old people 4*s.* to 5*s.* where little or no rent was being paid, and other help was available."

(3) "Aged couple, three sons at home, earning 25*s.* 8*d.*, 27*s.*, 22*s.* 11*d.* respectively; total £3 15*s.* 7*d.* for five persons. Relief was continued."

(4) "Couple, aged respectively 66 and 38, with two young children, 12 and 8. Son Edmund, not at home, earning 24*s.*

	s.	*d.*
Son Llewellyn, 19, at home, earning -	34	9
Son B., 16, at home, earning - -	8	6
Daughter, M. G., at home, earning -	7	0
Total - - - -	50	3

Relief, 7*s.* 6*d.*; rent, 12*s.* 6*d.* per month."

Other instances are given in the chapter on Outdoor Relief of inadequacy of relief, and of the very general custom, both of officers and Guardians, of neglecting their duty of making enquiries, and of assuming that the old people
IV. 6, 260 will get along somehow. The Report comments strongly upon the ill effects of "this wide-spread system of trying to compensate for inadequacy of knowledge by inadequacy of relief. Two points, however, seem quite obvious; first, that when the applicants are quite honest in their statements they must often suffer great privation; and secondly, that when they are dishonest relief must

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often be given quite unnecessarily. The cases which touch the happy mean, where the resources which the Guardians assume are just those which the applicants conceal, must be comparatively very few."

There are certain cases in almost every Union, fortunately not very many, which are peculiarly difficult for even the wisest and most humane administrators to deal with. "Wherever we have gone IV. 6, 270
we have heard of the one or two cases, generally of old people, who are living in a terrible state of neglect, and to whom the Guardians are forced to give out-relief, because they are powerless to remove them to an institution against their will. Very often they are senile, and incapable of taking a resolution on their own behalf. Their homes and persons become indescribably loathsome, so much so that there are cases in which even district nurses and undertakers have refused their services; and they are a source of constant danger to themselves and to their neighbours." A skilful relieving officer may sometimes succeed in persuading these unfortunate people to allow themselves to be removed; but failing that it ought to be within the powers of the Relieving Authority, under due precautions, to order their removal.

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To give those powers may cause an outcry on the part of so-called humanitarians; especially those who have never seen the horrors of such a case. But there can be no doubt that the true humanity lies in bringing a kindly compulsion to bear; and the objections to such a course are no greater than those which can be brought against the compulsory removal of infectious cases. And, as with infectious cases, when once the removal has been effected it almost invariably ceases to be felt as a hardship.

There are less urgent cases in which many difficulties might be met by better supervision of
IV. 7, 339 the old people, and even the worst cases might be diminished in number if they were properly looked after from the first. At present, when once an applicant has been placed on the relief list he may happen not to be visited again for many months. If he is unable to come for his relief himself it is often taken to him by another pauper, and he is not even seen by anyone in authority. Thus he may continue to get more and more decrepit and helpless, and his home more neglected and squalid, without it being known or reported to the authorities. This would be avoided if from the first he were periodically visited, and his condition reported. It would then be possible very often to arrange for

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him to be looked after by a neighbour or possibly a nurse, and to avert the extreme neglect which necessitates compulsory removal.

In some few places the experiment has been tried with great success of appointing a woman to supervise the cases of the aged, and sometimes also of widows with children. The Commission recommend both that this plan should be generally adopted, and also that the services of voluntary workers should be enlisted to ensure that every old person in need of assistance should be in constant touch with a friendly visitor. IV. 7, 340

It is necessary before leaving the subject of the old people to refer to one really painful development of the present day which has been brought to the notice of the Commission. Witnesses from all parts of the country spoke of the growing reluctance of relatives to assist one another, and more especially of children to maintain and nurse their parents. The following extracts illustrate the point: VIII, 3, 83

"My general observation is that as far as I can remember in many cases—I might almost say in most cases—the children of the people that come to me would, if they possibly could get out of it, avoid contributing anything towards the support of their parents."

(London.)

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"Often at the relief committees you find sons in receipt of good wages endeavouring to evade contributing towards the support of an aged father and mother, or either, and in the case of lunatics the relatives will resort to any subterfuge to avoid paying a fair sum towards the support of a relative for whom they are liable."

(Midlands.)

"I have noticed that there is a growing disinclination on the part of sons and daugthers to help in contributing to the maintenance of their parents. . . . I think Yorkshire is almost the worst place there is in that respect; they are growing exceedingly lax in that way."

(Yorkshire.)

"With regard to the poorer classes there is not the same disposition to assist one another that there was years ago, and the younger generation have not the inclination to support their aged relatives, or take the same interest in them as formerly. It is a difficult matter to get them to contribute towards the maintenance of their relatives, even in the case of parents. Rarely do they visit relatives in the workhouses, and when information has been sent to them of the serious illness of a near relative in the workhouse, very often no notice is taken of it, or possibly a letter is sent saying that they are not able to visit them."

(Eastern Counties.)

It is difficult not to connect this decrease in the sense of filial affection and responsibility with the general feeling that if the children fail, the State

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is bound to step in. The Commission believe IV. 7, 358
"that if the position is clearly defined and a consistent policy laid down, both as to pensions and Poor Law relief, the natural feeling between parents and children will again assert itself."

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CHAPTER IV

THE CHILDREN

In reporting as to the condition of the children who are maintained under the Poor Law, the Commission have found it necessary to speak in very different terms as to those who are maintained entirely by the Guardians, and those who receive relief while remaining under the care of their parents. For the second class the Guardians seem never to have felt any great responsibility; technically the relief is given to the parent, it is very seldom that any care is taken to ensure that the children are adequately cared for, and it is certain that in a very great number of cases they are ill-nourished or neglected, or both.

With the first class of children, on the other hand, those for whom they have assumed full responsibility, the Guardians have achieved a really remarkable success. For the most part these children are brought up in schools and homes of

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various types; others are "boarded out"; others less fortunate are still in the workhouse.

The whole number of children in receipt of Poor Law relief on January 1st, 1908, was 234,792, and of these only 62,426 were being maintained in institutions. Out of this number 16,221 were in workhouses. Of the condition of these last the Commission report on the whole unfavourably. In some workhouses they are much better cared for than in others, but almost universally their surroundings are dreary, and very unfit for children. "Where most of the children have been removed to schools it would seem that the Guardians are apt to take less interest in the few that remain. In many unions, indeed, the children are treated with the utmost kindness and care, and in all unions the majority now go out to the public elementary schools, only 565 being still taught in workhouse schools at the commencement of the year 1907. Elsewhere we have ourselves found children in surroundings so dreary that it seems strange that Guardians who have families of their own could acquiesce in them."

II. 103
IV. 8, 391
IV. 8, 392

The following instances seen by the Commissioners illustrate this point:—

(1) "The nursery was bad, very messy, and the children looked miserable; some of the infants were

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being nursed by old women, some lay in cradles with wet bedding, and were provided with 'comforters.' . . . The infirm and children over three are in the same building, apart from the main body of the house. The children are under the care of a woman who has been there twenty-seven years and has two helpers. She is a fairly capable, roughish sort of woman, hardly fit for such a responsible position. She was reluctant to show anything, and I had to push my way in everywhere. The three-year-old children were in a bare and desolate room, sitting about on the floor and on wooden benches, and in dismal workhouse dress. The older ones had all gone out to school except a cripple, and a dreary little girl who sat in a cold room with bare legs and her feet in a pail of water as a 'cure' for broken chilblains. The washing arrangements are unsatisfactory; the children have no tooth-brushes, and very few hair-brushes. They do not wear workhouse dress to go to school, but I saw some coming in from school in the rain who were not properly dressed for a wet day. Altogether there is great need for reform in the treatment of the children."

(2) "The children (thirty-nine girls and twenty-three boys) are housed in the workhouse under the care of a male and a female industrial trainer, but they are not kept separate from the adult inmates. Indeed the children's wards left on our minds a marked impression of confusion and defective administration. In appearance the children were dirty, untidy, ill-kept, and almost neglected. Their clothes might be described with very little exaggeration as ragged, and when the inspector told a group of children to take off their right boots large holes were displayed in six stockings out of thirteen.

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The eyes of some of the children seemed suspiciously 'weak,' and in two or three cases to be suffering from some serious inflammation."

There have no doubt been difficulties in removing all the children from the workhouses; some are in the sick wards, others are the children of that difficult class known as "ins-and-outs," who come into the workhouse with their families for a few days or weeks at constantly recurring periods. The attempts to relieve these unfortunate children of their dirt and ignorance are frustrated anew every time the parents take their discharge for a bout of drinking, while their presence amongst the other children acts as a constant drag upon their progress. The powers of the Guardians to remove these children entirely from the vicious influence of their parents need to be much more freely exercised, but this can only be done concurrently with much sterner treatment of the parents themselves.

But when all allowances have been made it still remains true that many children remain in the workhouses under unsatisfactory conditions, in consequence of the Guardians' failure to take sufficient interest in their welfare. It is a defect of local administration, for the central authority has been constant in its pressure in the direction

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of removing children from workhouse surroundings.

IX. 83 The Commission's recommendations on this point are explicit :—

> "We are strongly of opinion that effective steps should be taken to secure that the maintenance of children in the workhouse be no longer recognised as a legitimate way of dealing with them. We put this in the forefront of our recommendations."

And with regard to the children of vicious parents :

IX. 89 > "We think that the power to adopt children of vicious parents should be more frequently exercised and accompanied by a stricter dealing with the parent, and that the Public Assistance Authorities should in future retain supervision of adopted children up to the age of twenty-one."

For the most part this policy of removing children from the workhouse has been followed with success, and the difficulty has become one of restraining Boards of Guardians from launching out into unnecessary and wasteful expenditure. This is especially the case with what are known as "grouped cottage homes." When the system was first introduced it was intended that these

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homes should really be cottages, so that the children's life in them should approximate as far as possible to those of the children of the independent working man. How far this intention has been lost sight of is shown in the fact that some of these institutions have cost as much as £289 per child to build, whilst others have cost as little as £42 12*s*. Nor have we found that the less costly and pretentious institutions are in any way less efficient as regards the welfare of the children brought up in them. Indeed, it has been fairly argued by an experienced witness that the life in some of the most progressive, or perhaps, we IV. 8, 375 should rather say, fashionable schools, is not really a suitable preparation for the children, and is likely to make their after life seem harder than it need.

"It must be rather difficult for a girl who has spent her leisure time at school in playing hockey, croquet and organised games, who has been taken on half-holidays to places of interest, and has had free access to a library and recreation rooms, to settle down to an ordinary servant's work. A child in its own home has between school hours to help in various ways and learns early the necessity of real work, and has experience of the cost of clothing and food."

It is sometimes argued that the greater capital expenditure in erecting these places is compensated

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for by a diminished annual expenditure through the introduction of labour-saving apparatus, &c. As a matter of fact the annual cost seems to increase almost in proportion to the magnificence of the building. In the Bermondsey cottage homes the cost per child per week, including all charges, comes to 20*s.* 1*d.*; and there are others where it is not much lower.

The large institutions known as District or Associated Schools have never been very popular, and have recently fallen into disfavour owing to an adverse report from a Committee appointed to consider the subject in 1894. There is reason to think that this Committee's Report was unduly severe, but it led to some of the London schools
IV. 8, 367 being broken up at a cost of £700,000, and the number of children maintained in this type of school has fallen from 7,358 in 1895 to 3,591 in 1907. Nevertheless some of our most experienced witnesses think that these large schools are best adapted for the type of children to be educated :

IV. 8, 368 "The children who come under the care of the Poor Law have, as a rule, been neglected and subjected to bad example in such moral faults as dishonesty, intemperance, idleness, lying and the like, and the reshaping of their characters needs expert handling. This, as it seems to me, can best be secured from experienced teachers and attendants in the Associated Schools.

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"The bedrooms of Cottage Homes are liable to be sources of moral contamination. Too much importance cannot be attached to the grave danger incurred by placing a few children alone in a bedroom. There cannot be proper supervision, and it is not within the power of the most watchful 'Mother' so to classify her children as to guard against mischief. Many of the children in the Poor Law schools come from the lowest surroundings, where they have passed through experiences and witnessed scenes the description of which must be demoralising to the children who have been more carefully guarded. In the large dormitories of the Associated Schools such undesirable conversation is less likely. There are attendants about, and there is the feeling that out of so many one might tell."

The third type of institution is that known as the "Scattered Home." The object of these is to avoid massing the children together in large numbers, and houses are taken in different parts of the town in which groups of children—preferably not more than eight or nine—are placed with a foster mother. They go to school in the public elementary schools and are brought up as far as possible in a natural home life. The success of the system depends upon the skill with which the foster mother is selected, and upon adequacy of supervision. Its chief advantages are its approximation to a normal life for the children, and absence of the large capital expenditure which

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characterises and tends to stereotype the two former methods.

The Commission, after seeing all types of institutions, and examining into the condition of their children, came to the conclusion that much more depends upon the nature of the administration than upon the particular system adopted. They also received strong evidence to the same effect. One witness who has had a wide experience of girls coming from each type of institution says :

IV. 8, 370 "There is no doubt that there are advantages peculiar to every way in which the Poor Law children can be maintained — boarding-out, 'barrack' schools, cottage homes, scattered homes—all have their various merits. The success or failure of any system must depend entirely on the people by whom it is administered."

The Association of Superintendents of Poor Law Schools maintain the same :

"With reference to the question of the different systems of arranging for the care of the Poor Law child, it is not a question of system, but of administration. The infallible test of assessing the value of any arrangement is the examination of those living under the arrangement. It is impossible for a badly ordered barrack, block or cottage to produce alert, cheerful, upstanding and responsive boys and girls."

Finally, in a Report on the educational work in

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Poor Law schools issued in July, 1908, by the Board of Education, it is said :

"Whatever opinions we may have been disposed to form on the vexed question of cottage homes *v.* barrack schools as rival methods of boarding children, we are not able to detect in the schools of either class any general characteristic which can be held to be distinctive of the particular system adopted. Our principal conclusion on this point is that the success of the school depends almost entirely on the character of the supervision and the *personnel* of the staff." IV. 8, 372

There has been a strong public opinion formed of late years in favour of the system of "boarding out" the children who came under the care of the Guardians. It is a system which prevails to a much larger extent in Scotland than in England, although it has been authorised in the latter country since 1870. The Commission say with regard to it that "many difficulties in dealing with children are avoided where Guardians are able and willing to adopt the system of 'boarding out.' In this case the expense is comparatively small and involves no capital outlay; when the system is well-managed a real home life is secured for the children, and they enter into industrial life upon the same terms as the children of the independent working class. On the other hand, it is more difficult to be certain that they meet with kindly IV. 8, 378

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treatment; and they share in none of the special advantages enjoyed in Poor Law schools."

In England there are really two systems under which children are boarded out. The one which is most known and talked about is that under which committees of ladies are formed in country districts, who undertake to find suitable homes in their neighbourhood and to supervise the children sent to them. The children come from other unions, and are paid for by the Guardians sending them at the rate of 4*s.* to 5*s.* a week. The committees and homes are further supervised and inspected by lady inspectors under the Local Government Board. Great precautions are thus taken to secure that the children are properly looked after, and there is no doubt that in the majority of cases the system acts well. Nevertheless, the number of children boarded out under this system is small, and tends rather to diminish
IV. 8, 386 than to increase; on January 1st, 1908, it was only 1,876. The reason appears to lie partly in the limited number of children who can be dealt with in this way. It is not considered well to send them below the age of two nor above the age of ten; and foster-parents object to children with parents living who may make rival claims upon them. Partly, again, there appears to be a serious

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difficulty in finding suitable homes, and in forming committees of ladies willing to undertake the necessary supervision.

Under the other system of boarding-out the children are placed with families within their own unions, and subject to supervision only by the Guardians and their officers. Though many more children are dealt with in this way—6,689—it does not appear to be nearly so satisfactory in its results, owing probably to the little interest taken in the children by the Guardians. The Investigator appointed by the Commission to inquire into the condition of the children under the Poor Law reports unfavourably upon this branch of the work :

"It is clear from the accounts of these six unions that effective supervision of boarded-out children and their homes is not obtained under the ordinary Poor Law administration. This fact becomes still clearer on contrasting the conditions found in these unions with those prevailing amongst the groups of children boarded out under boarding-out committees without their unions. Supervision of homes and children by guardians and relieving officers was never found to be satisfactory." IV. 8, 381

A much more favourable report was received upon the first system of boarding-out :—

"Taken as a whole the supervision of the boarding-out committees visited in the course of this inquiry was IV. 8, 384

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wonderfully good and contrasted very favourably with supervision by Guardians and relieving officers."

"Boarding-out, when properly supervised and with an active and wise boarding-out committee is, I believe, the ideal system both for boys and girls, but especially for girls. Suitable homes, however, are not easy to find."

The medical investigator reported to the same effect :—

"I am strongly of opinion that, as far as possible, the rearing of pauper children should be done in the country, not in the town ; and the holding of that opinion is partly why I prefer boarding-out to scattered homes."

IV. 8, 398 The Commission note one grave defect common to nearly all Boards of Guardians in their dealings with children, and that is the absence of any systematic records as to what becomes of the children after they leave their care. They know that the children do not come back to them, and this, no doubt, is strong evidence that they are maintaining themselves in independence. But this is not sufficient. The few cases where such records are kept show extraordinarily good results, and it would be satisfactory to be able to prove that such results are general. The Commission recommend, not only that records should be systematically kept, but also that there should be regular supervision of the children for three

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or four years after leaving. "It is not sufficient to send a child of fourteen to a situation which may prove unsuitable, and leave it there to look after itself. Children of this age are greatly handicapped by having lost their natural guardians, and may suffer from the loss even more severely at this critical age than earlier in life." The Commission think that this is work which might well be done by volunteer workers:

"The evidence which we have heard convinces us that voluntary agencies may be relied on to co-operate in this work. We think that such agencies should be recognised by the Public Assistance Authority and should report to it, and such reports should be entered on a record. We have been struck by the comparatively small attention given to the after-care of boys, and we should welcome development on the lines of those societies which deal with girls." IV. 8, 399

By far the greater number of children who are dependent, or partially dependent, upon the Poor Law are those who live at home with one or both parents; for the most part they are the children of widows. It is with regard to those children that the Guardians have failed most signally in their work. The question is no doubt made difficult by the fact that the primary respon-

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sibility lies with the parent; but by the mere giving of relief the Guardians have recognised that they also have a responsibility, and it is a responsibility which cannot be discharged by the grant of an inadequate dole. If they intervene at all, they should intervene in such a way as to ensure that the children have a fair chance of being properly brought up. At present few Guardians seem to take any interest in the out-relief children, to know what conditions they are living under, or what is likely to become of them as they grow up. The Commission report that nowhere have they found want of uniformity and inadequacy of relief more marked than in the allowances granted for
IV. 8, 408 the maintenance of children. In illustration of this they quote the following instances which they noted whilst attending Relief Committees in different parts of the country:

(1) "Altogether seventeen cases were heard and the applicants seen. The majority of these cases were widows with children, the relief being on an unusually adequate scale. Thus a widow with three children dependent and earning 14*s.* a week and some food, was given 7*s.* a week relief, bringing her total weekly income up to 22*s.* and food. In another case a widow with four dependent children and one boy earning 15*s.* a week, with a total income to the family of 25*s.*, received 7*s.* a week, bringing their total income up to 32*s.* a week for

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six persons. The rents mentioned were high, varying from 4*s.* to 6*s.* There was no fixed scale of relief, but it seemed to average out very uniformly at 5*s.* 6*d.* a head, including the mother and children."

(2) "The following cases illustrate the methods of the guardians, *e.g.*, a man and his wife, aged twenty-four and twenty-two with two small children; man broke his collar-bone, had been under treatment as out-patient in the general infirmary. Amount of relief which had been given during the previous month, 3*s.* and one loaf. The woman was looking after her husband and was earning nothing, and the rent was 2*s.* 6*d.* Thus leaving a family of four persons 6*d.* a week and a loaf to live upon."

(3) "Woman aged 33, with three children, aged respectively 7, 5, 2. Husband sent to Canada by public subscription six months ago. Earning 3*s.* Relief 2*s.* 6*d.* per week."

(4) "Woman with five children, aged respectively 11, 9, 5, 2, ½. Husband in prison (twenty-one days) for non-payment of rates. He had only been out of prison five weeks, having served twelve months for felony. Family relieved during that time with 4*s.* per week."

(5) "We were told that there was no scale of relief, but we found that in practice a widow was supposed to keep herself and one child, and would receive 1*s.* 6*d.* a week relief for every child in addition to one."

(6) "The scale as regards widows is 4*s.* for the mother, 2*s.* each for two children, and 1*s.* for the rest."

The case of one Union is noted as especially significant of the irresponsible attitude of the

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Guardians towards out-relief children. The rate of allowance in that Union for a widow is nothing for herself and the first child, and 1*s.* 6*d.* and a loaf for each subsequent child. The same Board of Guardians is maintaining children in cottage homes at a cost of 17*s.* 6*d.* a week per child, exclusive of education, for which a special grant is
IV. 8, 499 made to the public elementary school. "Making every allowance for the fact that some of the mothers might be able to earn, or might be assisted by relations, we think that the discrepancy should have suggested to the Guardians that the amount per child was both too low in the one case and too high in the other."

The great mistake here, as elsewhere, lies in the application of a fixed scale without consideration of the circumstances. There is no doubt that with the assistance of friends and relatives many widows do, and still more might, bring up their children without any Poor Law relief; but if relief is given at all it should be adapted to the needs of the family.

Even worse than the inadequacy of the relief is the fact that it is often given to maintain children with drunken or immoral parents, or in thoroughly insanitary surroundings. The Commission was much impressed by the necessity of greater discrimination and supervision:

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"We think that the closer supervision which is required in the case of the aged is even more imperatively needed in the case of the children, and we quote from Dr. Williams's Report in support of our suggestions for improvement : IV. 8, 413

"Where little supervision is exercised to see that out-relief is wisely used, large numbers of the children are brought up in homes fronting on to filthy streets or courts, and spend most of their time out of school playing amongst garbage. In Liverpool 45 per cent. of the families were living on roads which were in a bad and dirty condition, while in the same proportion of cases the sanitary condition of the house itself was bad. In Bradford, where an effort is made to see that out-relief is expended wisely, 19 per cent. of the cases only are living on dirty streets or courts, while in only 14 per cent. the sanitary condition of the house is bad."

"We think that where out-relief is given care should be taken to ensure that the total income from whatever source is sufficient to afford proper food, clothing, and housing conditions for the whole family :

"The lowest income possessed by any family investigated is 2*s*., and belonged to a family of three persons in Liverpool, but incomes of 3*s*. for four persons, 4*s*. for three persons, 5*s*. for five persons are found in the tables. It does not need much consideration to see that not only are these incomes insufficient, they are impossible. The families possessing them do not live on them ; they beg

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or borrow; they pawn their furniture and clothes; they do not pay rent, but move from place to place as landlords push them out. Such a life can be continued for a long time, and it is not necessary to emphasise the fact of how hopelessly demoralising it must be for children, and how small must be the chance children brought up in this fashion have of becoming decent and self-respecting citizens. Their schooling is often irregular owing to the frequent moves, and no regularity or order enters into their lives. . . . In the large urban unions we have particulars of many families whose income may be considered an impossible one. In Liverpool I saw a house into which out-relief was going, the whole household plenishing of which was a broken kettle, and another in which a heap of rags and an orange box represented the whole."

"We think also that it should be the duty of the Public Assistance Authority to ascertain that the children are being properly nourished.

"A large number of the children are fed almost entirely on bread and tea. Very few, if any, children of families in receipt of out-relief get sufficient fresh milk, most get none at all. How many go absolutely short of food it is difficult to say, but the evidence given by the condition of nutrition and intelligence of the children examined leads one to the conclusion that large numbers are underfed as regards the essential food elements, though they may possibly have sufficient bulk."

"We think that unless satisfactory conditions in the home can be assured, the children should be maintained in a Poor Law institution or an

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industrial school; more especially we think that no children should be maintained by out-relief in immoral surroundings:

"I saw in one instance out-relief children habitually sent out to pilfer in a small way, others to beg, some whose mothers were drunkards or living immoral lives.... These definitely bad mothers were but a small minority of the mothers whom we visited, but there were many of a negatively bad type, people without a standard, whining, colourless people, often with poor health. If out-relief is to be given at all, especially where children are concerned, those who give it must take the responsibility for its right use, and to do this there must be close supervision of the homes. The negatively bad mothers spoken of above might in a very large proportion of cases be guided and stimulated by kindly and wise supervision."

"Great stress has been laid by our medical investigator on the need for more medical supervision of all children under the Poor Law, both indoor and outdoor, and this opinion we endorse.

"We think that in the case of children of widows, care should be taken that they get a fair start on leaving school:

"No board of guardians, so far as my investigations go, takes any interest whatever about the placing and starting in life of boys who have had out-relief, nor does it try to help them to any technical training. In some unions the women guardians help to place the girls in

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domestic service, and the board generally tries to persuade mothers to send their girls to service. For a boy, out-relief stops at fourteen, and he turns to the first job at which he can earn. Most likely this job will be one that leads to nothing. It may be street selling of some kind, it may be an errand or van boy's job. When it is over he finds, or tries to find, another, probably also leading to nothing, and so he drifts on."

The difficult question of how far a widow should be expected to earn a living for her children as well as look after them is treated very differently by different Boards. Some make it a condition of giving any relief that the mother should earn as much as possible, others give enough to enable her to devote herself entirely to the children. In Glasgow, *e.g.*, a "special roll" has been made of widows who have full maintenance allowed them; but the experiment has not been very successful, and in a considerable proportion of the cases the women have lapsed into immoral habits. It is clear that here, as elsewhere, no general rule can be laid down; "we
IV. 8, 419 think that the circumstances in each case should be carefully considered and watched, and that the mothers should not be expected to earn unless satisfactory arrangements can be made for the children."

The suggestion is further made that in cases

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where the mother continues to work provision might be made for the children to attend a day boarding school, managed on the same lines as the day industrial schools. An experiment has already been tried in this direction in Liverpool and Glasgow. "When the children are too young to go to school we think that the mothers should not go out to work, as it is impossible to provide a sufficient substitute." IV. 8, 420

The changes which the Commission recommend in dealing with these children would really revolutionise this department of work. It would certainly involve for the time being a large increase of expenditure, but it is an increase which would more than repay itself if it resulted in the children becoming efficient men and women. "To a very large extent the money now spent in small doles of out-relief is wasted by reason of its inadequacy; and it will be good economy to spend more in doing effective work." It cannot be doubted that under the present system many of the children are growing up anæmic, diseased, undisciplined and unskilled, and likely, therefore, to add to the pauperism of the country in the future. IV. 8, 422

But far more important than the increase in expenditure involved will be the increase in care and supervision. If, as the Commission anticipate,

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this care and supervision is largely undertaken by voluntary agencies, that will probably result in a decrease in the number of cases requiring public assistance; it will often happen that the help and advice of a voluntary agency is more appropriate and effective. When this form of help is not forthcoming it may prove necessary to appoint extra officials, "and these in many cases should be women capable of instructing and advising mothers." This, again, would involve increased
IV. 8, 421 expenditure. But the Commission think "that to a large extent increased expenditure in this department should be met by a reduction of the extravagant expenditure at present incurred in many Poor Law Schools and Homes."

It has already been said (Ch. 1) that the Commission do not agree with the view that necessitous children should be transferred to the care of the Education Authority. The prime need of these children is maintenance, while the function of the Education Authority is education. So far as their general education is concerned the children already receive it either directly from, or under the supervision of, the Education Authority. But they need much more than this. Many of them, especially those who are in institutions, are seriously handicapped by their antecedents, and

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need special discipline, attention, and training. That the elementary school-teachers do not succeed so well in this direction, even with their normal children, is evidenced by the Board of Education itself in a recent Report: "Teachers of public elementary schools which are attended by Poor Law children testify to their superior habits of cleanliness and obedience."

One argument adduced in favour of transferring the children to the Education Authority consists in a good deal of vague talk about removing the "stigma of pauperism." The Commission rightly IV. 8, 437
protest against the way in which critics of the Poor Law apply this term without any consideration of its justice. In respect to the children especially, it has long ceased to have any application except for purposes of rhetoric.

A considerable number of children (nearly IV. 8, 431
8,000) are sent by Boards of Guardians to specialised charitable institutions which are intended to meet the needs of special classes of children, such as training homes and training ships, homes for the crippled and feeble-minded, etc. These homes are inspected and certified by the Local Government Board, and form a valuable means of co-operation between public and private assistance. There are also, in addition to these

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special homes, very large charities for dealing with
IV. 8, 432 poor children in general. "These institutions deal to a large extent with the same class of children as the Poor Law; but their work is not always safeguarded in the same way, and there is no attempt at co-operation, or at dividing the field of work. The children in these institutions are practically without outside control, and the question arises whether all institutions dealing with children should not be subject to the same supervision, and be required to co-operate with the public authority." It would no doubt give rise to some objection at first to ask that a private orphanage should submit to inspection, but when it is considered how helpless the children in these institutions are, and how cut off from external supervision, it is probable that public opinion would support the change.

IV. 8, 440 Finally the Commission recommend that the policy and terms of the Education (Provision of Meals) Act, 1906, should be reconsidered in its relation to relief generally, and that if relief for necessitous children is required, and is not and cannot be met from voluntary sources, it should become part of the duty of the Public Assistance Committees to provide such assistance as may be necessary by way of meals or otherwise.

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This recommendation is made on the ground that when a child comes to school ill-nourished, there is need for careful and sympathetic enquiry at its home as to the causes of the difficulty. The Education Authority has no machinery for making this enquiry, nor for dealing with the distress which may exist there. The relief of a child should be in the hands of an authority capable of assisting the family as a whole, that is, the authority which is responsible for public assistance.

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CHAPTER V

THE ABLE-BODIED

In the Report this subject is dealt with under two headings—The Able-Bodied under the Poor Law and Distress due to unemployment. Both in practice and theory, however, the two subjects are so closely connected that it will be convenient here to deal with them in one chapter. It might be thought, indeed, that no able-bodied man would be in economic distress and needing relief except in consequence of want of employment; but this is far from being so. In one form or another it is true that the employment question enters into all these cases, but it is complicated with many other questions which have to be taken into consideration and which make remedies very difficult of application. Unemployment is of as many kinds and due to as many causes as employment itself, and there is no one panacea which can be

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applied to remedy all kinds. Every kind of work may bring with it sooner or later its correlative unemployment, in the sense that some of those who have chosen it as their work may find their services temporarily or permanently not in demand. This may be due to the inferiority of the service offered, or it may be due to some defect in the character of the man who offers it, or it may be due to the fact that more of the particular kind of service is being offered than the community has any use for. But whatever the cause, the only complete remedy is for the man to offer something which is wanted, and then he will cease to be unemployed.

Short of this complete remedy many expedients have been tried, and many more suggested, to meet the difficulties and distress which arise out of want of employment. Generally they have consisted in the attempt, under very varied conditions, to devise work which can be done without any particular qualifications. For the most part they have failed, sometimes because the men did not really want the work, more often because the work did not really want the men. The demand on one side or the other was not a real one, and could not be maintained.

Nevertheless, it may be worth while—it is often

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Theory of Relief Works.

held to be worth while—to institute a temporary expedient which cannot be maintained, if it serves to make the way easier to a relation between the workman and his employment which *can* be maintained. And that is a very fair test to apply. Is the man more fit for useful work, more capable of service wanted by the community, than he was before his period of exercise (for work which is not wanted, which is only instituted for the sake of the man who does it, is, after all, only exercise), or is he less fit?

In answering this question we have to consider, not only the man's physical health, but also his skill, industry and willingness to adapt himself to the conditions of the labour market.

The administration of the Poor Law has, since 1834, proceeded on the assumption that the most important factor in the situation is the man's will to work and to adapt himself and his services to the demands of the community. It has been held, and rightly, that if that will is impaired or weakened, the situation becomes hopeless, and hence has arisen what is popularly known as the "deterrent" system of relief. When the Commissioners of 1832 made their survey of pauperism, they found that the most striking feature of the situation was the unwillingness of the labourer to

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work regularly for an employer whilst he could get permanent or intermittent maintenance from the parish, and the object which they set before themselves was to make him once more eager to be useful. "The workhouse test was based upon the IV. 9, 443 assumption that the first essential towards being useful is the desire to be useful, and that this desire was being extinguished by a policy of relief which made life easier for the man whom it was unprofitable to employ than for the man whose services had a real market value. When placed between the alternative of steady work for an employer and a light job for the parish (or even relief without any work), the labourer had chosen the easier course. When placed between the alternative of steady work for an employer and maintenance in a workhouse under strict discipline, he again chose the easier course, and sought for the work he had before avoided. The Commissioners had no wish to drive the poor into the workhouse; had they done so their policy would have been an utter failure. The object was to prove to the country, and above all to the labourer himself, that his labour still had a real value, and that it rested primarily with him to make that value appreciated."

The application of this principle, and its success

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or failure through three-quarters of a century, is described in the Report. There is also an important and interesting description of the changes which have taken place in the conditions of industry during the same period. Here no more can be attempted than to summarise the position as we find it at the present day.

VI. 1

In the first place unemployment has practically ceased to exist in the rural districts and has concentrated itself in the towns. Hence it is not the country unions, but those in the cities, more especially in the densely populated cities, which are feeling the pressure of able-bodied pauperism today.

The ordinary returns as to the numbers of able-bodied in receipt of Poor Law relief are somewhat misleading, as they include persons who are ordinarily able-bodied but temporarily disabled. Omitting these we find that the number of able-bodied men in health relieved in the workhouse on 31st March, 1906, was 10,060, while the number relieved in their homes was 8,103. The great majority of these men were comparatively young, between the ages of 25 and 55; and the number, especially of those in the workhouse, has increased rapidly of late years.

II. 118

The total number is not of course great com-

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pared with the whole mass of pauperism ; but the fact that it is increasing, when taken in connection with the present conditions of life in many workhouses, suggests a serious evil. The Commissioners were convinced, both from the evidence they received and from what they themselves saw, that there is a class of persons to whom workhouse life has ceased to be deterrent, and that many, even of those who shrink from it at first, rapidly deteriorate under its influence until they come to prefer it to the more strenuous and responsible life of the outside world. One witness who has been in close contact with this class for many years says :

" The pauper in the workhouse intends to be there ; he is either going to be there or in some other institution all the days of his life. My experience is that the average have been in from ten to twelve years, and some of them nineteen years, and they are young men now. IV. 9, 489

" The workhouse is no deterrent to any man. The workhouse simply harbours them, and as long as the workhouses exist, these men will exist.

" That is your experience, not only from Poplar, but from elsewhere ?—That is my experience of fourteen years, not only in Poplar, but in the provinces, in large provincial towns.

" Would you say from your experience that that is one of the defects of the present system of Poor Law administration that the workhouse is not a deterrent ?—It is

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not. I say my experience is that it does not matter whether trade is good or bad, it is immaterial. When trade was good, and there was the Boer War and the Coronation, we had the same class of men in the Poplar Workhouse; it makes no difference whether trade was good or bad, they were still there. It is simply a kind of thing that grows and gets into the bones, and it will take years to get it out; it wants a moral and mental instructor. It is like taking a child by the hand and teaching it to walk, to get those men to work properly and be independent."

The Report points out that a considerable number of these men have probably been in bad health on their first admission, and having come to like the life have stayed on after their restoration to health. Under a proper system of administration this should be impossible; but there is no doubt that in some of the enormous workhouses of to-day an inmate once admitted is practically lost sight of by the Guardians, and in the absence of any regular call-over stays on as long as he pleases. On the other hand he may become what is known as an "in-and-out." Another witness gives a graphic description of how we manufacture this class by our present system:

IV. 9, 502 "This class of man is well known to the master of every London workhouse as the able-bodied loafer. As a rule, he is a strong, healthy fellow, knowing no trade, evincing great dislike to work, and possessing all the

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attributes of the soft-shelled crab, willing to live upon the fruits of the labour of the worker, so long as he can avoid the sharing of responsibility himself.

There is no doubt that the moment this class of man becomes an inmate so surely does he deteriorate into a worse character still. Unless rigorously dealt with and made to work under strict supervision, he has a fairly good time in the House and after a month or so he has mastered every trick of the trade, and becomes a confirmed in and outer, taking his day's pleasure by merely giving the necessary notice, returning the same evening more contented than ever with his lot in the House. Something for nothing is degrading the man, until all the manhood has left him and there remains for the rate-payers to keep an idle, dissolute remnant."

Another witness who had a long experience as chaplain in a large city workhouse said : IV. 5, 191

"After an experience of some twelve years there is," he says, "no doubt in my mind that life in the workhouse deteriorates mentally, morally, and physically the habitual inmates. Indeed, the life of these people is better described as more or less a miserable existence than a life. It must be admitted that the mental capacity of the average person who drifts into the workhouse is of a low order, but, nevertheless, I have seen in countless instances a gradual deterioration of intellect owing to the lack of almost all incentive to use the brain. The inmate finds at very least the necessities of life, and in many places far more than the necessities of life, provided for him with scarcely any thought or effort on his part, and in the majority of cases the sole ideas that fill the mind are to

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get as much to eat and as much sleep, and as large an amount of immunity from even the lightest task as possible. A large number of cases have come under my notice of young persons of both sexes who on their first admission to the workhouse have felt their position and surroundings most keenly, and yet in a very short space of time have found the life so congenial and free from responsibility and need of exertion that they made no effort to leave it, and after their discharge return to it as soon as possible. I have also seen many young people admitted who were at first bright and willing to perform their light duties, but who, under the influence of their associates, soon grow lazy and unwilling to do anything, though physically well able to work. Then follow short sentences for refusing to perform their tasks, and soon they become incorrigible rogues and vagabonds, and the result is—the habitual criminal. Again, the ill-effect of the increasing tendency to make the life easier and to increase the dietary and general comfort of the inmate is shown in the increasing number of admissions of those who, earning wages for a portion of the year outside, place their money in safe keeping and enter the workhouse regularly for periods of rest at the ratepayers' expense. I have come across many such cases, such people easily learn to complain of mysterious weaknesses, aches and pains which are hard to disprove, the supposed possession of which entitles them to the best of fare and medical comforts which the institution has to offer." In conclusion, "the rapidly growing opinion amongst the poorer classes seems to be expressed by the remark of a man to me last week. 'So long as I can get sixteen ounces of pie for my dinner and my two children kept

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for life, and they don't ask me to do any more than polish the stair bannisters, I'm not going to work.'"

Other witnesses speak of the bad effect of the life upon women, notwithstanding the fact that it is easier to find employment for them than for the men:

"The commonest faults of able-bodied workhouse women, as a body, are laziness and dishonesty. I have never yet seen a workhouse woman hurry. Every movement is taken in a leisurely way. Our best workers do not do in a day more than half of what a good charwoman outside would do. This is one of the difficulties in getting young women taken out of the workhouse to stop in the situations found for them. They cannot understand why the mistress objects to their dawdling through their work, as they have always been used to do inside. . . . I fear that nearly all our able-bodied women steal when they get the chance. . . . The views which workhouse *habitués* express from time to time are interesting as showing their point of view. One woman said to the portress in my hearing: 'I lives here; you are only a paid person.' Another said to a policeman: 'You're a beggar come over from Ireland to live out of the rates, that's what you are.' Another said to a gentleman holding an important post: 'You're only a servant; I want to see your masters.' A man told a group of our nurses: "If it wasn't for the likes of us, the like of you wouldn't be here.' . . . It is difficult to believe, but it is an actual fact, that respectable young married women, who enter our 'class' and maternity wards, not infrequently declare themselves un- IV. 5, 193

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married, so that their husbands shall not run any risk of being asked to pay on their account."

It would seem from evidence such as this that the workhouse of to-day is a complete failure as regards a certain class of able-bodied. The reason is to be found partly in the size of many of these institutions, partly in the mixed character of the population inhabiting them. It is no unfrequent occurrence to find town workhouses containing a thousand or more inmates of all types. In such cases there are few masters who can do more than preserve a certain amount of discipline, and even that fails sometimes. "The able-bodied are not
IV. 5, 187 occupied, and spend their days in sullen idleness, and the old people suffer from the general atmosphere of repression and gloom." On the other hand, more especially in London, the difficulty is increased by every attempt to lessen the hardships of workhouse life for the infirm :

IV. 9, 489 "Particularly if it is an overcrowded workhouse, it is impossible to prevent the able-bodied class sharing in the comfort, and I may say luxuries, of the older ones, you cannot prevent that class finding the conditions of life in a mixed workhouse, such as, as a matter of fact, they are not entitled to, and which they ought not to share in."

Another witness, speaking of the Marylebone Workhouse, says :

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"I do not think the present condition of things in the workhouse is satisfactory. The master tells me that associating in large numbers in the able-bodied blocks becomes an attraction; and it appears to me that some method of breaking up such associations, accompanied by systematic training under healthy conditions, would be advantageous. . . . The master feels very strongly that what the men require is to be given continuous work, which they are able to do, and to be separated the one from the other. He regards the workhouse as a kind of club-house, in which they put up with a certain amount of inconvenience, but have very pleasant evenings."

It seems clear that persons of this class should from the first be dealt with in institutions by themselves, and under conditions quite different from those accorded to the infirm. It is probable that the majority, if properly handled from the beginning, might recover their desire and capacity for independence. For those who have become hardened in their mode of life nothing can be done under the present system. Some unions have established what is known as a test workhouse or able-bodied workhouse, to which none but the able-bodied are sent, and where an effort is made to exact work under strict discipline. But they are not very successful, owing chiefly to the fact that the Guardians' power of detaining the men is limited to a week at the outside, so that they can

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go and come as they please. The Inspector for Yorkshire says :

IV. 9, 503 "The able-bodied inmates of modern workhouses are, as a rule, very few. It is only in large centres of population where they appear in considerable numbers. The Sheffield Union is, perhaps, troubled more with this class than any other union in my district. I recently obtained from the master of this workhouse a Return showing all the admissions and discharges at the test house of the workhouse for the year 1903. The total number of admissions was 5,066, and the total number of discharges 5,072. The master states that this class gives infinite trouble. They have no fear of prison ; in fact, many of them prefer it, and state that the work is not so hard and the food better. Many of them have got good trades, such as fitters, plumbers, puddlers, ironworkers, etc., and could earn from £3 to £4 a week if they chose. They prefer to go into the workhouse, where, however, they only work under compulsion, and give all the trouble they can to the officers. The master furnished me with a list of fifty-six men, ranging from the age of seventeen to fifty-two years, who are either now or have been frequently inmates of the workhouse test house, and have been sent to prison on various occasions."

It is to be feared that for many of this class there is little chance of conversion to an independent life ; but if there were the power to send them to a "detention colony," where they would be kept for a period of years at steady work, removed from the temptation of drink, they would at least

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be less troublesome and costly than they now are, and there would be less temptation to others to fall into the same habit of life.

The normal rule is that able-bodied men shall not be given relief in their own homes; but provision is made in the Local Government Board orders whereby it can be done under certain conditions. "Under the Regulation Order, or under IV. 9, 457
the Prohibition Order where the Guardians have an Outdoor Labour Test Order attached, the Guardians may give outdoor relief to able-bodied men under what is known as the stoneyard system, that is to say, the men are given a certain number of days' work in the stoneyard, in lieu of being taken into the workhouse."

Where a labour yard is well managed, this may be a most useful method of assisting able-bodied men, and less likely to be harmful to them than their maintenance in a workhouse under such conditions as we have described. But great difficulties arise when the conditions of work in a labour yard are made less strenuous or less continuous than the conditions of work outside. Experience shows that many men will work for two or three days who will not work for a full week, if by so doing they can get just sufficient relief to keep them in idleness for the other days. Hence it

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comes that in most labour yards there collects a more or less permanent residuum of men who never seek work elsewhere, and whose work in the labour yard is not worth what they are paid for it. In times of distress, when really respectable workmen may be driven to seek work in the labour yard, they are forced into association with these permanent *habitués*, and often dragged down to their level. A number of striking instances where this has happened are quoted in the Report, of which the following is typical:

IV. 9, 460 "Before the commencement of the frost, which really put an absolute stop to all riverside labour for nearly two months, they had already opened a stone-yard, and the consequence was that when the real distress came they had on their hands a certain number of undisciplined men in an overcrowded yard, and then on the top of those, they had those who were driven to relief by the severity of the weather. They got a number of persons whom they practically could not control." . . . "It was stated before the Select Committee on Distress that, including supervision, rents, plant, and materials, the guardians spent altogether £17,000, bringing the cost of the stone broken to £7 a ton, whereas 5*s.* or less per ton is the usual cost. It was further stated in evidence before the Committee that the experiment was a great failure, owing, among other things, to the class of men employed; some would have honestly tried to do as much as they could, but were deterred by others."

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One of the difficulties of giving employment in either labour yards or workhouses is the little choice of work to which the men can be set. Wood-chopping and stone-breaking are the two occupations to which the authorities most often have recourse, and neither is satisfactory :

"In the matter of the Firewood Trade there seems little doubt that the competition of charitable societies and Poor Law Guardians is ruining the independent employer." IV. 9, 464

A member of the Leicester Board of Guardians stated in his evidence that :

"We have opened a wood-yard away from the workhouse, where we have sent from 60 to 120 men, being the lame and others physically unfit to work on the land, to saw, chop, and bundle firewood, at which work we have incurred a great loss, year by year, and have practically shut up all the private firewood dealers in the borough." IV. 9, 477

Lists have been furnished to the Commission of wood-choppers who have been driven to the workhouse because their industry has been under-sold by charitable agencies and by Boards of Guardians, and the paradox has been perfected when these men have been occupied in chopping wood to be sold again at a loss, and so to throw more men out of independent employment.

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The fate of the firewood industry is a concrete example of the dangers which attach to all kinds of relief work. The result has been so marked in this case because the industry in question is a comparatively small one, and the competition supported by charity and the rates has been on a very large scale and very persistent.

But, it will be said, these men must be helped, and it is only common sense to insist upon some task of work being done in return for relief given. That is true, but under a better system work might be given which would be much more helpful to the men, and of which the bad effect on independent industry might be reduced to a minimum. Some of the Continental labour colonies, for instance, are almost self-contained, in the sense that they provide for nearly all their own wants, and consume nearly all their own produce. If the able-bodied men receiving relief were in the same way engaged in providing for themselves and for the institutions belonging to the Poor Law, there would be a much greater variety of occupations available and comparatively little injury to any one trade.

A step in the right direction has been taken by some Boards of Guardians who have tried the experiment of starting a farm and setting their

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men to work upon it. "In so far as it is successful, this plan has the merit of teaching the men something of work upon the land; but it has been found in practice that supervision is difficult, and that the men prefer it to taking up work under the ordinary conditions of the labour market." It is from Leicester again that we hear:

"We have also 48 acres of heavy land a mile out of the town, where we have employed the able-bodied men in digging, planting, manuring, and attending to vegetables, tomatoes, etc. Here we have also incurred a very considerable loss." IV. 9, 474

Attempts to draft off some of these men to outside employment failed; the men either would not take or would not keep the work which was found for them.

A much more systematic effort will have to be made than any yet attempted if good results are to be attained. What seems to be indicated by past failures is a system of country workhouses for this class of able-bodied, on a large enough scale to afford variety of occupation for all types of men and all seasons of the year, and under conditions of work and discipline which shall make them less attractive than an independent life.

Before leaving the question of the able-bodied as under the Poor Law, it is necessary to mention

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one form of relief which has become more prevalent of late years. Under the orders of the Local Government Board it is always open to the relieving officer to give relief immediately and unconditionally in cases of "sudden and urgent necessity." There is also an article in the Out Relief Regulation Order which permits the Guardians under special circumstances in any case to depart from the regulations, and report to the Local Government Board that they have done so. Both these provisions are intended to apply only in exceptional cases of emergency, but they have been utilised by certain Boards of Guardians to enable them to evade the intention of the law, and to give relief without a labour test. "In this way a large number of able-bodied men have, during the last few winters, received relief in certain unions without doing any work in return, or submitting to any test. A return handed in by Mr. Lockwood shows that in the half-year ending Lady Day, 1906, the number of men so relieved in Camberwell was 781, relieved 2,847 times; in Bermondsey the number of men was 344; while in Poplar, the numbers varied from 172 to 534 per week. Very often the relief is repeated week after week until it becomes practically continuous."

V. 9, 479

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The Poplar Guardians initiated this policy in 1904:

"As might have been expected, as soon as the decision of the Guardians to grant out-door relief to able-bodied men was known, the relieving officers were flooded by applications, and the weekly value of relief in kind rose in a few weeks from £88 at the beginning of the Christmas quarter to over £300."

The effect of relief given in this way without any attempt to test the willingness of the men to work cannot fail to be mischievous, and to tempt them more and more to cease to rely on their own exertions. It is true that in specially selected cases of men thrown out of work by unexpected misfortune, the wisest as well as the kindest form of help may be to give an allowance whilst they seek new work. But it is a form of help which is most wisely given privately, out of charitable funds. When given wholesale from public funds there is no form of relief which may so quickly demoralise a neighbourhood.

Under the Poor Law as at present administered we find no effective working system for dealing with able-bodied persons, whether good, bad, or indifferent. In some places the management is much better than in others, but in most places the law is applied unintelligently, whilst in some it is

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evaded still more unintelligently. What is needed is, on the one hand, a system which shall be wider and more elastic in its application; on the other hand, greater intelligence and honesty of purpose in administering the system.

During the last twenty years the prevailing tendency has been to attempt to deal with the able-bodied in some way outside the Poor Law. For much longer than that, indeed, the charitable public has always been ready to respond to the claims of any period of "exceptional distress"; but it was in 1886 that the problem of the "unemployed" as such began to take shape in the public mind. In that year remedies were attempted in two directions, which have been tried and failed, and tried again, as the evil recurred and persisted and finally threatened to become permanent. The first method was that of starting a large public fund to be distributed amongst the unemployed. In London in 1886, "nearly £80,000 was rapidly subscribed, and almost as rapidly distributed, without, in most cases, any adequate precautions being taken to ensure a proper administration; as a consequence much of the money was wasted and had a most demoralising effect." The distribution of money was discredited in the eyes of responsible

VI. 3, 364

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authorities, and subsequent Mansion House Funds were devoted to the attempt to benefit small numbers of persons permanently, mainly by way of relief works. But the raising and distribution of funds still continue largely both in London and the provinces, very largely through the medium of newspapers, and frequently to the injury of the neighbourhood chosen for their distribution.

The other direction in which a remedy was sought was that of municipal relief works. Mr. Chamberlain issued a circular from the Local Government Board in 1886, recommending that in times of exceptional distress the Guardians should confer with the local authorities, and the latter should put in hand work for the benefit of the unemployed. "In all cases . . . the men employed should be engaged on the recommendation of the Guardians as persons whom . . . it is undesirable to send to the workhouse, or to treat as subjects for parish relief, . . . the wages paid should be something less than the wages ordinarily paid for similar work." This circular, which was repeated in 1892 by Mr. Fowler, has been largely acted upon all over the country, but the conditions which were intended to safeguard the practice have been almost universally dis- VI. 3, 384

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regarded. A large amount of desultory work has been given to the "unemployed" at a great cost, and it has gradually become clear that the class it was intended to assist are not really benefiting, while a new form of casual labour is being created. It has come to pass with this work, as with that offered in the labour yard, that it has largely been appropriated by loafers and ne'er-do-wells. The municipal authorities, in the attempt to make the work go as far as possible, have nearly always adopted the plan of taking the men on in relays of a few days each :

VI. 3, 396 "Loafers and tramps are not unwilling to do a couple of days' work—even hard work; and many who will work for weeks together three days in each week, would be weeded out if they were compelled to work every day. This being so, schemes which merely provide a few days' work for a large number of men in successive relays are of all others the most likely to be abused. They offer work in the form which exactly suits those who are unwilling to submit to continuous exertion, while doing very little for those really in distress. The plan of employing men in two shifts—three days a week each—is recommended on the ground that it gives them a chance to look out for work during the rest of the week, but against this very real advantage must be set the encouragement offered to loafers by an arrangement which falls in with their habits."

The effect of this upon really respectable men

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is sometimes to deter them from applying for the work, sometimes to drag them down to the level of the loafer. "Here and there, as in Birmingham, we have been told that the better class of workman has been assisted by the municipality, but elsewhere, and especially in London, the evidence is conclusive that the relief works were frequented by the under-employed casual, the 'professional unemployed,' and the loafer. At Newcastle, for instance, as early as 1895 the city engineer reported : VI. 3, 397

"Decent men willing and wishful for work . . . are even intimidated and prevented from doing their best by those with whom they must work. Several cases came to our knowledge last year where men were threatened for doing more than the 'professional' unemployed thought was sufficient."

To those who have watched the progress of this form of relief, especially in London, it seems probable that the numbers of those who find themselves distressed every winter have been largely increased by the offer of relief-work as an alternative to the provision which many of them might have made for a slack season :

"The natural result was that before long 'a day from the vestry' came to be looked upon as a matter of right and its refusal as an injustice. Crowds gathered round

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the vestry every winter waiting for work and gradually losing their hold upon the open labour market. At a meeting of the vestry in 1895 a young man complained that 'he had been up every day for ten weeks, but had not been taken on once,' and he was one of many. Almost every man capable of work who applied to the Charity Organisation Society or the guardians had had one or more days from the vestry, and a generation has grown up which has learned to look up it as a right."

A similar criticism is also made by the Bishop of Stepney, who says:

"This is a plan which obviously rather creates a class of unemployed. . . . In several boroughs there is, or until recently was, a real danger of a class of permanently unemployed expecting winter by winter to subsist on doles of municipal work."

It is perhaps inevitable that work done under these conditions should prove much more costly than when done under ordinary conditions by workmen who know that they will not be employed unless they work well. Many instances of this were brought to the notice of the Commission:

VI. 3, 401 "Some forty or fifty select outdoor labourers from the register of the unemployed at Blackburn were put on to sewer excavation. It is said that the few permanent men who were put with them, and the better of the unemployed themselves, got demoralised on relief works. The Borough Surveyor says that he would not again mix men, and he

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estimated that where an ordinary man would do 5*s.* worth of work, an 'unemployed' would only do 1*s.* worth."

"From St. Pancras we were informed that the cost of painting the arc lamp columns by the unemployed amounted to about 8*s.* 6*d.* as against 6*s.* by contract in the open market. 'It certainly was not so well done, in spite of rigid supervision.'"

"In Stepney the borough engineer worked out the cost carefully a year or two back and there was an increase of 33 per cent. over ordinary labour."

"At Gateshead the Church Army Captain thought the Distress Register men worse than his ordinary clients. The estimated value of their wood-chopping work was £35 0*s.* 11*d.*, for which they were paid £99 8*s.* 6*d.* Various other work was given at Gateshead, excavating, painting and stone-breaking, at a total cost in wages of £654 4*s.*, of which the estimated value was £447 5*s.* 2*d.*"

"At Liverpool work which cost £2,000 was only estimated as worth £350 to £400. (Returns of the Local Government Board.)"

"At York about 9½ acres at Naburn Asylum were dug over by the unemployed. They were paid £498 16*s.*, but the value of the work, as estimated after consultation with various farmers, was £57."

Another serious drawback to this form of relief is that work has been forestalled which would otherwise have been done by regular workmen, who in their turn have suffered from want of work:

"Carrying out . . . ordinary work at an earlier period than is necessary is directly calculated to have the VI. 3, 406

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effect of causing at a future date a reduction in the number of men regularly employed. . . . This means that the better class of workmen . . . become unemployed for the sole reason that the work . . . has been done at an earlier period by the unemployed at a much greater cost and with far less efficiency."

As a method of helping respectable workmen, municipal relief works have proved to be a complete failure. Here and there they may have assisted a few to tide over a bad time; but they have done this at the cost of depriving other respectable workmen of employment which would have been theirs. They have made it evident that in most large towns there are large numbers of men who prefer casual work to steady employment, and who will not do more than they can help even at casual work. So far as their experience helps us to define the problem of the unemployed, they have no doubt contributed towards its solution; but they have made that solution more difficult by encouraging the belief that regular employment is unnecessary, since every winter will bring its doles of casual work.

The evils arising out of relief works of this type were so obvious, and the hope of their ever serving as a remedy to unemployment so small, that strenuous attempts were made to introduce a

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better system. Mr. Gerald Balfour informed us that :—

"The situation was quite accurately summed up in a Report issued by the Charity Organisation Society in 1904, in which it was said : 'There are at present two public relief agencies in the field—the Poor Law Guardians under the Local Government Board, and the Borough Council, who have a free hand.' That was the situation which the Government had to deal with, and the question was, what was the best way to deal with it." VI. 3, 451

Mr. Long also told us that his aim was to "regularise" and "secure more beneficial results" from the then existing system of municipal relief works, the evils of which were admitted. In 1905 the Unemployed Workmen Act was passed, establishing Distress Committees in large towns, upon which was placed the duty of assisting the unemployed. The intention of the Act, as stated in evidence by Mr. Gerald Balfour, was to afford assistance to the steady respectable workman : VI. 3, 429

"We distinctly proposed to deal with the *élite* of the unemployed. The unemployed for whom the Bill was intended were respectable workmen settled in a locality, hitherto accustomed to regular work, but temporarily out of employment through circumstances beyond their control, capable workmen with hope to return to regular work after tiding over a period of temporary distress."

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The methods of assistance indicated in the Act are three :

1. Emigration and migration.

2. The provision or arranging for the provision of temporary work.

3. Labour Bureaux.

The act "aimed at combining members of munici-
VI. 3, 426 pal, Poor Law and charitable bodies into a new and special local authority, whose normal duty was to watch, so to speak, for the approach of unemployment in their district, and whose abnormal duty was to provide help for the better class of unemployed workmen under conditions which, it was hoped, would avoid some of the evils which had arisen through the unregulated provision of work by the municipalities and charitable agencies."

Unfortunately, the Distress Committees have been swamped by the casual labourer and loafer, just as the municipal authorities and the labour yards were swamped before them. In a very few places where there was real emergency, such as Woolwich after the Arsenal discharges, the majority of the applicants were of the higher class, whom it was possible to help through temporary
VI. 3, 432 distress. "But these cases are the exceptions, and, as a rule, it seems clear that the bulk of those seeking benefit from the Unemployed

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Workmen's Act have been irregular labourers more or less in a chronic state of destitution."

The result has been as before, that the assistance intended to save the regular workman from falling into the casual labour class, has been mainly diverted to subsidising that very class of casual labour.

Moreover, the Distress Committees, have not succeeded to any great extent in remedying or superseding the bad system of relief works carried on by the municipal authorities. The same evils of doles of work instead of regular employment, of extravagant cost, and of forestalling work which should be done by regular workmen, are to be found going on notwithstanding the Distress Committees, or even with their connivance, as before the Act which was intended to remedy them. Indeed, they have been rather encouraged than otherwise by the fact that, since the Act was passed, grants have been made from Imperial funds which have relieved the local authorities from some part of the cost.

But though the Distress Committees have failed to meet the problem in so far as they have fallen back upon the expedient of relief works, some of them have done work in other directions which has been much more hopeful. In London

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especially, a large number of families have been emigrated, with the best results; and some useful work has also been done in migrating families to places where there was employment for them.

In a few instances the experiment has been tried of sending the men to a "labour colony" in the country, while the family was maintained at home. This method of dealing with unemployment has the great advantage that the men are kept steadily at work under healthy conditions, and nearly always show great improvement in health during their stay. Difficulties have arisen, especially when the men have not been well selected, and have proved refractory. But the chief difficulty has
VI. 3, 447 been that too often the men, belonging as they mostly do to the casual labour class, have relapsed into their old conditions upon leaving the colony, and have returned to the town only to rejoin the ranks of the unemployed. Some few have been emigrated, still fewer have taken up work in the country; but the total effect in diminishing the number of unemployed has been negligible. Nevertheless, the experience of the labour colonies has been valuable; they have shown that the townsman can be put to work upon the land with good results, and under conditions far preferable to those of the workhouse from every point of view.

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The third method of assistance prescribed under the Act was the establishment of labour bureaux; and here again some valuable experience has been obtained. It has been found that if they are to VI. 4, 500 succeed they must be dissociated from any relief agency; otherwise, the best type of workers will not register at them, and employers who are not actuated by philanthropic motives, or seeking to get cheap labour, will not apply to them for workers.

In the second place it has been found, as might VI. 4, 502 have been foreseen, that an isolated labour bureau can do comparatively little to assist the mobility of labour. When work is slack in a district, the register will be full of applications for work, but no employers will be seeking workers. A great step forward has been made in London by linking up the labour bureaux in each district, so that the demand on each side may be known in every part, and the work and the workman brought together as soon as possible. The next step, which will be greatly more effective, is to have a system of linked labour bureaux over the whole country.

Another lesson which has been learned is the VI. 4, 512 importance of interesting the workmen's own institutions in the movement. If the trade unions suspect that the labour bureau is to be an instru-

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ment for supplying cheap labour, or for breaking down a strike, their hostility will make it largely useless. It will be essential to associate representatives of trade unions with the management, and to avoid any action which can be regarded as interference with trade disputes.

Finally it has been learned that if a Labour Bureau is to succeed, it is not sufficient to put a clerk to sit in an office and take down names. It is necessary to employ men of organising ability, who will study the wants of the district and make themselves trusted by employers and men alike.

VI. 4, 523 Given these conditions the Commission believe that the establishment of Labour Exchanges might be effective in preventing a considerable amount of unemployment, that they would enable the workers to ascertain quickly and easily what work was available, and would so diminish the weary search for work, and that when fully established they would afford most useful information as to the condition of the labour market in different parts of the country. Finally they consider that the fact of a man having registered at the Labour Exchange and being willing to take work when offered would be *prima facie* evidence that he did not belong to the casual or loafing class. Hence

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their first proposals for dealing with the unemployed are as follows:

"We recommend, then, that there should be established under the Board of Trade a general system of Labour Exchanges throughout the United Kingdom; that these exchanges should be managed by officers of the Board of Trade, with the help of an advisory Committee of employers, workmen, and members of Local Authorities; that there be no compulsion to make use of these institutions, but that it should be the object of the Board of Trade and the advisory Committee by propaganda and otherwise to popularise them in every way. The exchanges should be granted free postal and telephone facilities by the State, and arrangements should be made whereby they might grant passes entitling workmen travelling to a situation at specially cheap fares from the railway companies. In suitable cases, the cost of such passes might be defrayed by the Labour Exchange and afterwards recovered from the workman." VI. 4, 528

But it is not for a moment supposed that Labour Exchanges will by themselves solve the problem of unemployment. They will help the genuine worker who has useful qualities to offer to find a market for his skill, character, and capacity. They

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can do nothing for the man who has nothing to offer, neither skill nor character nor capacity. They can do little again for the man who has lost his power for sustained work, beyond finding him an occasional job. And finally they can do nothing directly for the man for whose qualities there is no market in this country, until the system becomes an Imperial one, linking the Colonies and the Mother Country into one labour market accessible to all.

The number of those who will not be directly helped by Labour Exchanges has become very large. At present we have no means of ascertaining, or even of estimating, how many people are suffering from unemployment at any given moment. Some of the Trade Unions issue returns showing the amount of unemployment amongst their members, but those apply to a very small proportion of the total number of workers. All we know is that many thousands now apply every winter to the Distress Committees and register at the Labour Bureaux, and that a large proportion of these are unskilled and casual labourers, who live from hand to mouth, and seldom if ever have regular work. It is in connection with this class that the most difficult "problems of poverty" arise; the "sweated industries" are recruited from

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its women, and too often the men become parasites upon their wives and children. Whether or not the class is increasing there are no data to show; but we have abundant evidence to show that it is being continuously recruited from various sources.

Apart from special local causes, there is a VI. 4, 535
consensus of opinion that the intermittent labour market is recruited from the following classes:

(1) Those who like intermittent employment, or follow it because their forefathers did.

(2) The failures and breakages from higher and more regular employ.

(3) The agricultural labourer attracted by the high wage per hour.

It is probably inevitable that so long as there is a demand for casual labour it will continue to be recruited from these sources. But there is one other source the existence of which is of the greatest social import, and which might and should be stopped almost entirely. One of the most disturbing facts which has been brought to the notice of the Commission is the extent to which boys, on leaving school, drift into work which offers fairly good wages for three or four years, and then throws them out unskilled at an age when it is too late to learn a trade.

A great many boys when they leave school VI. 4, 537

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drift into occupations which are not very strict in their regulations, and are very casual—relatively well paid, indeed, but not likely to lead to permanent work. Many parents do not look sufficiently far forward to take into account what will happen to their children when they are between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. They look at the occupation mainly from the point of view of the wage immediately obtainable. A great number of them start as errand boys with grocers and small trades-people, or as street-traders, newspaper boys, and van boys, or as telegraph boys, numbers of whom are thrown out by the Post Office every year at the age of sixteen.

There are also many industries which employ large numbers for the three or four years between boyhood and manhood which should be a preparation for a workman's life, and then turn them adrift with no future before them :

VI. 4, 541 "The results of this large employment of boys in occupations which leave no opportunity of promotion to employment as men are disastrous. The boy, thrown out at sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, or twenty years of age, drifts naturally, as the witnesses testify, into the low-skilled labour market, or the army of unemployables. There is, the Bishop of Stepney says, a continual influx of

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unskilled boys ready to do casual work at almost any wage, boys often demoralised and physically enfeebled by their two or three years in the streets, or on vans, and so forth."

The Commission make several definite suggestions, the adoption of which should go far to remedy this evil. They recommend, in the first VI. 4, 546 place, that in connection with every school and the local Labour Exchange there should be a committee or agency prepared to advise the boys leaving school and their parents on the subject of their future work. In the second place they endorse the suggestions of their special investigator on this subject:

(1) That boys should be kept at school until the age of fifteen instead of fourteen;

(2) That exemption below this age should be granted only for boys leaving to learn a skilled trade; and

(3) That there should be school supervision till sixteen and replacement in school of boys not properly employed.

Further suggestions are that there should be improved facilities for technical education after school age, and more prolonged and thorough physical drill. Finally the Commission "refer to one XI. 128 criticism that has been made with almost absolute

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unanimity. There seems to be outside the circle of the teaching profession a very strong general feeling that the education of our children in the elementary schools is not of the kind which is helpful to them in after life. . . . We would suggest to the Board of Education the advisability of meeting these criticisms by a thorough reconsideration of the time table and curriculum in our elementary schools, as well as of the aims and ideals of elementary education."

If these suggestions were carried out there is no doubt that the number of those dependent upon casual jobs for a living would be gradually diminished, and there would be more jobs for those who remain. Another way of attacking the evil, and the most efficacious so far as it can be done, is for employers to work as far as possible with a regular staff, and to abandon the practice of relying upon casual labourers to do their work.

This reform is most needed, and would be most striking in its results, in the case of dock labourers. For the most part, work at the docks is carried on almost entirely by casual labourers,
VI. 1, 262 who are taken on "by the day, half-day, quarter-day, hour, or job." The rate of pay is often high, and attracts many who do not realise how uncertain and irregular the work is. Hence there

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are always many more men waiting for work than there is any demand for.

"The surplus of labour is very great, although it is impossible to estimate it, owing to the numbers who come intermittently to the docks in the hope of getting an odd job. Mr. A. L. Rathbone puts it at some 4,000; Mr. Sexton at not less than 10,000. At any rate there is always an excess, and the average employment is not more than three days a week. Thus the amount of work which, if well organised, might keep a smaller number of men fully employed at high wages over the whole week, is spread over a great many thousands more; hardly any one gets a full week's work; and casual labour becomes a pernicious and a favourite habit." VI. 1, 291

That dock labour can be largely decasualised has been proved by one notable instance, that of the London and India Docks Company. In their docks 72 per cent. of the labour employed consists of men on regular weekly wages. Unfortunately there is generally little desire either amongst employers or employed to change the existing state of things; the employers find it convenient, without realising the evil which is being wrought, and the men have got used to the uncertainty of the life, and dread the immediate VI. 1, 277

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consequences of a change. There is no doubt that the immediate consequences would be to deprive of all work some of those who now get a little, and a considerable effort would need to be made before the surplus was itself re-absorbed into permanent industry. But the ultimate benefit would be incalculable, comparable only with the stamping out of some demoralising epidemic. It has been well said that if we could do away with drink and casual labour we might close half our workhouses.

But it is not only at the docks that casual labour is rife. The habit of taking men on for a few weeks or days, or even hours, is increasingly pre-
VI. 4, 561 valent in many branches of industry. The Commission think that it should be the recognised policy at least of Government Departments and Local Authorities to employ as far as possible a regular staff, and diminish their use of intermittent labour. With regard to private employers, two ingenious methods of bringing them into line have been suggested. The first is an
VI. 4, 564 "employment termination due," a small sum in the nature of a stamp duty to be paid by masters and men at the termination of each engagement. This, it is thought, would discourage short engagements, and also provide a fund which might

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be used as a basis for "unemployment insurance."

The second method is to compel all employers to engage their casual labour through the Labour Exchange, which would so arrange the work as to give full time employment to as many men as possible. The Commission doubt the wisdom or practicability of such a proposal. If casual employment could be obtained only through a Government office, the tendency would be to shift on to the office the responsibility of providing casual work for all who applied. VI. 4, 565

It is improbable that in any system of industry unemployment could ever be reduced to a negligible quantity; but that the evils attending it can be to a large extent met, has been shown by the action of those Trade Unions which grant unemployed benefit to their members. "There are, roughly, 1,500,000 Trade Unionists entitled to unemployed benefit. But if we consider that there are in England and Wales some 8,000,000 adult males between the ages of twenty and sixty, it is clear that the Trade Unionist insurance scheme only covers a very limited portion of the ground. Moreover, it is chiefly the highly-skilled and therefore most highly-paid workmen who are thus insured, for in most cases the Trade VI. 4, 572

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Unions of unskilled workmen give no unemployed benefit."

The problem is, how to extend the system of insurance against unemployment to all classes of workmen, including those who, just because their wages are low, have most need of some such help to enable them to get through periods when work is slack. In England little or nothing has been attempted outside the Trade Unions, but abroad a good many experiments have been made, and an account of these is given in the Report and its appendices.

The system which most recommended itself to the Commission is that under which the State or municipalities add a fixed amount to the benefit actually paid to an unemployed workman by a Trade Union or similar organisation. It is thought that in this way a great stimulus might be given to those Trade Unions which do not yet provide unemployed benefit, that large numbers of men might be induced to join either Trade Unions or Friendly Societies for the purpose of benefiting from such assistance, and even that new trade societies might be called into existence for the purpose of providing for their members insurance on favourable terms. The Commission formulate their conclusions on this subject as follows:

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"*First*, that the establishment and promotion of unemployment insurance, especially amongst unskilled and unorganised labour, is of paramount importance in averting the distress arising from unemployment. VI. 4, 604

"*Second*, that the attainment of this object is of such national importance as to justify, under specified conditions, contributions from public funds towards its furtherance.

"*Third*, that this form of insurance can best be promoted by utilising the agency of existing trade organisations or of organisations of a similar character which may be brought into existence."

They further recommend that as the question is urgent "a small Commission or Departmental Committee of experts and representatives of existing trade benefit organisations be at once appointed with an instruction to frame as quickly as possible a scheme or schemes for consideration."

Meanwhile, what can be done to mitigate the distress which actually exists, which is indeed chronic in our large towns, and becomes acute every winter?

The first essential step is to bring some sort of order into what is at present an administrative

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chaos. What we find now is a multiplicity of agencies attempting to deal with a class which is sometimes called able-bodied, sometimes unemployed, regardless of the fact that this "class" is not really a class at all, but a heterogeneous mass of men with few characteristics common to all of them. They are very far from being all of them able-bodied; they are not even all unemployed, in the sense that employment is a thing which they want but cannot get. The honest, the criminal, the unfortunate, the strong, the weak, the industrious, the incorrigible loafer, the indifferent, all in the prevailing confusion are shifting about from one agency to another; with the result that each agency in turn tends to become the prey of the most worthless and the most hopeless, while the better men stand aloof. A similar confusion prevails amongst the agencies themselves. We find the Poor Law, with its indoor relief, outdoor relief, workhouses, casual wards and farm colonies; the Distress Committees, with various forms of employment relief, allowances, migration and emigration, and labour bureaux; the Salvation and Church Armies, with colonies, labour yards, shelters and emigration; the emigration societies, and various institutions run by voluntary charity. In addition, every winter sees large charitable

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funds raised and dispensed in certain districts, generally without any regard to the work of other agencies. Amongst all these there is an almost complete lack of co-operation, in the sense that all are dealing indiscriminately with the same people. It is quite a mistake to suppose that the Poor Law is dealing with one set, charity with another, Distress Committees with another, and so on. The men drift aimlessly backwards and forwards from one to another; half the winter they may be working under a Distress Committee, the other half in a labour yard; one winter they may spend in a labour colony, the next in a workhouse. No one takes hold of a man and deals with him persistently year in and year out until he is restored to independence; and only special investigations (and those only to a limited extent) can track the unhappy victims through the long game of philanthropic battledore and shuttlecock.

The Commission holds that the first essential VI. 4, 609
step towards reform is that there should be one authority, and one only, responsible for the public relief of distress due to unemployment; and that this authority should be the one which is responsible for the relief of distress due to other causes. It is comparatively seldom that distress is due to one cause alone; want of work is complicated by

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want of health, or of character, or of capacity; and the authority which deals with it should be able to bring into play the whole range of agencies devised to remedy what is wrong, instead of being confined to the single panacea of providing "work." It will then be the duty of the one authority empowered to give public assistance to bring into co-operation as far as possible all voluntary agencies, and so to bring some order into the present chaos. Further, it will be the duty of this Public Assistance Authority to determine how far existing methods and institutions are adequate, and to supplement them when necessary by new methods and institutions.

What the nature of these methods and institutions should be follows from the definition of the
VI. 4, 608 functions of the Public Assistance Authority in relation to the "unemployed":

"1. To assist with a view to their ultimate self-support and independence those who are able to work, and who can show that they have taken active measures to obtain work, but without success, and cannot in consequence support themselves or their families.

"2. To assist, under curative and reformatory conditions calculated to restore self-respect:

"(*a*) Those who, though willing to work, cannot

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offer a return in work adequate to the wage demanded or received, and are in consequence without employment and unable to support themselves or their families.

"(*b*) Those who, though able to work, cannot show that they have taken active measures to obtain work, and are in consequence unable to support themselves or their families."

It has been made quite clear by past experience that these objects are not to be attained either by casual jobs at "relief works," or by relegating a man to the workhouse as at present managed. But the Commission contemplate that the Public Assistance Authorities in the various counties would either singly or in combination, or through the medium of charitable bodies, provide institutions which would be really adapted to meet the needs of the various types of "unemployed." These institutions should clearly be in the country, or at any rate on the outskirts of the towns, with land attached or available. Some would be of the nature of labour colonies, or farm colonies, where test work and training could be given; others would be country workhouses where under discipline and healthy conditions the "unemployable" might regain strength and character. And in the background, for the wilfully lazy and refractory

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c. would be the Detention Colony, to which cases would be committed for periods varying from six
VI. 4, 629 months to three years. The Commission do not propose that this last institution should be under the management of the Public Assistance Authority. It would be penal in its nature, and as such should be under the Home Office. But its existence would be essential to the success of the other institutions. It has been proved over and over again that no helpful work can be done by any institution which is liable to be swamped by men who are persistently lazy and refractory, and can go and come as they please. The knowledge that there was the possibility of being committed to a Detention Colony would keep many men steadily at their work in the Labour Colony; while those actually committed would be prevented from wasting the opportunities they would not use.

Thus the methods which would in future be available for the assistance of the able-bodied by the Public Assistance Authority would be:

VI. 4, 630 "(1) Home Assistance on condition of daily work in an Industrial or Agricultural Institution or Colony or otherwise as the Public Assistance Authority may decide within regulations laid down by the Local Government Board. By Home Assistance we mean assistance at the home whether

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in money or kind, and given without requiring the recipient to live entirely in an institution. The conditions under which Home Assistance should be granted would be as follows :—

"(*a*) That the requisite assistance is not forthcoming from any other source.

"(*b*) That the assistance be given on condition of daily work.

"(*c*) That the assistance should be only given to an applicant with a decent home and a good industrial record.

"(*d*) That the order for assistance should be for a strictly limited period and subject to revision.

"(*e*) That the applicant should be registered at the Labour Exchange, and that the relief should cease as soon as suitable occupation has been offered through the Labour Exchange.

"(2) Partial Home Assistance, *i.e.*, Home Assistance for the family of an applicant, the applicant himself being maintained in an institution and given work.

"(3) Institutional Assistance, *i.e.*, continuous maintenance in an Industrial or Agricultural Institution or Colony without detention, except in

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so far as the applicant binds himself by a written agreement to stay for a definite period.

"(4) Continuous maintenance under compulsory detention in a colony established and managed under the Home Office."

In advocating the establishment or utilisation of Labour Colonies and country workhouses, the Commission have been guided by the experience of similar institutions either in this country or abroad. That experience does not lead them to expect that a large proportion of those who have fallen into the ranks of "unemployables" will be restored to independence; but it seems clear that they can be much more effectively dealt with in this way than when relegated to an urban workhouse, or left to lead a life of loafing and begging. They can at least be brought to maintain themselves in part, and are meanwhile withdrawn from injuring the rest of the community.

The most effective remedy for unemployment consists in the migration or emigration of the persons who cannot find work where they are. There is always a risk lest assistance to the unemployed should tend to perpetuate or increase the congestion of surplus labour in a locality, and this risk is avoided when the help takes the form of

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migrating them to a place where there is a demand for their labour. It is hoped that the Labour Exchanges will in time do much to increase the mobility of labour within the country; but there is immediate need for vigorous measures to be taken to relieve the pressure in certain urban districts. The Commission think "that the new VI. 4, 662 authority when constituted should turn their attention primarily to the dispersal of labour from those districts. The distress there is chronic and tends every winter to become acute; and any attempt to deal with it on the spot only perpetuates the evil. Every effort must be made by migration and emigration to break up the congested mass of labour, and to allow the ordinary conditions of industry to resume their course. It may be found that special grants are necessary to carry out this policy, and if so we think that there should be no hesitation in making them."

Boards of Guardians already have the power to emigrate families, but exercise it rarely. The Distress Committees have done a certain amount of emigration with success so far as it goes, but they have not been able to meet the demand. In West Ham the unemployed are said to be "willing and most anxious to emigrate. They would go in

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IV. 9, 674 swarms if they had the money." And the secretary to the West Ham Distress Committee says of emigration that it is :

VI. 4, 659 "The most beneficial form of assistance rendered under the Act, both in the relief to the locality as well as to the emigrants. The objection raised to such form of assistance under the Act on the ground that it is robbing the country of some of its best workers is greatly discounted in the fact of the small percentage of the best workers that register under the Act, and the small number of these who seek emigration aid. Of over 250 married and single applicants assisted out by the West Ham Distress Committee four only were of Class I." (*i.e.*, skilled and regular artisans), "and sixty of Class II." (*i.e.*, irregular artisans and regular labourers).

It is believed that when the Public Assistance Authority is well established its powers will prove to be sufficiently elastic to deal with any crisis of unemployment ; but, inasmuch as it will take time to bring into play all the new forces with which it is proposed to combat the evils of unemployment, the Commission think that it may be well to be prepared for an emergency occurring in the interval. They suggest that in such a case the Local Authorities should be enabled to carry on special works which would relieve the labour market, when it had been proved to the satisfaction

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of the Local Government Board that there was really exceptional and protracted distress.

"The special works should be carried out on ordinary commercial lines, by contract, and the fitness or unfitness of workmen for the work shall be the main consideration in engaging or dismissing them and in determining the conditions of their employment. All workmen so employed shall, as far as practicable, be taken from the register of the local Labour Exchange." VI. 4, 703

It is obvious that the danger to be guarded against in giving effect to this recommendation is that such works should tend to degenerate into ordinary relief works of the type which the Commission have condemned.

It has not been considered necessary to deal separately with unemployment amongst women. There is no difference in principle between the methods which should be used to assist unemployed women and those which apply in the case of men. When necessary, special institutions would be established for women. VI. 4, 635

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CHAPTER VI

THE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AUTHORITY

WHAT is this Public Assistance Authority to which it is proposed to assign in future the assistance of the able-bodied. Does it simply mean that these are to be "relegated to the Poor Law"; or is there really to be such a change in the methods and spirit of the Poor Law as to constitute a new departure?

Before answering this question it is necessary to refer again to our criticisms of the work at present carried on by Boards of Guardians. We repeat that much of it has been excellent, and has been achieved at the cost of a devotion and self-sacrifice on the part of many Guardians which has received but scant recognition from the public they have served. There is no doubt that conscientious and humane Guardians have suffered unjustly from the odium which has attached itself

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to others whose work has been of a very different type. It is not suggested that any Guardians are guilty of the wilful brutality of which they are often accused; the work is much too arduous to be undertaken by persons who are not on the whole well-disposed towards the poor; but in many places the Commissioners have found a carelessness, or roughness, or stupidity which goes far to explain their failure.

The following descriptions of meetings of Guardians are taken from notes made by members of the Commission immediately after attending those meetings. They represent Boards in all parts of country, both urban and rural, and it will be seen from them that the conduct of business is frequently such as to make the proper administration of relief impossible:

"We attended a meeting of the Board. . . . The relieving officers and the chairman stated the cases so confusedly and so incompletely that it was almost impossible to form any opinion as to the methods on which out-relief is distributed, but we gathered that each Guardian decided whether relief should be given to the applicants from the parish which he represented. The relieving officer was not consulted, nor was his statement of facts considered." IV. 2, 76

"We attended a meeting of the Board. There was a large number of Guardians present, and the proceedings

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were not very orderly; the relieving officer, a talkative, masterful man, practically decided most of the cases in conjunction with the Guardians of the parish in question. The clerk seemed to be a nonentity, and was seldom in evidence. Most of the Guardians took part in the proceedings, but as they all talked together it was difficult to judge what passed. There was practically no enquiry as to the resources of the applicants, and with the old people the amount of relief was determined solely by their age."

"We found a very large meeting of the Guardians . . . the reason, as it appeared later, being that the election of a chaplain was on the agenda paper. It is difficult to say anything in praise of the method of conducting business, the chairman was totally ignorant of the procedure of a public meeting, the clerk self-assertive, ignorant and copious. . . . The election over, the Guardians streamed out of the Board room and the relief cases were taken. For this purpose, the remnant of the Board divided into two committees, one at either end of a small Board room, result, such a babel that it was difficult to hear, and impossible to estimate the merits of the applicants."

"We visited and attended two Relief Committees. At the first there were five Guardians present, of whom one was a lady. Relief was distributed without principle or knowledge of the facts. The Guardians paid little or no attention to the officer's report, indeed sometimes they began to discuss the amount of relief before he had completed his statement of the facts. The chairman seemed weak and incompetent, without backbone, afraid of the members of the Independent Labour Party, of whom two were present."

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"A large number of Guardians were present, and they seemed to us noisy in their proceedings and rough in their handling of the applicants."

"We were present at the Relief Committees. These are four in number. It is not easy to convey any idea of their inefficiency. Three of them were held in close proximity—the shouting of the relieving officers, the banging of doors, made the scene a pandemonium. The procedure was as follows:—The committee sat on one side of the counter, the relieving officer on the other with a pile of money beside him. He took names in order from the Application and Report book (which seemed to be very fairly kept), summoned the applicant, stated the facts of the case, allotted the relief, and handed it to the applicant, at the same time giving a card to the chairman of the committee for endorsement. By this method thirteen cases were decided in one committee in four minutes."

"The relieving officer did not make or read out any general statement or explanation of the cases; and amidst the babel of what largely resembled a *conversazione*, it was difficult for us (or indeed any of the Guardians saving the chairman with the book in front of him) to obtain a clear idea of the cases."

"We attended a meeting of the Board, at which eleven members were present, one being a lady. There had been another lady, but she was beaten at the last election by a publican, who was said to have brought twenty-five electors drunk to the poll. The out-relief was practically administered by the chairman and the relieving officer; if the Guardian of the parish in which

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the applicant resided happened to be present he took some interest in the case, otherwise the Board were not concerned with the relief. . . . The publican interest, we were told, was largely represented on the Board, the assistant clerk being in intimate and close alliance with them. The Board, as a whole, seemed slack, uninterested and unintelligent. . . . In one case where the woman was reported dirty and the man given to drink, one of the Guardians mentioned having seen him at the public-house that morning. Relief was, however, granted at the instance of the Guardian of the parish, who was also the publican whose house the man frequented."

How, it may be asked, is it possible that people of this type, with so little notion of carrying on the work in a proper manner, should come to hold such important positions? The answer is that it is mainly the fault of the general public, often the very people who are eager to criticise. The Guardians, are elected on a democratic franchise, but so little genuine interest is taken in their work that a very small proportion of those qualified to vote for them do so. In London at
IV. 2, 73 the last Guardians' election only 28·1 per cent. of the electorate recorded their votes, and very similar conditions were reported from other parts of the country. Of those who do vote, the larger number are often persons likely to benefit themselves, or through their relations, and their votes

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are guided by the promises of Guardians to give relief on easy terms. Of one Board of Guardians we were told:

"We are sent here to give outdoor relief to our relations, our fathers, and our mothers, and our sisters, and our cousins, and our uncles, and our aunts, and if we did not do it we should very soon be sent about our business." IV. 2, 81

It was impossible that the Commission should not notice in visiting Boards of Guardians how strongly the publican interest was represented in some places: "We have been present at meetings IV. 2, 75 where the treatment of cases has obviously been affected by the presence of members who were house agents or owners of slum property; on other Boards the publican interest is strong (on one Board no less than seven out of thirty-five members are publicans), and publicans have been heard to insist on out-relief being given to *habitués* of their houses. More generally the evil is attributed to ignorance and indifference, combined with the fallacious hope of keeping the rates down by a minimum dole of out-relief."

Recent prosecutions and convictions in London have brought to light the fact that the work of IV. 2, 79 the Guardians gives great scope to dishonest men for actual fraud, and "conspiracy to defraud the ratepayers." A certain amount of the ex-

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travagant expenditure incurred by many Boards of recent years is probably attributable to this cause.

Under the present system Guardians are usually elected every three years. The alternative system is for one-third to retire annually, but this is seldom done, and the consequence is that at every election there is the chance that the majority of the new Board will be men and women new to the work, with no experience, and only too likely to reverse the policy of the old Board without sufficient cause. From two different towns we get the following evidence :

IV. 2, 74 (1) "I have now been a Guardian for twelve years, and have been through four triennial elections. In my opinion, each of the four Boards elected has been less good than the last. The men on it are proposed and elected without, as it seems to me, the slightest regard for the position and work of a Guardian. They are chosen and elected (often avowedly so) in order to try the strength of the political party to which they belong, and to many of them one cannot help thinking that the chief idea in being a Guardian is that it brings some notoriety, and may be the first step towards a seat in the City Council—a sort of practising ground for it. Every three years our whole Board goes out, and only about one-third returns. The new two-thirds come totally ignorant of everything to do with Poor Law, not content to wait to learn, not even waiting to understand what is going on in their particular Union.

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much less what has been the history of the Poor Law, and of pauperism, for some years and centuries."

(2) "Many men simply become Guardians as a stepping-stone to the Town Council; they wish to gain confidence in speaking, and use the Board room as a practising ground. . . . They are often ignorant and indifferent, and stand for other reasons than their knowledge of or interest in the poor."

It has seemed clear to the Commission that the method of popular election is not one which is adapted to get the best administrators. There are men and women ready to do excellent work, who will not stand the ordeal of a popular election under the present conditions. "The work is tending more and more to fall into the hands IV. 2, 92 of persons who, caring more for their own interests than for those of the community, direct their administration more towards the attainment of popularity than towards the solution of the real problems of pauperism. . . . At present there is no doubt that the work of Boards of Guardians has fallen into disrepute, and nothing short of a determined effort will restore it to the esteem which it deserves."

These are the grounds upon which the majority of the Commission have come to the conclusion that Boards of Guardians as at present constituted should be abolished, and their duties transferred

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to an authority which shall be more uniformly disinterested and progressive in its administration. This does not mean that the Commission would not view with great regret the loss of very many of the present Guardians, who are enlightened, experienced and devoted to the interests of the poor. But the change they suggest does not necessarily involve such a loss. "We earnestly
IV. 2, 77 hope that if our recommendations take effect, every effort will be made to secure the continued services of such Guardians."

The particular form which the new authority should take has been largely determined by another defect in the present administration. The Commission have been impressed by the fact that much of the present failure is due to the want of proper classification amongst the inmates of Poor Law institutions, more especially of the workhouse. There are, of course, in every workhouse, different parts of the building assigned for the use of men, women, and children; generally, also, the infirm occupy different dormitories from the able-bodied, sometimes, again, they have different sitting-rooms. But much more than this is needed if any higher standard of administration is aimed at than the mere housing and feeding of the inmates. So long ago as 1834 the Commissioners recommended in their

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Report that classification should be *by* workhouses, not *in* workhouses; *i.e.* that a different institution under different management should be assigned to each different class. The difficulties of the present system are strongly felt by those who have to administer it; the Workhouse Masters and Matrons' Association state in their evidence:—

"With proper classification of, and in, workhouses, it would be possible to treat each class of inmates on its merits, in more detail, with the result that to the deserving an almshouse system would present itself, while the treatment of the undeserving would be deterrent. IV. 4, 167

"If you give us all classes to look after as we have at present, you want expert knowledge on every point and expert administration on every point, and it is impossible, in the one house, with the one staff of officials, to get it. That is one reason why we request so strongly classification by workhouses as well as in workhouses."

The Local Government Board laid great stress upon this point in their Report of 1873–4; but pointed out that the reform could not be effected except at an enormous cost, unless Boards of Guardians would combine for the purpose. There are not enough of each class of pauper, especially when we come to such small classes as the epileptic or feeble-minded, to make it practicable to have a separate institution in each union. But by combining for the purpose different Boards could

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distribute their paupers amongst their several institutions in whatever way seemed best. Thus one workhouse might have been turned into an almshouse for the aged; another into a home for the feeble-minded; another into a workhouse for the able-bodied only.

With this object in view facilities were offered in the Poor Law Act of 1879 which enabled Boards of Guardians to enter into combination "for any purpose connected with the administration of the relief of the poor." But the Act is permissive only, and has been used to a very small extent. There is a curious jealous narrowness about most Boards of Guardians which makes them unwilling to co-operate, not only with charitable persons and institutions, but even with each other. One witness of wide experience said:

IV. 4, 164 "There is nothing on which the average Guardian is more sensitive than any change in his area. He looks upon it as his right, and he does not like to be mixed up with the neighbours at all. It is quite impossible, except by general legislation, to get over that prejudice."

Again:

"I think it is one of those things which, if it were left to the Local Government Board, would not be done; I mean to say, even if we had a recommendation in favour of it, I do not think we could do it."

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There are no doubt many unions, especially in the country, where the need for reform in this direction is not very obvious. When there are no able-bodied paupers the workhouse, under good management, tends to become a fairly comfortable home for the aged and infirm, who have little to complain of when the master and matron are kindly people. But even in these workhouses will generally be found a few children, a few feeble-minded women, and a few epileptics, none of whom are receiving the proper treatment. And that the general workhouse may degenerate into something much worse than this is clear from the following notes made by the Commissioners on different workhouses seen by them :

(1) "On the day of our visit there were eighty-seven inmates, fifty-one men, twenty-seven women, and nine children. There was no attempt at classification. Thus, young women, girls, infants, and old women were all using the same dormitory. The master and Guardians apparently considered that this was inevitable, but in one case in which a sleeping-room had been allotted for six old women, the next dormitory thereto was occupied by old women, young women, and girls, and as we have pointed out, it would have been easy to have allotted the old women's room as a girls' dormitory. It seemed to us scandalous that local apathy should be allowed to condemn young girls to be put to sleep with women admitted by the master to be frequently of bad character." IV. 5, 190

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(2) "We visited the workhouse, but being short of time, we could only visit those sections of the building which the master was least unwilling to show us. We were accompanied by the acting chairman, who seemed quite unfamiliar with the house. In the infirmary there were ten beds for males, eight beds for females, and a lying-in ward. The charge nurse was absent on holidays; there were no acute cases. The condition of the patients was unsatisfactory, and although (as we were informed) the doctor comes when sent for, the condition of the patients was such as to suggest reasonable ground for complaint. In the absence of the nurse, the patients were in charge of the assistant matron, who is quite ignorant of nursing. At night the patients, one of whom has fits of a somewhat serious kind, help one another. In the body of the house there were five imbeciles in charge of inmates. The children, eleven in number, are in the house; they mix with the other inmates; they go out to school, the two or three whom we saw seemed untidy and neglected. The Board is opposed to boarding-out. Our visit to the H—— Union has left an unpleasant, if not painful impression in our memories."

(3) "The inmates were simply crowded together in ill-ventilated wards. With such overcrowding, classification is impossible. The beds in the infirm men's wards were so close together that it was scarcely possible to get between; clothing and utensils were lying about everywhere; nails were driven into the walls in many places, evidently by inmates, and garments of various kinds hung on them. Men were lying on the beds in their day clothes; others playing draughts around the fire in their

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shirt sleeves; whilst others were permanently bed-ridden in a state of senile decay. There was only one day attendant for a pavilion with 190 inmates. The overcrowding applies to all parts of the workhouse."

(4) "Most of the people looked even more dejected than usual; hardly one seemed to have enough spirit to speak when spoken to."

(5) "There is little or nothing to be said in praise of this house. Every place seemed dirty, and the fullest use was not made of what resources there were. The sanitary arrangements were disgraceful, the laundry was in a state of chaos, and the accommodation in the tramp wards was primitive. The inmates were sitting round fires in small rooms with low ceilings, and seemed morose and indifferent to their surroundings. The children looked far from happy. They were huddled together in a small room with no attempt at brightness."

(6) "The whole of the workhouse reflects great discredit on the Board of Guardians; it is overcrowded and ill-managed, and the staff is inadequate. Indeed, the detailed administration seemed so incompetent as to be almost cruel."

The present state of affairs is clearly one which must be remedied, and the remedy cannot be delayed any longer. "Ever since 1834 the need IV. 4, 165 for classification has been felt, and has become increasingly urgent as the possibilities of specialised treatment for various kinds of distress have been realised." Full facilities have been offered the Guardians to effect the necessary reforms by means

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of combination, but they have opposed a stubborn resistance to all pressure. It seems necessary, therefore, to take the matter out of their hands altogether. This the Commission proposes to do by enlarging the area for Poor Law administration from the union to the county,[1] so that all the institutions within the county will be at the disposal of one authority. That authority will then be able to carry out a complete scheme of classification, utilising the present workhouses where possible, and supplying additional institutions where necessary.

The only real objection which has been raised to this policy is that it might involve hardship to the persons who were removed to a distance from their
IX. 7 friends. The Commission thinks that the risks of this are minimised by the great facilities of communication which now exist, and that they are far outweighed by the increased benefit to be derived from the change. Moreover, they point out that if their recommendation to house the old people in small homes is carried out, these will naturally be situated in the localities where they are needed.

It is this County Authority which it is proposed to call the Public Assistance Authority of the future. To it will be assigned the responsibility

[1] The term "County" is used here and subsequently to include "County Borough."

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Rate, a County Rate

for the proper administration of all public relief within the county; the responsibility which is now divided amongst many Boards of Guardians. It will still work under the general control and supervision of the Local Government Board; but in matters of detail it will have more freedom than is now left to the Guardians.

Thus the first step in the reforms proposed by the Commission is the enlargement of the area of administration. Concurrently with this goes the enlargement of the area of finance. That is to say, the poor rate would in future be a county rate instead of a union rate. This would have the effect of equalising the burden of pauperism throughout the county. At present that burden is very unequally distributed; in some unions the rate levied for Poor Law purposes is as low as 2*d.* in the £, whilst in others it is as high as 2*s.* 5*d.* And the inequality is intensified by the fact that it is often the poorest districts which have to pay the highest rates. It is true that to a large extent Poor Law expenditure is determined by the wisdom or extravagance of local administration, and the Commission have not lost sight of the theory that local responsibility tends to economy. But they have found that in practice the results have not been what might have been expected. It is true that in country unions, where the farmers

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who pay the rates preponderate on the Board, there is an economy which amounts to parsimony in many directions; but in the towns some of the most reckless extravagance and lavish expenditure have been in the poorest districts. For whatever reason, the ratepayer has certainly failed to exercise his influence on the side of economy. Hence it is considered that to make the charge uniform over the county will not only add to the uniformity and efficiency of administration, but will also be a check to local extravagance.

The next important point is the constitution of the new authority. By some of the Commission it was thought that the enlargement of the area would suffice to avert most of the evils of popular elections, and that the new authority should be specially elected. This proposal was rejected, chiefly on the ground that it would be inadvisable to have two independent and co-ordinate authorities within the same area; so it is recommended

IX. 22 by the majority that the Public Assistance Authority should be a Statutory Committee of the County Council, appointed by the County Council partly from its own members, partly from outside, and after appointment acting independently. In order to secure continuity of administration it is further recommended that the members

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of the Public Assistance Authority should retire one-third annually, and be eligible for re-appointment.

Although the responsibility for the administration of public assistance throughout the county is to rest with this county authority, it is not proposed that it shall itself undertake the detailed work of dealing with individual cases. One of its most important functions will be the appointment of local committees, to be known as Public Assistance Committees, which will to a large extent take the place of the present Boards of Guardians. Within the limits of the general policy laid down by the county authority and the Local Government Board it will be left to these committees to receive all applications for assistance, to render such assistance as they consider adequate to the needs of the applicant, and to secure the proper supervision of all persons in receipt of assistance. They will also "inspect, supervise, and administer" such of the Public Assistance Authority's institutions as lie within their area, or any others which may be assigned to them. Their further duties are set out in detail in the Report, but the following may be noted here. (1.) It is made especially incumbent upon the Public Assistance Committee to co-operate with other public and voluntary IX. 25

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agencies. The present jealous and exclusive attitude of Boards of Guardians has been such a hindrance to progressive work in the past that the Commission have felt it necessary that this co-operation should be an explicit instruction for the future.

(2.) It is further to be an explicit instruction to the Committees to "decide upon the best method of assisting applicants *with a view to removing the cause of distress*." The intention of this is clear. The administration in future is to make a systematic and strenuous effort to get at the root of the evil of pauperism; to find out what in each particular case has brought about distress, and then—in co-operation with other agencies—to endeavour to find the right remedy. This will mean the abandonment of the old inadequate system of doles; where allowances are made they will be sufficient to remove distress altogether, and they will never be used merely to enable the recipient to drag on a miserable life under degrading conditions (see Ch. 7).

Success in carrying out a better administration will depend almost entirely upon getting the right men and women to serve upon the committees. The Commission believe that there is a better chance of this if the members are appointed than if

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it is left to the chances of election; but in order to secure local interest and co-operation they provide that the members so appointed shall include a certain proportion of persons nominated by the urban and rural district councils, and where a "Voluntary Aid Committee" has been established in a district a certain proportion nominated by that committee. "The persons so nominated shall be experienced in the local administration of IX. 26
public assistance or other cognate work and shall include a proportion of women, in our judgment not ordinarily less than one-third. One-third of the members shall retire each year, but shall be eligible for re-election." It will be seen that every facility is afforded here for enlisting anew the services of those Guardians who have done good work in the past, and whose experience will be invaluable in the future.

For finance the Committees will draw upon the Public Assistance Authority, to which they will submit half-yearly estimates of their expenditure. Officers to assist them in carrying out their work will also be assigned to them by the Public Assistance Authority, and will be under their supervision and control. It is suggested that in the first instance the areas within which the Committees should work should be the present union

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intensification of Relief Areas -

areas, or (in county boroughs) the relief areas; but that these should be sub-divided, and administered by sections of the Committee when their size make it desirable.

We have spoken of a "Voluntary Aid Committee," and this, which is an integral part of the organisation proposed by the Commission, must now be explained.

There is an immense amount of charitable work being done all over the country which is perhaps more potent, both for good and for evil, than that which is done officially under the Poor Law. The work which is paid for out of public funds, compulsorily raised for a certain purpose, is and must necessarily be carefully defined and guarded by legal limitations. Thus what it gains in thoroughness and certainty it loses in elasticity and comprehensiveness. The voluntary worker is limited only by his own capacity and power of sympathy. He can risk his money on "forlorn hopes," he can try experiments, best of all he can intervene with timely help before his *protégés* have fallen to the point where a claim can be made upon the public funds. A corollary to this greater freedom is the greater power for evil involved in the absence of all outside control. There can be no doubt, no one indeed can have failed to notice,

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that a large amount of idleness and drink and incapacity is directly attributable to the ill-advised charities of inexperienced almsgivers. Chapter 7 of the Report contains a survey of the conditions under which the administration of charity, both endowed and private, takes place at the present time; it describes the want of co-ordination and overlapping, and consequent demoralisation of the recipients; and suggests the conditious under which these defects might be remedied.

It is clear that to subject the charities to the same sort of control and limitation as must necessarily govern the Public Assistance Authorities would tend to deprive them of just those characteristics which make them most valuable. But it is thought that a great step forward might be made by putting them in a position of greater responsibility, in which they will be recognised by the State as having undertaken a definite public service. It is with this intention that the Commission have recommended that in every county there shall be formed a Council of Voluntary Aid, representative of the important voluntary agencies of the county; and correlative to each Public Assistance Committee a Voluntary Aid Committee representing local voluntary agencies. These

IX. 109

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functions of V.A. Cttes (1) Registration (2) a centre

committees would include representatives, not only of charities in the narrower sense, but also of Friendly Societies and similar institutions; and as an essential step towards co-operation there would be mutual representation between the Public Assistance and Voluntary Aid Committees.

These Voluntary Aid Committees would be "a recognised link between public assistance and charity." One of their most useful functions would be to serve as a centre for the registration of all the relief work done in the district, including that of the Public Assistance Authority, and a place where charitable workers could meet to discuss their work and devise plans for assisting the families in whom they were interested. There would be a continuous give-and-take between public assistance and voluntary aid, each undertaking the work for which it was best suited, and assisting the other where it was possible. Thus it is hoped that under the new conditions the Public Assistance Authority would be able to utilise the services of voluntary workers in certain departments of their work where they would be of the greatest service, as in the constant visiting and supervision of the aged, or of widows with children. The occasional visits of officials, however important and necessary, can do little to help and strengthen

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such cases compared with what can be done by an experienced volunteer devoting herself to a small number of families. In short, such a system of co-operation would realise the best features of the "Elberfeld system," and be in complete harmony with the new development of Civic Guilds and Friendly Visitors.

The work of the Voluntary Aid Council to be established in each county would be of a somewhat different nature to that of the committees in its area. "The executive work would be assigned to IX. 109 the Voluntary Aid Committees. The Voluntary Aid Council would supervise their operations generally, and would, as far as possible, maintain the same principles of help and relief throughout county or county borough. It would collect funds for distribution to Voluntary Aid Committees, and it would allocate funds to poor districts. The county is already the accepted area for many benevolent and philanthropic purposes. The local infirmary or hospital is frequently a county institution. There are county nursing associations, and the county is the recognised centre in connection with various military funds. We propose that the Voluntary Aid Council, acting for the county, should promote any voluntary institutions or societies for which the county as a whole has

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need. Its duties would thus be important and distinctive."

It is proposed that these Councils should be mainly representative of existing agencies, such as endowed and other charities, the Public Assistance Authority, Friendly Societies, and trade associations, clergy and ministers, &c. In order to give the voluntary charities a standing, a scheme is suggested whereby they should register themselves on terms similar to those under which the Friendly Societies are registered. Finally, it is proposed that a statutory obligation should be imposed upon the Lords Lieutenants, the Chairmen of County Councils, the Lord Mayors and Mayors of County Boroughs, to draw up and submit to the Charities Commission schemes for the constitution of Voluntary Aid Councils within their areas.

For the sake of brevity the term County has been used throughout this Chapter to include both the County and the County Borough.

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CHAPTER VII

THE USE AND ABUSE OF "OUTDOOR RELIEF"

Of all the many controversies which have been fought upon Poor Law questions the most persistent and irreconcilable has been that upon the respective merits of "indoor" and "outdoor" relief. The two sides of the controversy are supposed to be supported by two different schools of administrators, following two different and incompatible policies, though, as a matter of fact, the number of unions in which relief is administered consistently upon either the one policy or the other is very few.

The opposition of most of the best and wisest administrators to granting outdoor relief has its justification in the abuses to which such relief is liable. Students of Poor Law history know what reason England has to dread any recurrence of such a flagrant abuse of outdoor relief as was

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revealed by the Poor Law Report of 1834; and it is probably because other countries have no such history behind them that they generally accept outdoor relief as the normal method of assistances. But that the abuse of outdoor relief is not a mere matter of history will be shown directly from the Report of the present Commission. It is also necessary to realise that indoor relief has developed abuses of late years which were never anticipated by its early advocates.

The method of relieving distress by means of maintenance in an institution has, of course, been practised for centuries. The *policy* of making maintenance in an institution the normal system, with exceptions in favour of certain classes, found its most weighty advocates in the Commissioners of 1834, more especially with reference to the "able-bodied."

IV. 5, 182 "In order to justify the policy of the Royal Commissioners of 1834 in connection with this class, it is necessary to consider what they had in mind in substituting for partial outdoor relief the offer of total maintenance within a well-managed workhouse, where employment should be given under conditions less favourable than those of the independent labourers. They were certainly not influenced by any desire to "penalise poverty"

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or to prevent people from applying for necessary relief. On the contrary, they claimed that their policy was based upon that adopted by the working classes themselves as the only safe principle for the government of their Friendly Societies.

"On this point, as on many others, the independent labourers may be our best teachers. We have seen that in the administration of the funds of their friendly societies, they have long acted on the principle of rendering the condition of a person receiving their relief less eligible than that of an independent labourer. We have now to add, that they also adopt and enforce most unrelentingly the principle that under no circumstances. and with no exceptions, shall any member of their societies receive relief while earning anything for himself."

The significance of the distinction for our present purpose lies in the fact that when the Guardians grant relief in an institution, whether workhouse, infirmary, or school, they make themselves entirely responsible for the lives of the recipients. The advantages of this complete control and supervision are great. By means of it they can ensure that the children are properly fed, clothed, and educated; that the patients in the infirmary are treated appropriately and made to carry out the doctor's instructions; and that the inmates lead a sober, clean, and orderly life. Such control is far more

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difficult when the people receive assistance in their own homes, and as a matter of fact it is seldom, if ever, attempted. The Guardians, with few exceptions, consider their responsibility fulfilled by the grant of a small allowance ; and do not regard it as incumbent upon them to ensure either that it is adequate, or that it is properly expended, or that the recipients are leading satisfactory lives.

This irresponsible attitude of the Guardians towards outdoor relief is the more serious in that the number of persons receiving it is twice as great as the number maintained in institutions. In country districts, indeed, there are nearly four-and-a-half outdoor paupers to every one indoor pauper; and though it is not generally in the country districts that the worst forms of abuse are to be found, there is room even there for very great reforms.

The first defect we may note in the frequent inadequacy of the relief given at the home. This has already been dwelt upon in speaking of the aged and the children. It is largely due to the want of supervision and control, in the sense that the Guardians have seldom any real knowledge of the circumstances of the persons to whom they grant allowances. They know every detail as to the food, and clothing, and shelter of

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the inmates of their institutions, and would feel themselves guilty of cruelty and neglect if these were insufficient; but in the case of the outdoor paupers their ignorance enables them to avoid all sense of responsibility. It is true that in the forms filled in by the relieving officer he is supposed to state what the resources of the applicant are, but frequently the entry under this heading is "unknown," and it is quite the exception that it is even supposed to be exhaustive. If the relieving officer happens to know that some one is helping he may enter it, but generally speaking he does not go out of his way to make enquiries. The following extracts from notes made by the Commissioners illustrate this point:

(1) "The practice of the Boards (six unions) with respect to out-relief varies considerably. Most of them seem to work from a fixed standard, which varies from 2*s.* to 2*s.* 6*d.* per head for adults, and about 1*s.* 6*d.* for children. Cases are seldom discussed with reference to their needs: 'She will be content with that,' or 'That is what the other old women are getting,' or 'She is over eighty, give her another sixpence,' were the sort of considerations brought forward. Here and there the relieving officer had ascertained the income, but that was exceptional. Generally speaking, the relief given seemed on the face of it quite inadequate; but the assumption that there were undisclosed resources was probably justified in many cases." IV. 6, 255

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(2) "Relief was apparently granted on the assumption that it was supplemented from other unascertained sources. Unless this assumption was correct, the scale of relief seemed inadequate."

(5) "A widow, living alone, received 3*s.* 6*d.* a week, out of which 1*s.* was given to a girl for attending to her room, as she was helpless. She said that coals and rent cost her 1*s.* 4*d.*, leaving her 1*s.* 2*d.* a week on which to live. She was trying to eat a dinner which she said was not cooked, and she could not finish it."

(7) "Enquiries as to resources are, I should say, practically not made at all. The first two cases I saw were an old groom and an old gardener, who had worked for good families, and were very comfortably housed. I asked whether their employers allowed them anything, and the relieving officer replied that he had never asked, as he made a point of not asking about private charity. Sons he may happen to see, but trusts to his general knowledge to judge whether they do or should contribute. I do not think there was a single case amongst those I visited, or amongst those we heard called over at the Board meeting, in which he really knew what the children were doing for their parents; with one exception, the relief given was on the face of it glaringly inadequate, but the homes were comfortable, and there were no signs of extreme poverty."

The Guardians are wont to justify the smallness of their allowance on two grounds: first, that the recipients probably have "undisclosed resources" of which they know nothing, and secondly, that

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to give adequate relief to so many people would be too costly. They fail to realise that in many cases they are giving to people who have no real need of it; and that proper knowledge would enable them to give a sufficiency to those in real need without increasing the burden on the rate-payers. Said one witness:

"I consider there are numberless cases in the West Derby Union who ought to be receiving considerably more than they are receiving; but it is very difficult to get Guardians to understand that it is better to have 500 on outdoor relief at 7*s.* 6*d.* than 1,500 at 2*s.* 6*d.* IV. 6, 256

But this irresponsibility of the Guardians extends to matters which are even more serious from the point of view of the community than the superfluity or insufficiency of the relief given. The Commissioners report that they have found instances in which out-relief is being supplied to subsidise dirt, disease, and immorality, and where the strictest enforcement of an indoor policy would have been more humane as well as more wise. "Opinions may differ as to the degree of strictness desirable in Poor Law administration; but no possible justification can be advanced for the granting of out-relief in such a way as to perpetuate pauperism and the conditions which give rise to pauperism." IV. 6, 261

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The instances cited in the Report to illustrate this point have been selected as coming from different parts of the country, and some of them are typical of many others in the same district. One feature which is especially to be deprecated is the way in which phthisis is being propagated in many homes, by relieving the patient in the midst of his family under conditions of overcrowding and insanitation. Another even more disastrous, is the permitting children to grow up amongst immoral and drunken relations. The following cases illustrate these points :

IV. 6, 262 (1) "Mrs. W., a widow with five children, receives 10*s.* per week. She is a notorious drunkard, and has lately been turned out of a house in a street where drunkards abound, because her drunken habits disturbed the whole street. When we called she refused to open the door ; the relieving officer concluded she was drunk."

(2) "T., married, with three children, is partly paralysed, and seems mentally deficient. His wife is crippled by rheumatism. The Guardians allow 6*s.* per week for man and wife, and 6*s.* for the children. The tenement consists of two rooms . . . and there are living in the house in addition to the foregoing, Mrs. T.'s mother, one male lodger, about 40, and Mrs. T.'s sister with an illegitimate child. In these two rooms it will be observed there are five adults, three children and one baby. I was told by the relieving officer that the Guardians do not attach importance either to cleanliness,

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sanitation, decency, or the ordinary standards of morality. As a result of my own observation, I am prepared to endorse the statement."

(3) "Case of phthisis. Man been ill three years (56 years of age), been getting out-relief for three years. Has five children, youngest 8 months, another expected. Wife, aged 41, getting 12*s.* 6*d.* from parish. The children are made up as follows :—A girl, 20, out of work, living at home; a son, 17, working as miner, earning 16*s.* a week; and three young children. The whole seven sleep in one filthy, dirty room with a gable roof at the sides, about 3 feet high, running up to 8 feet in the middle. The room was about 14 feet by 8 feet."

(4) "Case of phthisis. Man about 40, and wife same age; two children dependent; 5*s.* out-relief. Son, aged 19, earns 18*s.* a week. Man, wife, son and two children all in one room; filthy is a mild word to use to describe the condition of things here. . . . The boy is delicate already, and will, without doubt, follow his father. Never works a full week."

It is significant that many of the worst cases found by the Commissioners were in places where the Sanitary Authorities had grossly neglected their duties, and were very largely responsible for creating the pauperism which the Guardians were making futile attempts to relieve. It is realising this which makes it obvious how futile it would be to entrust any part of the work of relieving pauperism to the Sanitary Authorities.

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The following extracts from the Reports of Commissions on their visits illustrate this point:

"1. I visited some thirty to forty out-relief cases. For the most part they are living in homes which reflect most serious discredit on the sanitary authority and on the great companies which have attracted to the district a large population. The overcrowding is of such a kind that ordinary decency is impossible; both sanitary accommodation and water supply are most inadequate."

"2. The first row of houses were built on the side of a hill, as if the houses had been let into the earth. The houses consist of three floors, with one room on each floor, no back at all. Almost every house I went into was of a similar character: no convenience for washing, no sink, only a tap at the door, and flag-stones for floor. I ought to explain that there are two entrances, one for the ground floor, which would be called the back, and one for the floor above it, which would be called the front, though both entrances faced a road and opened right on to it in each case, and as the road was unpaved it was simply a quagmire of filth and dirt. I believe the Medical Officer of Health has closed some of the bottom rooms; but after people have been ejected he was told they return again, as they have nowhere to go. These houses are allowed one w.c. for each two houses. This was convenient for the downstairs people, but those who lived above had three or four minutes' walk round, or were obliged to go down a ladder and through the downstairs room. We counted in several instances that at least twenty persons would have simply one of these places at their disposal, the results being seen along the

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pavements and in the corners, especially at the front or top entrance streets. To make matters worse, the Corporation, having nowhere else to dispose of the town street and house refuse, is simply piling it up on an open space surrounded by houses. A proposal has been made for a dust and refuse destructor, but so far the authorities appear to think it quite right to poison the inhabitants. . . . I cannot describe all I saw, but as a sample I saw one row of twenty of these places in which were sixteen cases of out-relief."[1]

The impressions gained by the Commissioners during their own visits were confirmed by a subsequent investigation undertaken by the General Inspectors of the Local Government Board. They found that whilst it could be fairly said to be exceptional that the recipients of out-relief were living under such conditions as we have described, nevertheless they were sufficiently prevalent to constitute a very serious evil. The following extracts, the one from the north of England, the other from Wales, reveal an abuse which ought not to be tolerated :

"1. This class (Class C.) contains those concerning whom the present enquiry is made. Too frequently they represent the most demoralised and diseased of the population. They include some epileptics, imbeciles and cripples of the lowest class. Their homes are nearly IV. 6, 263

[1] This is not quoted in the Report.

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always to be found in the poorest quarters where population is densest. Cleanliness and ventilation are not considered of any account. The furniture is always of the most dilapidated kind. The beds generally consist of dirty palliasses or mattresses with very scanty covering. The atmosphere is offensive, even fetid, and the clothing of the individuals, old and young, is ragged and filthy. Bankrupt in pocket and character, this class look to the rates to support them, and are never backward in making application. The children are neglected, furnish the complaints of the National Society of Prevention of Cruelty to Children inspectors, and fill the homes of the Guardians. The men are drunkards, gamblers, workshy corner boys, and often criminals. The women are too often immoral, as well as unclean and neglectful. *Souteneurs* may be included in this class. . . . It is impossible with the present powers to deal satisfactorily with the various subsections of it which come before the Guardians and the Sanitary Authorities. The Guardians feel forced to give relief to bad cases because of the children, or for fear of some allegation of want of consideration to destitute ruffians or drunkards."

(2) "There is no doubt whatever that a large number of the outdoor paupers are living in an environment of filth and immorality, and in many cases I fear they are participants in, and abettors of, these foul, insanitary, and degrading conditions. . . . I found far too much intemperance and sometimes even drunkenness in cases to which relief was being granted. . . . Closely allied to it, and as a rule the fruits of it, were filth, both of person and surroundings, and sadder even was the neglect and resultant cruelty to children, who were ill-fed and ill-clad

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. . . During the periodical visits of the relieving officer. I consider that each room in a dwelling should be thoroughly inspected, for frequently I found that though the living-room might be fairly clean, the rest of the house was a mass of filth, the bedding dirty, a heap of ill-smelling rags for bed clothes, and the atmosphere vile and vicious. In some instances even the living-room was a disgrace to humanity."

It would be incomprehensible that respectable hard-working people should have allowed themselves to be taxed in order to maintain such people under such conditions if we had not seen what a general ignorance and apathy prevail amongst the electors, and what irresponsibility amongst the Guardians. The Commissioners endorse the following explanation offered by one of the Inspectors:

"Potent factors towards producing such a state of things as that suggested by the Commissioners are the views taken by a not inconsiderable proportion of Guardians: first, that the disposal of the relief granted by them is a matter for which not they but the recipients are responsible; and secondly, that, however small the relief given to a person with little or no other apparent means of subsistence, it is no one's business to enquire further if the applicant is satisfied. The first of these views. . . . is almost an incitement to a careless parent to waste on drink money which should be devoted to the nourishment and clothing of the children, while the second may mean a bargain IV. 6, 267

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between a parsimonious Board of Guardians and liberty or licence-loving paupers, for the lowest terms on which they will keep out of the workhouse."

The remedy with which the Commission propose to meet this evil is, that in future no out-door relief shall be given, except to persons leading respectable lives in decent houses. As an immediate step in
IV. 6, 26 this direction, and having regard to the fact that instances such as those described are generally to be found in certain quite limited and well-defined areas, often single streets, it is recommended that the relief authorities should proscribe such areas for the purpose of out-door relief.

There will, no doubt, be found persons to protest against this as inhuman, to say that it is to penalise poverty, since people are driven by poverty to live in such places. But this view really indicates ignorance of social conditions amongst the poor. Except in a very few places where there is a great scarcity of houses, it is not the pressure of poverty which drives people to live in these degraded areas; it will nearly always be found that the rents are higher, often considerably higher, than in respectable streets. The real attraction is the absence of restraint and the liberty to overcrowd, and to lead irregular lives, which is to be found under the slum landlord. But even if

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this were not so, it would always be open to the Relief Authority to remove a family from such surroundings, and if necessary assist it on a more liberal scale. In the cases of families with children such a policy is indeed imperative, if they are to be saved from carrying on the tradition of pauperism to another generation.

To insist upon this restriction of out-relief to persons leading orderly lives in decent homes is only to make general a practice that has already been tested by some Boards. One Inspector says of his district:

"I gathered from nearly all the relieving officers that there were certain streets in their district of such a reputation that an application for outdoor relief from a resident therein could not meet with success." IV. 6, 269

It was a question very seriously weighed by the Commission whether the simplest and most effective reform would not be to abolish all outdoor relief, and to insist that anyone desiring to be maintained at the cost of the community must consent to live in an institution and under supervision. And if they had felt it to be impossible to secure proper control and supervision otherwise, it is likely that such would have been their recommendation.

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IV. 6, 292 "We have dwelt at length upon the question of out-relief, believing it to be of the utmost importance that the evils connected with the system as now conducted should be fully exposed. If these evils were inherent in any system of out-door relief, and could not be got rid of unless the system itself were abolished, we should feel ourselves bound to recommend the cessation of all outdoor relief after a certain date. But we think that this course, though it might be preferable to continuing the present system, would be attended with considerable hardship, that it would give rise to a feeling of harshness and injustice on the part of those who could not be expected to understand the reasons for the change, and, moreover, that it would deprive the administrators of a method of assistance which may be turned to good account in skilful hands."

One good result which the Commission think would follow from a system of "conditional out-relief" would be the gradual raising of the standard of cleanliness and decent living amongst the

IV. 6, 270 poor. "A policy such as this (*i.e.* of proscribing bad areas) gradually but steadily pursued until it was generally recognised, would, we are convinced, do much to diminish the evils of dirt, overcrowding, and immorality, not only amongst the actual

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recipients of relief, but also amongst their neighbours. At present such evils are condoned by the action of the Guardians, and the mere insistence on a higher standard would be an influence for good, both upon the people themselves, upon the owners of slum properties, and upon the Sanitary Authorities." While the slum landlord or his agent can get his rents paid by the simple expedient of going upon the Board of Guardians and granting out-relief to his tenants, there is little inducement to him to set his house in order.

But another point which had to be taken into consideration by the Commissioners in determining their attitude towards out-relief was the question how far institution relief continued to be more desirable, even from the point of view of the community. We have seen that the workhouses have ceased to a large extent to be deterrent; that to the lowest class they are actually attractive; and that the expenditure on them is increasing to an alarming extent. Not many years ago it was easy to refute the argument that out-relief was cheaper than indoor-relief, by pointing out that for every three people who would accept out-door, only one would accept indoor, and that therefore it paid better to offer only indoor. But to-day

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it is doubtful whether even in the proportion of three to one it would not be cheaper to have out-door relief. It was a curious experience in visiting a large number of workhouses to find, as one went from one place to another, that what one had to look for was the most spacious and prosperous looking institution in the place, set in the best-kept grounds, surrounded with expensive walls and handsome gates. Though this is not yet the universal type, it is rapidly becoming so; and constitutes a new danger in itself.

For as we have seen the modern workhouse, even when attractive, is not effective. It represents an attempt to combine functions which are incompatible, and conduces only to the degeneration of its inmates. "Indoor-relief" has bred a class of lazy parasites, willing to submit to any conditions so long as they are well fed and relieved from all responsibilities. They are not even precluded from injuring the outside community, inasmuch as the law permits them to go in and out at their pleasure, using the workhouse as a convenient resort and a protection to their noxious lives from the discipline of hunger and cold.

Even from the point of view of the old people, the workhouse proves to have failed in very many places, and shows the paradoxical

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result of rapidly increasing cost with diminished efficiency. Under the circumstances, and whilst the workhouse is continued on its present lines, it is impossible to recommend that it should play an increased part in the system of Public Assistance.

But supposing the workhouse to be broken up as the Commission desire, and to be replaced by a series of specialised institutions adapted to the requirements of different classes, would it not then have been possible to limit Public Assistance to maintenance within one or another of these institutions?

There is no doubt that such a system would be quite possible, and, if good administration could be secured, might achieve remarkable results. Whether the country could ever have been brought to understand and accept it is another matter, and it is noteworthy that none of the witnesses before the Commission, though all schools were fully represented, urged the adoption of so stringent a policy. In any case the Commission have preferred that no method of relief should be excluded which might be capable, under skilful administration, of yielding good results. Our system of relief has suffered in the past from its narrowness and rigidity; the

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narrowness of the workhouse on the one hand, and of the allowance to scale on the other. If any new attempt to root out pauperism is to be effective there must be a far greater elasticity and adaptability in its methods. There must be a determination to seek out the causes of distress in each case, and a generous application of the remedy—whether that remedy be discipline, or food, or medicine, or money.

Another difficulty which has always been connected with out-relief lies in the fact that it is frequently given to subsidise low wages. It is clear that in so far as this enables an employer to pay his workers a wage which is less than sufficient to maintain them, it is a direct encouragement to sweating. But if the employer can say, "it matters nothing to me whether you give these people relief or not; if they give up the work there are hundreds of others ready to take it, on whatever terms I like to offer," then the issue becomes less clear. If, as would seem to be the case, the low wages are inevitable, then surely it is essential that someone shall step in and make up the deficiency? Or is this simply condoning an evil, and must we seek some other way out?

It is almost entirely with regard to women's

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work that the question arises to-day, but in this connection it arises constantly. There is hardly a Board of Guardians throughout the country which is not giving doles of out-relief to supplement the earnings of women. Generally these women are widows with children, or old people over 60. In the hope of getting more light upon the question the Commission appointed investigators to enquire into the effect of out-relief upon wages and the conditions of employment. Their reports are full of interesting material, but it is always difficult in "social investigations" to isolate causes so as to show a clear relation of cause and effect. Still certain points stand out clearly. One is that women's work, in the trades which are subsidised by out-relief, is in the condition described above—that it matters nothing to the employer whether they receive relief or not. Those who do receive IV. 6, 276 it form an exceedingly small proportion of the workers in any trade, while there is always a surplus of women waiting to be taken on. "In London and many of the larger towns the supply of *unskilled* women's labour is still far beyond the demand for it." The low-class employer can deal with his hands as he likes; he can lower their wages, fine them, dismiss them; whatever he

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does he can be sure of having as many as he wants as soon as he needs them :

"As a rule the large employer has not the least idea what becomes of his discharged workers. All he knows is that when he wants to take them on again they will be on the steps in larger numbers than are required."

The only remedy for this state of things is to diminish the number of women willing to do unskilled work on such terms. This out-relief, as at present administered, certainly does not do. Its effect upon the situation may be small, but it is all in the wrong direction. Many women would rather earn low wages and receive out-relief in addition than earn enough to keep themselves at better work. The feeling of getting "something for nothing" is irresistible :

IV. 6, 280 "We are convinced, however, that some paupers conserve their energies so as to ensure the continuance of relief. This was brought home to us by the statement of a partner in Firm No. 15. His forewoman on offering an outworker more work met with a refusal, as the worker feared she might lose her out-relief if she earned more. Such cases are significant, and there are probably more than we have found."

One table of wages in the Investigators' Report is interesting. It shows that the average earnings of forty-three out-workers in receipt of relief

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averaged 4*s.* 10*d.* per week, while the average earnings of 131 workers in the same trades *not* in receipt of relief were 7*s.* 3½*d.* "But the paupers are not paid lower rates than the independent workers; they are merely enabled by the receipt of the relief to work less hard." Many of them, no doubt, are compelled to work less hard, either by bodily infirmity, or by the pressure of home duties; and if the *rate* at which they were paid were such as to afford a proper maintenance to whole time workers, the position would be less objectionable. But 7*s.* 3½*d.* is not sufficient for a proper maintenance in London, and nothing should be done which makes it more possible for women to work at such rates. For a public authority to supplement the earnings from these industries is really like an official condonation of the "sweating" system. IV. 6, 277

The right method of dealing with these cases is only to be found by individualising the case; by ascertaining the needs and possibilities of each family and taking steps to put it on a proper footing. In some cases it might be wise and right, under proper supervision, to give the mother full maintenance for herself and children so long as she was fully occupied in caring for them. In others it might be wiser to arrange for the

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children's maintenance in day or boarding schools, and thus to set the mother free to earn a good wage. Underpaid industries might be proscribed just as insanitary areas were proscribed, and, if necessary, steps should be taken to train the mother to skilled work. Account would have to be taken of the woman's aptitudes; and if she proved hopelessly inefficient as a mother the policy of schools would be best for her and the children alike.

Deserted wives are in much the same position as widows, but there is an added difficulty for the administrator in the fact that there is frequently collusion between the wives and the deserting husbands. The desertion, in short, may be a mere matter of arrangement between man and wife, devised to obtain a maintenance for the family at the expense of the ratepayers. Hence the
IV. 6, 286 recommendation of the Local Government Board "That outdoor relief should not, except in special cases, be granted to any woman deserted by her husband during the first twelve months after desertion." At present this recommendation is very generally ignored; and collusion is practically connived at by the Guardians.

Another class which has its wages subsidised by outdoor relief is that of the old women:

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"One of the most painful features of the present system of inadequate relief is the vast army of aged women, whom it keeps clinging to the outskirts of industry at an age when they are quite unfit for work of any kind. Mr. Jones and Miss Williams report: IV. 6, 287

'At Leicester in March, 1906, there were 2,008 women recipients in receipt of out-relief, the total being composed of 823 under sixty and 1,185 over sixty. . . . Special notice should be taken of the cases of the old women in receipt of out-relief who work at glove stitching. Their earnings are exceedingly low, working out at 1*s.* 4*d.* a week on the average; but it has to be pointed out that the average age of the women is 67·7 years.'

"The amount of relief given is 3*s.* 6*d.*, except in the case of one veteran aged 88, who earns 1*s.* 6*d.*, and receives 4*s.* 6*d.* relief. We are not told how long they work for their pittance; and if the hours were very few it might be argued that the stitching was merely a pleasant occupation. But this is not likely to be the case. Where infirmity is great, long hours must be worked to earn even a few pence. Amongst the illustrative cases from London is that of a widow aged 79, who works from 5 a.m. till 10 p.m. to earn 2*s.* 11*d.* a week at steel-covering; she has 4*s.* from the parish and a loaf from the clergyman, and pays 2*s.* rent. From

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Glasgow we hear of women over sixty working ten hours a day at shirt-finishing, and earning 1*s.* 10*d.* a week: younger women can earn more, but the infirmity of the aged turns their work into slavery. Some women over sixty may be quite capable of earning a full living; others are incapacitated even earlier. Here again, what is needed is to replace a mechanical system of out-relief which is superfluous for some, and cruelly inadequate for others, by a discriminating treatment of each case."

If all these women in receipt of relief—the widows, the deserted wives, and the old—were removed from the ranks of those who compete in the "sweated" industries, some mitigation at least of the evil would be ensured. "Old age pensions" will ease the situation to some extent: the rest must be done by the Public Assistance Committee and the Voluntary Aid Committee, working in close co-operation, and dealing much more carefully and adequately with each case.

To ensure this more effective kind of work there is required, in the first place, as we have seen, a different conception of their duties and responsibilities on the part of the administrators. How we hope that this may be obtained has been explained in Chap. 6. A system of Public

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Assistance must take the place of a system of Poor Law Relief. But in addition to the great change in the constitution of the authority, the Commission recommend a number of changes in what may be called the machinery of the work, which they consider to be essential to proper administration.

One point upon which they lay great stress is the necessity of assigning smaller areas to the officers engaged in supervising and distributing the relief. The Local Government Board have IV. 3, 129 indicated between 250 and 300 as the maximum number with which one relieving officer can deal, and this seems a heavy burden of responsibility if we remember that the officer has not only to guard against fraud, but also to keep watch over the welfare of families under his care. But this limit is often far exceeded. One instance quoted is that of Barnstaple in 1902:

"For 1,479 outdoor paupers it has only three relieving IV. 3, 129 officers, much of whose time is taken up with other duties, two of them being also inspectors of nuisances, while the third is so much occupied with his functions as registrar that he has frankly stated his inability properly to investigate the circumstances of the paupers to whom he administers relief; and of whom he has 700 on his books."

In this case pressure was brought to bear upon

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the Guardians to appoint another officer, with the result that

> "They saved the salary of the officer several times over, and they were now in a position to judge whether their people wanted relief or did not want relief, which was the great thing."

The largest proportion of cases to relieving officers which was reported was at Leicester, where in 1906 it was over 1,000; and at the time when the Commissioners visited that town it was still over 800. It is impossible that under such conditions the people should be properly looked after.

IV. 3. 131 "We have ourselves noticed in going round with relieving officers, sometimes that the people did not recognise the officers, sometimes that the officers did not know the addresses of the people they were visiting." The Commission therefore recommend that in addition to utilising the services of volunteer workers for supervising the cases in receipt of assistance, care should be taken that no officer should be burdened with too large a number of cases, and that the proportion of cases to officers should be carefully and periodically revised.

IV. 3, 132 "Even more important than to have a sufficient number of relieving officers is to have the right type of man appointed." It seems to be a generally accepted axiom amongst Poor Law critics that

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the relieving officer is a harsh, unsympathetic man who habitually bullies the people who apply to him for assistance. Here and there it may really happen that a man of this type is appointed; or sometimes a man naturally kind-hearted may be made irritable by overwork and the harassing of unreasonable claims upon his time. But generally speaking a sufficient answer to these accusations is to accompany an officer on his rounds amongst the people and watch—not his demeanour to them, which might be assumed for the occasion—but theirs to him. To see him welcomed, as he so often is, as an old and valued friend, is proof of the constant kindness with which he has fulfilled his duties towards them.

Nevertheless, these officers differ greatly in capacity and in aptitude for the particular work. That this should be so seems almost inevitable under the present system of appointment:

"As a matter of fact, men are appointed relieving officers very often who know absolutely nothing about it. A relieving officer, as a rule, has to learn his work after he is appointed. It is very difficult to get at the motives which move individuals to appoint other individuals to certain Poor Law offices, but you will sometimes see a man appointed as a relieving officer simply because he has failed in everything else—I will not say very often, but not infrequently. He may have failed as a farmer; he

IV. 3, 133

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may have failed as a contractor; he may have failed as a road surveyor; he may have failed in any sort of line of business to which he has devoted himself, but if he be well known and have a quantity of friends they will find something for him."

At present the only prescribed qualifications are that the officer must be able to keep accounts, must be resident within his district, and unless with the consent of the Guardians and of the Local Government Board must not engage in any other trade, profession, or service. But very much more than this is needed, especially in the way of personal qualities:

IV. 3, 137 "For a relieving officer you want not only a man of good personal character, but you want a man of great sympathy and at the same time great firmness, you want a man who can be very gentle and at the same time very strong, you want a man who has the fullest sympathy with distress and at the same time who is determined to protect the ratepayers from fraud—a man who will find out imposition on the one hand and be very stern with it, and who, on the other hand, will be most sympathetic with real suffering."

"A relieving officer is practically on duty the whole twenty-four hours through. He has frequently to act in difficult cases on his own reponsibility; his duties take him into uncleanly houses and rough localities, he is on duty always and liable to be called up at any hour of the day or night."

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Under the present system a relieving officer generally approaches his work without any previous experience, and as he cannot be dismissed without the consent of the Local Government Board it is difficult to get rid of an officer who proves to be merely incompetent. The Commission recommend IV. 3, 139 that in future no officer shall be appointed for this work who has not previously served as an assistant, and also obtained a certificate from an approved examining body. They further recommend that to each Public Assistance Committee IX. 19 should be attached an officer who should to some extent combine the functions of clerk and relieving officer. His status would thus be higher than that of the relieving officer, he would be called the Superintendent of Public Assistance, and would be responsible for the officers working under him, who would in future be called Assistance Officers. Amongst those officers women should be appointed IV. 3, 142 to deal with certain classes.

Another improvement in machinery which the Commission recommend as essential to good work is the general introduction of the case-paper system. Already it is used in some unions with great success, but the practice should be made compulsory.

"Under the ordinary system, no continuous IV. 6, 299

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record is kept of an applicant and his family; at every fresh application he is entered afresh in the application and report book of the relieving officer, and where this book is not indexed it depends entirely upon the memory of the relieving officer how much of his past history is brought before the Guardians. When a new relieving officer succeeds to the work, the cases to him are all new, and unless he goes through the application and report books of his predecessor he has no means of tracing their previous history. Under the case-paper system every application is recorded on the same set of papers, which thus constitute a running history of the case; every set of case-papers is indexed, and can be turned up by anyone who is dealing with the case; into whatever institution the applicant may be sent his history goes with him. The system takes some trouble to start, but once initiated it is generally acknowledged to be much more effective and more simple than the old."

And when the machinery has been perfected, what is the improved use to which it is to be put? This should have become fairly clear from what has already been said, but it may be summed up by saying that the relief work of the future should be constructive in its nature.

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"It will be seen that what we are aiming at is, instead of a system of allowances, granted capriciously and irresponsibly to meet a constantly increasing demand, to substitute a system of careful and varied assistance, in which the IV. 6, 301
'allowance' will be only one of many forms of help, and which will be directly designed to raise the recipients, or where that is impossible the children of the recipients, to a position of independence."

It will make it easier to understand what is meant by this constructive help if we give illustrations, first of its absence and then of its presence :

(1) "A further reference to this case-paper will show IV. 6, 295
that even in this union, where the administration is unquestionably able, leakages occur. There were possibilities of development in connection with this family which were not taken. James, a lad of 14, was, when his parents first applied to the board, allowed to remain untrained, and now at the age of 24, is selling flowers in the streets instead of being employed at a good trade. The relieving officer (November 3rd, 1903) calls the attention of the Guardians to the daughter, Margaret, a girl of 19 (a cripple), and suggests that she be taught some occupation by which she can earn her living, but nothing is done, and we now find her sometimes in the workhouse and sometimes living with her mother entirely untrained and incapable of supporting herself. In all probability she will be a source

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of expense to the State as long as she lives, and her happiness in life will be curtailed by her limitations. Yet when she first became chargeable she was only a child of 11."

(2) "A baker's assistant out of work three years; about 50; does odd jobs. He and the woman who is now his wife, and three or four illegitimate children, were many years in the workhouse. They came out and married; there is another child, and they have intermittent relief in kind only. A miserable home."

(3) "A bricklayer's labourer, out of work constantly owing to quarrelsome temper. Wife was born and bred in the workhouse, and would be quite content to return there. Four little children, and a very bare home. Relief in kind only, no food unless they had it. Wife says she would gladly emigrate. Her sister and family are doing very well in Canada, but 'they did not emigrate, they just went.' Relieving officer thinks the man's character too unsatisfactory. This family seems condemned to hopeless pauperism, unless the Guardians adopt some different policy, and the relieving officer says he has several others like it."

The following instances of constructive work are taken from the chapter in the Report, which deals with Charity:

VII. 202 "A.B. was referred to the Charity Organisation Society by the Church visitor. He was ill with pneumonia. His club contributions were in arrears, so no sick pay was available. Five quite young children made it impossible for his wife to earn. Although for several years the man's wages had been small and irregular owing

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to bad health, it was evident that they had done their best to keep the home comfortable and take good care of the children. The Charity Organisation Society raised money to pay up the man's club arrears, gave an allowance of from 15*s.* to 20*s.* a week until he was entitled to sick pay, and sent him twice to a convalescent home by the sea. (He had a relapse after his first visit, because he tried to begin work too soon.) By the kindness of one of the Society's visitors two of the children were sent for three months into the country to enable Mrs. B. to give more time to nursing her husband, and to lessen the household expenses. After many months of careful treatment, in which the district nurses took a large share, the man recovered, but was not strong enough to resume his former work. An introduction was obtained for him to the manager of one of the tram lines. He obtained work exactly suited to him and was quite able to support his family.

"I will take one which is a case we are dealing with VII. 203
at the present moment, which I think is a typical one, in which I think charity can help. It is a case of a very badly crippled girl, who was placed by the Guardians in a special home for cripples. I went to see the girl there, and I brought the case under the notice of the Charity Organisation Society, and consequently one of our ladies found a suitable dressmaker, and the girl was taken out of the home. A brother, who was not legally liable, was written to, and he helped to pay the cost. The Guardians, instead of paying to the home, will be paying for about two years a small amount, and at the end of those two years that girl will be self-supporting. There was a piece of work which was very largely not relief

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work, it was the arrangement and the management of the thing, which I think will save the rates a very considerable sum. This was one of the cases.

"The fourth was a case which was sent to us in the middle of last month, a man who had gone into the workhouse; he was blind, and they asked me if I could look into it and give some advice with regard to it. I found he had been educated at the Blind Institution at Hampstead, had behaved very badly indeed; had stolen and behaved disgracefully in many ways. That was a case where I thought it best to leave the man for a time in the workhouse. I thought it better to put him to grinding corn for a time, and when he had learned what steady work was one might see what could be done with him, so as to put him back to his trade, which is Braille printing.

"16714. Has he learned the lesson?—That lesson is in process of being learned. These are all quite recent cases. I took the last five cases. As it happens, instead of all being old-age cases, they are various cases, they are not all of one type. The last case is a pension case; an old woman of eighty-one, who had been very largely helped by her adopted daughter. The relieving officer, when she applied to him, felt it would be rather a mistake to bring an old lady like that up to get her relief from the rates. He thought her adopted daughter had behaved so splendidly to her that it would be better to arrange the relief through charitable people. We found that someone who knew her was willing to help, and we have raised the balance. Those are five cases that have come to us recently from the Guardians, and show the sort of co-operation that goes on. It is very largely a co-opera-

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tion of the relieving officers; all the relieving officers come to our offices and know us, and if they think there is a case which seems a suitable case for us, they pass it on.

"The father of a large family was dying of phthisis when the case was first referred to the Trustees of the Bermondsey United Charities. He was being carefully nursed at home, and help was continued until he died. In addition to this, a good deal of help was given directly by the trustees. After his death, assistance still had to be given until the Charity Organisation Society had obtained the admission of three children to Church of England Homes, the Children's League of Kindness paying 2s. a week for each, and until the delicate eldest son had been convalesced and had started work and a girl had become old enough for employment. In addition to this it was found necessary to obtain hospital and convalescent treatment for the widow. The family was self-supporting for some months, but the oldest son developed rapid consumption, and help was again needed. The total cost so far has been about £30. VII. 145

"In this case there was co-operation between the Bermondsey United Charities, Children's League of Kindness, Society for Relief of Distress and Courage's Fund. The 'Sons of Thames' Lodge of Oddfellows (M.U.) have also been helping."

These are all cases in which constructive work is successfully carried out by means of co-operation between various agencies. Even the semi-penal treatment of the man sent to the workhouse is

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constructive, if it is to lead to giving the man another chance of independence. But work such as this can only be effectively done where there is real co-operation between all the agencies available, and how this co-operation may best be brought about we have already indicated in Chap. 6. The following note by one of our investigators further illustrates the point, and indicates also how large a part may be played by the wise friend :

IV. 6, 297 "The method of dealing with cases should be much more elastic. The workhouse test is not enough. (*See* Case No. 11.) There are many cases which cannot suitably be met either by the grant of a workhouse order or by out-relief. Some require curative treatment, some merely sound advice. No case which has ever touched Poor Law should be left to drift unaided. There is evidently an urgent need for some organisation which would deal with cases where the offices of a friend are required. It should work in conjunction with the Poor Law officials, who would hand over suitable cases to its care. I have come across cases, *e.g.*, Nos. 46, 48, where it is likely that if a strong and wise friend could be found they might be placed upon an independent economic footing. It is so often not only financial aid that is needed but friendship and advice. It is sometimes thought that the religious and charitable agencies provide this, but in only one case have I discovered any attempt on the part of such agencies to build up the economic independence of the family.

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The need for effective encouragement of thrift in the case of those who are engaged in seasonal trades was very evident. Cases 35 and 36 illustrate this. The men earned good money in the summer, but instead of saving a proportion of it spent it all, and in winter they had nothing to fall back upon. The mere providing of facilities for saving is not enough. There should be persons visiting the families who will encourage them week by week during the summer to make provision for the period of seasonal unemployment." [1]

Some indication of how much room there is for this constructive work is given by the facts brought out in the year's record of pauperism already referred to:

"It shows that 274,607 persons, or 16·1 per cent. of the total number, were relieved on more than one occasion during the year. Clearly then, the previous period of relief obtained by these people had failed to exercise any curative influence, and they returned to independent life, not more, but in all probability, much less, fitted for maintaining their independence. The figures show that there is much room for improvement and that capable administrators can find ample scope for their talent." IV. 6, 298

[1] Details of the cases referred to are contained in Miss Harlock's Report, in the Appendices to the Report of the Commission.

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CHAPTER VIII

MEDICAL RELIEF

THERE is one department of Public Assistance of special importance and difficulty—that of medical relief. It is important, because, as we have seen, a large proportion of pauperism is contributed by sickness, and it is desirable from every point of view that sickness should be cured as soon as possible. It is difficult, because medical attendance is one of the necessaries of life for which the working classes have made provision to a very large extent, and any scheme of medical relief is bound to respect that provision and to abstain from entering into competition with it.

Another important factor in the situation consists in the multiplicity of charitable agencies which exist to provide medical assistance both in hospitals and to out-patients. The problem for the administrator is to combine all these agencies, including the provident institutions, into

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harmonious co-operation with the medical relief to be given by the Public Assistance Authority. To realise what this means it is necessary to describe in more detail the present situation.

The present Poor Law in its work of medical relief is merely one of the competing agencies. It deals with much the same class of patient as the voluntary hospitals, and deters many from subscribing to provident institutions by offering the same advantages free of cost. So far as we have been able to ascertain, there is hardly any attempt on the part of Boards of Guardians to co-operate with voluntary agencies, while there is frequently much jealousy and constant friction. The only exceptions to this attitude are to be found in occasional subscriptions to hospitals and district nurses in return for their services.

Considered in itself, and out of relation to other agencies, the medical service of the Poor Law is in many respects thoroughly efficient and well-organised. This is especially true of the Poor Law Infirmaries, which in many places are now separated from the workhouse, and under independent management. They are well-equipped hospitals with "all reasonable and proper appliances for the treatment of diseases of every kind," and with "everything provided which V. 1, 22

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might tend to promote a cure or alleviate suffering." The cost of maintaining patients in these infirmaries has steadily increased of late years, while the cost of building has risen to as high as £377 per bed in London. In some cases, indeed, there is a profusion of expenditure which does not contribute to efficiency, and should have been avoided. The following is an instance noted by Commissioners when visiting :

V. 2, 134 "The wards resemble those of a hospital, and are, in every respect, as well equipped. . . . The steward's room is more expensively furnished and decorated than the writing rooms of a first class hotel or club. It has a polished wood block floor, covered with a very fine carpet and the fireplace is of marble and glazed tiles. . . . Taking the entire annual cost, viz., £28,000, and dividing by the accommodation, the annual cost, including debt charges, works out at £85 a bed, *i.e.*, 33*s.* a week. This figure would be increased if calculated upon the average number of inmates. . . . Money has been, and now is, poured out in an unwarrantable manner upon its provision and upkeep, with no regard for those from whom the money is compulsorily obtained. . . . Speaking generally, we are of opinion that it is impossible to justify the expenditure incurred in the provision of these buildings."

A considerable part of the increased cost of maintenance is attributable to the improvement in
V. 1, 26 the nursing service. "Prior to 1867, the indoor

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poor were chiefly nursed by paupers who . . . . were often illiterate, drunken, and altogether unsuited for such work." Guardians are now prohibited from employing any pauper to perform the duties of a nurse; and over 3,000 trained nurses are employed in workhouses and workhouse infirmaries, in addition to 2,000 probationer nurses.

Where separate infirmaries have not been provided, the sick are treated in special wards of the workhouse which are set apart for the purpose. For the most part these have shared in the general improvement, though on a much simpler and less expensive scale. But the wards are often ill-adapted and ill-fitted for the use to which they are put, and the nursing arrangements inadequate. It is said that it is difficult to get good nurses to V. 2, 145 put up with the monotony of the work in quiet rural unions, while the small number of patients makes it uneconomical to have more than one nurse. The Commission therefore endorse the V. 2, 145 opinion of their medical investigator that some "of these very small institutions are in constant risk of inefficiency," and that "the only practical remedy is the formation of larger administrative areas," with institutions set apart for sick inmates."

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One striking result of the improvement in the infirmaries is the greater willingness of the poor to resort to them when ill. In the towns, and more especially where the infirmary is separated from the workhouse, the fact that treatment in the infirmary is Poor Law relief is rapidly losing all deterrent effect.

V. 1, 39 "District medical officers make more use of the infirmaries than formerly. They find less difficulty in inducing patients to enter for treatment which could not be properly given in the home. The relatives of poor persons sometimes persuade them to go to the infirmary "as if it were a private nursing home," by telling them "how comfortable it is." Guardians and relieving officers, Mr. Bagenal informs us, are always impressing on the applicants for relief that the infirmary is not like the workhouse. Indeed the deterrence has disappeared so completely in some districts, we are told, that poor persons are actually attracted from the country to the towns in order to obtain treatment in the infirmaries."

V. 1, 40 But the growing popularity of the infirmaries is not confined to the poor. Much evidence has been given to show that they attract persons of a higher social position than formerly; the

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following are selected from many extracts given in the Report :

"The evidence that a better class than formerly resort to the Poor Law infirmaries is to be found in the appearance of relatives and other visitors to patients; the number of cases where payments are recovered by Guardians and of those where funerals are conducted and paid for by friends or relatives."

"A large number of persons apply for admission to the infirmary who would not otherwise do so, or who do not need to do so. The standard of the union infirmary has been so improved that, generally speaking, it equals, if it does not surpass, that of the general hospitals, many people preferring the infirmary to the hospital."

"In one district (Camberwell), a very large addition was made in 1903, yet the whole building is again fully occupied to some extent by a better class than had previously received Poor Law relief. . . . In Camberwell it is alleged that the ordinary 'infirm' cases have been largely driven out of it, and drafted into a workhouse, in order to make room for better off patients, and there seems a good deal of foundation for the statement. . . . The infirmary has attracted to itself many patients somewhat above the average level of pauperism, so that its wards are kept well filled, and many sick paupers of the ordinary class have to be retained in or sent to the workhouse."

There are many persons, one might say the whole of the lower middle class, who are fairly well off, but cannot afford expensive treatment and nursing in their own homes. It is perfectly natural

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that these should avail themselves of the accommodation provided out of the rates, since nothing else is available, but it is not right that the very poor should be deprived of it. The proper remedy is indicated by the fact that many of these people are willing and even anxious to pay according to their means.

V. 41 "Many medical practitioners, too, avail themselves of the presence of a Poor Law infirmary to recommend for admission such of their patients as either by reason of their limited means or the nature of their illness are unable to receive proper treatment in their own home: in such cases the Guardians making proportionate charges."

(*Q.*) "And they would admit the patient on the understanding that so much per week was to be paid for the patient?"—(*A.*) "Yes."

"Mill Road has now become a general hospital, and is no longer a Poor Law hospital. You will understand that when I tell you that we collect from relatives over £5,000 a year. You will see from that the class of people that unfortunately come to us."

"The infirmary is practically a general hospital, and caters for a class slightly better than the ordinary *habitués* of a workhouse. A considerable sum is recovered each year from relatives, as much as 10*s.* a week being paid in some cases. One patient, a paralytic, was mentioned as being the brother-in-law to one of the richest men in B——, who repaid the whole cost of treatment, etc., to the guardians."

"The matron, a very capable person, showed us part

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of the infirmary. They are very full, and building constantly new wards. Some paying patients are admitted, paying anything up to 10*s.* 6*d.*, which is the maximum charge."

One of the most pressing needs of the day is a system of paying hospitals, on the model possibly of cottage hospitals, where medical men can attend their own patients, and within the means of persons of small income. This would leave the gratuitous institutions, whether provided by voluntary charity or by the Public Assistance Authority, free for the use of the really poor.

In respect of the amount of accommodation afforded to in-patients, the Poor Law infirmaries have far outstripped the voluntary hospitals. "At the present time the beds in the London Poor Law infirmaries (18,000) are nearly twice as many as those in the voluntary hospitals, and are almost equal to the total beds provided by voluntary hospitals in all England and Wales. Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and other large provincial towns have likewise more Poor Law infirmary beds than hospital beds." It seems unlikely that in the face of such competition from rate-supported institutions the hospitals which depend upon voluntary contributions will continue to flourish unless their work is in some way V. 81

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differentiated from that of the infirmaries. So far as the class of people dealt with is concerned, there is no real distinction. We have seen how the infirmaries are used by persons far removed from the pauper class; in the same way the hospitals are largely used by persons who are of the
V. 85 pauper class ". . . . there is no doubt that the voluntary hospitals supply gratuitous medical assistance of the very highest quality—both indoor and by means of their out-patient departments—to a very large number of persons of the same social status as those who apply to the Poor Law. For example, according to a census of the 709 patients in the London Hospital on November 28th, 1906, which the Hon. Sydney Holland, Chairman of the Hospital, was good enough to undertake at our request, it appears that 27 per cent. of the patients might be considered to be 'to all intents and purposes paupers, *i.e.* no money coming in, no savings, no club, and generally with wife and children to support'; while another 13 per cent. were 'on the very verge of pauperism, if not already paupers,' altogether 40 per cent. This figure, which relates to in-patients, corresponds very closely with the out-patient results obtained by our special investigator Miss Roberts, who estimates

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that 38 per cent. of the out-patients attending certain London hospitals enquired into by her 'may be said to be of the same class as applicants for medical relief from the parish."

It was suggested to the Commission that the V. 139
proper dividing line between the two sets of institutions would be one determined by the nature of the illness; the voluntary hospitals dealing with the more acute cases, and the infirmaries taking the chronic cases. In many ways this basis of co-operation is indicated as the right one. Not only can the hospitals command the services of the leading men in the profession, but their greater freedom and elasticity as voluntary charities marks them out as more suitable to deal with acute illness, while the routine and discipline of the rate-supported and inspected infirmary ensures the careful nursing of monotonous and uninteresting chronic cases.

Already this division of work takes place to some extent, but at present it is more a cause of friction than a basis of co-operation. The hospitals can always turn out any cases of which they tire, while the infirmaries are bound to accept whatever comes to them.

"An extraordinary antagonism seems to prevail V. 138
between the two agencies. Relieving officers are fretful

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of the constant claim on their time taken up by applications for removal from their local hospitals of the homeless or people who do not belong to that particular union. It was said that the wrong class of person is sometimes sent from the hospital to the infirmary; and that the hospital encourages people to demand relief, sometimes giving them open slips addressed to the relieving officer. The hospitals, on the other hand, complain of the great dilatoriness of the relieving officers in coming to the rescue, and accepting the responsibility of distinctly destitute patients. . . . Constant conflict seems to prevail in all parts of London."

If the division of work were recognised and agreed to on either hand, this friction would disappear and make room for co-operation. But one difficulty would remain from the point of view of the patient. In the hospitals treatment is generally gratuitous, and no disability attaches to the receipt of assistance in them. In the present Poor Law infirmaries the patients, except in rare cases, lose the franchise, and are liable, if they have means, to be sued for recovery of the cost of treatment. There seems no reason why a person suffering from chronic illness should be placed at a disadvantage as compared with one suffering from acute illness,
V. 237 and the Commissioners have accordingly recommended that treatment in an infirmary shall no longer disfranchise the recipient. The penalty of

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disfranchisement has long been removed from the recipients of out-door medical relief, though this is a need far more easily provided for than treatment in an institution. With regard to the question of payment or repayment, the only fair system would appear to be that in all institutions alike there should be payment according to means.

There is one other authority which sometimes provides gratuitous hospital treatment, and that is the sanitary authority. This authority has power under Act of Parliament to provide general V. 111
hospitals for the sick of their district, but with few exceptions they have confined themselves to providing hospitals for infectious diseases to which patients can be compulsorily removed if they are a source of danger to their neighbours.

In the sphere of out-door medical relief, there is still greater need for co-operation amongst competing agencies. Taking first the Poor Law, we find that this kind of relief is given under less stringent conditions than any other, owing to the Act which was passed in 1885 to abolish the V. 76
disfranchisement of the recipients of medical relief for all elections except that of a Board of Guardians. In many places also the applicants for medical relief receive it without appearing before the Guardians, who frequently pass all the

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V. 173 "medical orders" *en bloc* without any enquiry about the people. Indeed it is, perhaps, in regard to outdoor medical relief that their attitude of irresponsibility is most marked:

> "Phthisis cases are maintained in crowded, unventilated houses where there is unrestrained facility to convey the disease to their own offspring. Diabetes cases live on the rates, and eat what they please . . . outdoor medical attendance is freely and unconditionally provided by the Guardians for the drunken and the immoral."

Given under such conditions, or rather absence of conditions, medical relief is liable to be of the least possible service either to the recipient or to the community.

In a good many unions, on the other hand, an attempt is made to limit the applications for medical relief by granting it on loan, but it is seldom that any considerable part of the cost is recovered. Many Boards, indeed, while declaring it to be on loan, make no attempt to enforce repayment.

Very conflicting evidence has been given as to how far persons who need medical relief are deterred from applying because of its connection with the Poor Law. Some lay great stress upon the reluctance of the sick to apply; others say that reluctance is a thing of the past. It is probable that where it does exist it is due to a

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variety of causes; amongst which the personality of the medical officer must count for a good deal. One fact which comes out strongly is that poor people, as well as rich, like to be able to choose their own doctor. Under the present system they cannot do this. In every union there are appointed a certain number of district medical officers, each with his own district to serve, and any person applying for medical attendance must receive it from the medical officer in whose district he lives. The Commission record that they "are satisfied that the great majority of medical officers efficiently and punctually perform the duties entrusted to them, and that . . . . many bestow on the poorer classes a considerable amount of attention for which they receive no recompense." Nevertheless, there is a good deal of evidence to show that there is a certain amount of distrust and dislike of the "parish doctor" as such: V. 161

"1. The present plan of medically assisting the poor under the Poor Law is not an efficient system. The average Poor Law medical officer (outdoor) does not give the satisfaction he ought to his patients. Consequently, the private practitioner is often called upon to attend parish patients. The remedy for this state of affairs would be to appoint all practitioners in a district Poor Law medical officers who would be willing to act. V. 161

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"2. Another serious objection to the present system is that a great many people object to paying a visit to the parish doctor as a parish doctor, and often they will pay 6*d.* or 1*s.* (which they cannot afford) to another doctor, rather than go to him.

"3. They (the poor) are like the rest of us, probably, they like to choose their own doctor. They take a fancy to a particular man, and would like to have him; there ought to be no reason why they should not have him, although they are poor.

"4. The great hardship on the poor is that their doctor is chosen for them, and willy-nilly they must have him, or in most cases they can have none. Something in the plan of a provident dispensary would meet the case in most districts."

Another difficulty under the present system arises from the arrangement whereby medical relief must be obtained by an order from the relieving officer, instead of by direct application to the medical officer. There is a provision whereby the overseer can grant an order in case of emergency, but this is not generally known. In country districts this routine of applying first to the relieving officer might lead to great delay and serious consequences if it were generally observed One witness illustrated this:

V. 178 "For instance, if the parish patient wants an order quickly from me he really by law would have to go to

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Chatteris, that is, eight miles, and come back four miles. He would have to go past my house four miles, and come back to my house again, and then I should have to go four miles. As a matter of fact that is not done. . . . It would take a man walking three hours to deliver the order to me according to this arrangement."

It was found by our medical investigator that in rural districts it is a constant practice for doctors to attend poor persons when applied to, without waiting for the order from the relieving officer; but this is apt to lead to difficulty with the Guardians, in which case the doctor will say that he has regarded the applicant as a non-pauper applicant. "In this way a considerable amount of medical assistance to poor persons of the pauper class—estimated by Dr. McVail at 15 to 20 per cent. of the Poor Law cases receiving medical relief—is administered by medical officers without being recorded as medical relief." V. 180

These would seem to be the main defects in the outdoor medical service, regarded out of relation to other agencies; and in formulating their new scheme the Commission have been largely influenced by them. In other respects the service is well organised, and the people on the whole well served. But here, as in the case of hospital treatment, it is the people above the pauper class

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who are apt to suffer most from want of medical care.

V. 185 "One doctor who had given attention to the subject was strongly of opinion that in his own area the class just above the grade of pauperism was much worse off in respect of medical attendance than the paupers themselves. Poor people who were expected to pay for a doctor often felt the financial burden too great and delayed sending for him, or asked him to discontinue his visits before the patient ought to have been out of his control."

In many places, however, this class is well provided for, either by provident associations of different types, or by charitable agencies. The latter perhaps deal as much with persons of the pauper class as with those above it; and it is the provident associations which are most characteristic of the persons of small means who desire to preserve their independence. The best known, and in some ways the most important, of them are the friendly societies.

V. 96 "Perhaps the best measure of the progress made towards independence during the last century is got by comparing the membership of friendly societies with the number of paupers. A Parliamentary Return in 1803 states the number of societies in England and Wales to be 9,672 with 704,350 members, while the numbers relieved by the poor

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rate in the same year was 1,039,716. A similar Return in 1815 gives the membership of friendly societies as 925,439, which exceeded the number of paupers by 29,446: 'On December 31st, 1904, the number of members in the ordinary friendly societies and societies having branches, was 5,700,000'; while the total number of paupers of all classes on January 1st, 1905, was 932,000—an excess of friendly society members over paupers of nearly 5,000,000."

All-important as the friendly societies are in preserving the independence of their members during times of sickness, their direct object is the provision of a weekly allowance rather than of medical attendance. The proportion of members who insure in them for medical aid varies very much in the different societies. "In the Foresters' Society about 95 per cent. of the members are insured for medical aid. In the Hearts of Oak Benefit Society, on the other hand, the majority of members do not insure." It may be noted that the latter society pays relatively high benefits, and it is likely that many members prefer to pay their own doctor. Moreover, in many provincial towns the members of the various societies have combined to lease a house, provide their own drugs and appoint their own medical officer, who devotes his V. 95

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whole time to the association. This plan has the additional advantage that members' families are allowed to join. These associations have a total membership of 250,000.

Next in importance come the provident dispensaries. These are at present very local in their development, owing partly to the need of some initiative to start them, partly also to the rivalry of charitable agencies. When well worked they seem excellently adapted to meet the needs of the class they serve. The fees are very low, varying from 1*d.* to 1½*d.* per week for an adult, while children are admitted for about ½*d.*, and a reduction is generally made if the whole family are members. Special fees can be paid for the services of a midwife; and the members can select their doctor from the staff of the dispensary. Membership is generally limited to persons with an income below a certain limit, which varies from 14*s.* to 50*s.* a week. There are no statistics to show the total membership of provident dispensaries, but the following figures show their success in certain towns:

V. 94 "In London there are forty-three provident dispensaries issuing over 60,000 cards, representing about 116,650 individuals. In Leicester there are two provident dispensaries with about 60,000

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members, or 1 in 4 of the population; in Reading there are 17,578 members, or 1 in 4 of the population; in Northampton there are 18,000 members, or 1 in 5 of the population; in Shrewsbury there are 6,000 members, or about 1 in 5 of the population; and in Salisbury there are 9,190 members, or 1 in 2 of the population. Provident dispensaries exist also in some of the smaller towns, *e.g.* Market Drayton and Leominster; but in rural districts the 'medical club' is more prevalent. These medical clubs may include several medical men, in which case they differ little from the provident dispensary, or they may be organised by one doctor only. There are many varieties, but in one form or another they are almost universal and within the reach of almost everyone. Of the rural district of Hardingstone we are told:

"'Medical clubs have become so common in the district that it is only in exceptional cases that recourse is had to the Poor Law.'

"And again:

"'They are almost universal in Northamptonshire. I do not know any village without a club.'

"In Suffolk, the county medical club has 9,000 members, though a rule limits membership to

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persons whose earnings *per family* are under 20*s.* a week. At Bosmere and Claydon a very great many belong to medical clubs outside the county club. In the neighbourhood of Bury St. Edmunds, says Dr. Stork :

"'There is only one [doctor] that I can think of who has not got a private medical club of his own.'

"In towns also medical clubs are very common, and in certain districts, *e.g.* South Wales, the 'works' clubs' include almost the whole of the male working population, while medical clubs provide for the remainder. In seven towns—Coventry, Eastbourne, Hartlepool, Kidderminster, Norwich, Southampton, and Taunton—a 'public medical service' has been organised amongst the doctors for treating the poorer working class on a provident basis."

The fact that provision of this kind for medical assistance is found amongst the wage-earners of all grades in some places, makes it the more remarkable that in others it fails almost entirely. There can be little doubt that this is due to the competition of other agencies. Of the ease with which medical relief can be obtained through the Poor Law we have already spoken. Its effect is illustrated by the following statement from a medical officer :

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"There is absolutely no difference, except in individual character, between the man who comes to me as a private patient and who comes through the Poor Law. One puts into a dispensary, or saves money and pays the doctor, the other finds it leaves more for drink if he sends to the relieving officer. They find it so easy to get medical relief, why should they bother to provide in any other way?" V. 101

In some places the Guardians have realised this effect of their work, and have endeavoured to substitute provident institutions. "The Paddington and St. Pancras Boards issue handbills encouraging applicants to become members of provident dispensaries, and these are given by the relieving officers to applicants for medical relief. The Reading Guardians paid the entrance fee of applicants to the provident dispensary until the practice was stopped by the Local Government Board. At Brixworth the Guardians started a medical club which superseded parish relief and developed into clubs for each parish in the union. At Frimley a medical club was started by a Guardian as an alternative to Poor Law relief, and now practically all the people except the members of friendly societies belong to it. At Ipswich the district medical officer has a medical club, and the Guardians bring pressure to bear on applicants to join it wherever possible. While from Risbridge V. 97

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comes the suggestion that medical officers should be required to start clubs at such rates as the Guardians may approve of as being within the reach of the wage-earning power of the district."

V. 86 In London another powerful rival to the provident institutions is to be found in the out-patient departments of the voluntary hospitals. The number of patients treated in these in 1906 was 1,607,945; the corresponding figure for all other voluntary hospitals in England and Wales was 884,478. The pressure on these departments is enormous, and the people who resort to them vary in class from the pauper to the well-to-do. One great advantage which the patients have there is the chance of a highly skilled opinion in difficult cases, and the possibility in "interesting" cases of being detained for treatment as in-patients. But a serious disadvantage, which obtains in the great majority of cases, is that they are not attended in their own homes. This is a disadvantage to doctor as well as to patient, inasmuch as he has no personal knowledge of the home conditions, and is unable to supervise the carrying out of his instruc-

V. 189 tions. It was strongly represented to the Commission that the proper use of these out-patient departments is for casualties, consultations, and cases requiring expensive equipment for the treat-

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ment of special diseases and defects. If they would consent to restrict their work in this way, then cases would be referred to them by private practitioners, or by the medical men attached to provident institutions, when a special opinion was required, and they would thus obtain the interesting and difficult cases necessary for their work without being swamped by a multitude of applicants suffering from trifling or chronic ailments.

But in addition to the hospitals there are also in certain towns free dispensaries doing a very extensive work. Perhaps the largest of these is V. 102
the Newcastle Dispensary. It has seven whole-time officers; it treats about 12,000 patients per annum, and does the greater part of the outdoor medical work for the poor of the city. Similar institutions on a smaller scale are to be found in other towns. The treatment given at these dispensaries is said to be of a high order, and there is no doubt that they are doing much useful work. There is also no doubt that their usefulness would be much enhanced if they were placed upon a provident basis. As it is, they deal not only with the very poor, but also with many who could V. 150
well afford to pay ordinary fees to a doctor, and by still more who are in a position to join a provident dispensary.

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In Birmingham it is said :

"A person attending a Bible Class or P.S.A., on payment of ½*d.* or 1*d.* per month can obtain a subscriber's ticket entitling him to six weeks' continuous medical advice, attendance, and medicine, and also extras in the shape of food, notwithstanding that the person may be in full work, and the recipient of a wage up to £6 per week."

A witness from Newcastle stated :

"I get a big number of tickets to give away every year ; if I gave them to everybody that applied, I should be giving them to men with £2 10*s.* and £3 a week wages who come and apply, not isolated cases, but weekly."

V. 106 "Witnesses have told us that the free dispensaries are powerful and successful competitors of the provident dispensaries and medical clubs, and operate with hardship on the medical profession."

Many of the free dispensaries are old endowed institutions, but all of them are more or less dependent upon charitable subscriptions. They could all of them with very little difficulty be converted into provident or partially provident dispensaries.

V. 107 ". . . Several witnesses have given instances of free dispensaries having been transformed into provident dispensaries. One of the largest provident dispensaries in the country, the Leicester Provident

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Dispensary with 50,000 members, began as a free dispensary, and in London two free dispensaries have recently adopted provident principles. The latter, being endowed dispensaries, were converted under schemes of the Charity Commissioners, which retained a portion of the income for the use of a certain number of free patients. Such a change is wholly beneficial."

Finally, a certain amount of work, very limited in extent except in a few towns, is done by the sanitary authorities in addition to providing hospitals for infectious diseases. This work is for the most part confined to services in connection with infectious cases, such as disinfection, the provision of certain drugs and appliances, and the diagnosis of doubtful cases. In Brighton special work has been undertaken in connection with phthisis. But, speaking generally, the sanitary authorities deal with disease mainly from the point of view of prevention. It is on the basis of the few instances in which they have gone beyond their normal work that the proposal has been made to hand over to the sanitary authorities the whole task of providing medical assistance to the community. The proposal naturally meets with the support of the few eminent men who have extended the sphere of work of their own sanitary

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authorities; but a circular letter sent to medical officers in charge of sanitary work throughout the country, resulted in a considerable majority expressing an adverse opinion. There are, indeed, two fatal objections to the scheme. The first is that the number of places in which the sanitary authority has shown itself both competent and willing to perform even its present duties with any real adequacy is comparatively small. In many places it is more unprogressive than the majority of Boards of Guardians, and its officers are often powerless to carry out the most necessary sanitary work owing to the dead weight of opposition which they encounter. It would be the height of folly to hand over to such an authority the additional task of providing medical assistance merely because in a few towns energetic men had done good work. And it should be noted that some even of the best of these men are opposed to putting further duties on the sanitary authority, as tending to hinder them in the prosecution of their present work.

The second great objection to the proposal is that it ignores entirely the work of the great provident institutions we have described. Those who support it find it convenient to disparage the work of those institutions, as well as that of the private practitioner, and in so doing show the weakness

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of their hand. The real forward movement must be one which utilises all the forces in the community, and combines them into an efficient organisation.

It is this principle of utilising existing forces, and developing them to greater completion, which has guided the Commission in their recommendations concerning medical relief. They take as the basis of their scheme the provident dispensary, or, what is the same thing in a slightly different form, the public medical service as organised in the towns already referred to. The essence of both institutions is the organisation of the medical services of the district on a basis which shall bring them within reach of the poorer inhabitants of the district while affording an adequate remuneration to the medical men concerned. Under their scheme the whole country would be mapped out into convenient medical districts or "dispensary areas." "The nature of the 'dispensary' to be established in each area would vary with the nature of the district. In large and sparsely-populated districts a room in a cottage, with a locked cupboard for drugs, might be sufficient. In a crowded area, a complete building with waiting rooms, etc., and a dispenser might be necessary; while in medium districts attendance at the doctor's own house

V. Recommendations.

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might be preferred." In the latter case no special building would be needed. The determining factor would be the distance to be travelled by the patients. If, as might be expected, existing institutions fell in with the scheme, their buildings would often be available. It would be open to any local practitioner to be on the staff, and the members of the dispensary would have their choice of doctors. With a view to securing the co-operation of the medical profession, the British Medical Association would be asked to frame "a general scheme or scale of fees and wage limit, to be applied by their local branches as local circumstances may suggest."

What would be the relation of the Public Assistance Authority to this organisation? That there should be some quite definite relation is essential if it is not to continue the competition of the present Poor Law system.

V. 237 The Commission propose in the first place that the primary responsibility for organising and initiating medical assistance within each county shall rest with the public Assistance Authority; and that its function in this department shall be:

(i.) To co-ordinate and, when necessary, supplement the medical institutions of the county or county borough, and to suggest methods of co-

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operation with the Sanitary Authorities and the Authorities in charge of Voluntary Hospitals.

(ii.) To organise an outdoor and provident medical service easily accessible in all parts of the county or county borough, the service to include the provision of competent midwives.

(iii.) To develop an adequate nursing service throughout the county or county borough, preferably in connection with voluntary nursing associations.

(iv.) To subscribe, when necessary, towards these purposes.

(v.) To arrange for adequate supervision of, and report on the efficiency and adequacy of the medical institutions and medical service through the county or county borough.

It is recognised that in order to carry out the work effectively it will be very necessary to have the assistance and active co-operation of all the agencies concerned. It is therefore proposed :

" That to assist the Public Assistance Authority in carrying out the above functions they shall appoint a committee from among their number, to which shall be added representatives of the Health Committee of the County Council or of the County Borough Council, and of the local branch or branches of the British Medical

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Association. This committee shall be called the County or County Borough Medical Assistance Committee, as the case may be, and shall have power to co-opt representatives of local hospitals, county or county borough nursing associations, dispensaries, and registered friendly societies."

It is further proposed that a local committee on similar lines shall be appointed by each local Public Assistance Committee for the purposes of the local administration of medical assistance. This committee shall be termed the Local Medical Assistance Committee.

The main responsibility for making co-operation with the Provident Dispensaries effective will rest with the local Public Assistance Committees in their dealing with particular cases. With a view to diminishing delay in the treatment of sickness the Commission recommend that when any applicant for medical assistance is not a member of a provident society he shall apply direct to the district medical officer and be treated at once. The case will then be enquired into by the Assistance Officer and reported to the Public Assistance Committee, which will have power to recover the full cost of the treatment if they think that the applicant should have belonged to the Provident Dispensary, or to remit

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payment on condition of his becoming a member. In this way it is hoped that an application for medical assistance might in future become the introduction, not to pauperism, but to a Provident Dispensary.

The Public Assistance Committee would further be empowered to enrol all cases permanently in receipt of public assistance (*e.g.* widows with children, or old people) as members of a Provident Dispensary by paying the necessary fees. These persons would then enjoy the coveted privilege of selecting their doctor, while the children would be brought into close touch with the dispensary, and might be expected to join it on an independent footing as they grew up.

These are the main outlines of the scheme by which it is hoped that "the medical community, the Public Assistance and Sanitary Authorities, and the people themselves, would combine to provide an adequate and honourable system of co-operative medical assistance at the minimum cost, and a genuine attempt would be made to transform into a living and helpful organisation the existing medley of independent and often harmful agencies for dealing with the sick poor." V. 236

Further details of the scheme are given in the Report. The general recommendations of the

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Commission under which the scheme was framed are as follows :

1. That medical assistance should be re-organised on a provident basis.

2. That in certain cases power of compulsory removal to and detention in an institution should be given to the authorities under proper safeguards.

3. That there should be systematic co-operation between the Public Assistance Authorities, the Sanitary Authorities, and the voluntary medical institutions, based on a clearer definition of their respective functions.

4. That no disfranchisement should be attached to any form of medical assistance.

5. That the arrangements for indoor and outdoor medical assistance should be periodically inspected by medical inspectors on behalf of the Local Government Board.

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CHAPTER IX

DETENTION. — UNMARRIED MOTHERS. — INSURANCE. — DISFRANCHISEMENT

One fact which has become increasingly clear in the course of our examination of the present system is the inadequacy of its powers with respect to certain classes. If the administrators of to-day are encouraging disease and idleness and immorality it is largely because, while they are bound to give temporary relief to the idle and profligate and diseased, they are unable to detain them until, by continuous treatment, the disease may be cured or the bad habit eradicated. There are others, again, for whom powers of detention are needed as a protection to their helplessness, such as the feeble-minded, the children of vicious parents, and the friendless and decrepit old people.

With regard to the children it has already been indicated in Chapter 4 where the chief need lies.

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"Under existing Acts the Guardians already have the power to take over the rights of the parents of children until the age of eighteen, when they are of opinion that by reason of mental deficiency or of vicious habits or mode of life, a parent of a child is unfit to have control of it." These Acts have hitherto not been applied in the case of children of "ins-and-outs," vagrants, &c.; and the Commission recommend that in future they should be applied to them, and in general to
IX. 151 children "of parents whose mode of life is so harmful to the children that, in the interests both of the children and of the State whose future citizens they will be, the children should be separated from parental control." They also recommend that the control should be continued till the age of twenty-one. The chief objection which is likely to be brought forward to this recommendation is the serious one that, if carried out, it will relieve the worst parents of their responsibilities and leave them free to pursue their evil courses unburdened. It is clear that this objection can only be met by also giving effect to the recommendations of the Commission with regard to the parents of such children.

With regard to the aged also we have indicated where the need lies in Chapter 3. Cases are

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known of old people so decrepit that they have fallen into the fire; of others who cannot feed or clean themselves properly, and such cases "should clearly be dealt with either in almshouses or, if necessary, in infirmaries, where their wants and ailments could be properly attended to." But an order enabling such cases to be removed to an institution could only be granted under very carefully guarded conditions, which the Commission define as follows:— IX. 151

1. A medical certificate that continuous care and treatment are essential in the interests of the health or safety of the person concerned. IX. 151

2. A certificate that neither such person, nor his or her friends or relatives, are able and willing to provide the continuous care and treatment.

Closely analogous to the decrepit aged are the cases of persons suffering from serious or malignant disease which could not properly be treated in their own homes. The conditions under which such persons should become liable for continuous treatment in an institution would be those specified for the aged.

Another class which requires continuous supervision and control as a protection to their helplessness consists of the persons known as feeble-minded. The needs of this class were

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investigated and reported upon by the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded, which recommended that they should in future be cared for by a new authority fully armed with powers of detention and control. With their recommendations the Commission concur.

There are certain cases of infectious or contagious diseases which cannot at present be removed or detained, although they are a source of danger to those with whom they come in contact. We have already noted in previous chapters what havoc is wrought by phthisis, especially amongst the poor. It does not seem practicable with an illness of such long duration to isolate all cases ; moreover, in its earlier stages the risk of infection can be diminished to a large extent by simple precautions. In an advanced stage it becomes more dangerous, and the Commission recommend that there should be power to order continuous treatment "in advanced cases where a medical certificate is produced certifying that the patient is likely to affect others, or where the home conditions of the patient are such as to lead, with practical certainty, to the spread of the disease."

In the case of children suffering from ophthalmia, or from infectious complaints of such a character as to be a source of danger to the

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children of the school they frequent, similar power should be given, "an order for continuous treatment should be obtainable upon the production of a medical certificate to the effect that the diseased child is either in a state dangerous to others, or else is likely to communicate the disease to others, and that such danger or likelihood is not being obviated by the treatment provided by the parents, guardians, relatives or friends."

Those affected by venereal diseases come under a different category. "In the vast majority of cases IX. 151 they have contracted this ailment by their own misconduct. We have received evidence to the effect that these diseases work terrible havoc with the physique and stamina of the community, and that much of the infant mortality and bad health of children is due to their after consequences. If the object be the arrest and stamping out of these poisonous ailments, caution must be exercised in not prescribing treatment so drastic as to lead to their concealment. We are, however, clearly of opinion that whenever a medical certificate is produced stating that an individual is in such a condition as to be a danger to the community amongst whom he or she may be living, an Order for Detention or Continuous Treatment should be obtainable."

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Another class for whom it is highly desirable to have powers of detention are a certain section of the unmarried mothers who at present frequent the workhouses. One of the greatest failures of our present administration is the failure to differentiate sufficiently between the different classes of women who come under this head. They are broadly three: the young mothers who have lapsed for the first time, the feeble minded women who are not responsible for their lives, and the more depraved women who habitually make a convenience of the workhouse for the purpose of being confined with illegitimate children, who in their turn become a permanent charge upon the rates. The Commissioners' recommendations with regard to the first of these follow later; they believe that many might be rescued from further harm who are lost under the present system. The feeble minded mothers will in future be under supervision and control, and thus a great source of misery and pauperism will be at once and effectively stopped. There remain the more depraved women, and with regard to them the Commission think "that women of this class should be liable to an Order by Justices for a period of Continuous Treatment, and that after

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recovery from confinement they should be sent to some suitable institution for a fixed period and placed under reformatory influence.

"We commend this course in the interest of the woman herself. Unfortunate women, when they have fallen thus low, have often no means of subsistence except through a resumption of their vicious mode of life. The treatment we suggest may afford them some chance of regaining a respectable existence."

There is finally the class of persons referred to in dealing with the able-bodied in Chapter 5, whose character and conduct make it essential that they should be dealt with in a "Detention Colony" under conditions more suitable to the administration of the Home Office than to that of the Public Assistance Authority. The Commission recommend that those persons should be committed to a "Detention Colony" for any period between six months and three years who have been guilty of wilful and persistent repetition within a given period of any of the following offences :

"(1) Wilful refusal or neglect of persons to maintain themselves or their families (although such persons are wholly or in part able to do so), the

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result of such refusal or neglect being that the persons or their families have become chargeable to the Public Assistance Authority.

"(2) Wilful refusal on the part of a person receiving assistance to perform the work or to observe the regulations duly prescribed in regard to such assistance.

"(3) Wilful refusal to comply with the conditions, laid down by the Public Assistance Authority, upon which assistance can be obtained, with the result that a person's family thereby becomes chargeable.

"(4) Giving way to gambling, drink, or idleness, with the result that a person or his or her family thereby becomes chargeable.

"The results of this provision will be, we hope, that the loafer, the 'in-and-out,' the person who neglects his family, or who makes them chargeable owing to habits of gambling, drink, or idleness, etc., etc., will be submitted to a course of severe discipline and training, which, even if it does not restore the man to a comparative state of industrial efficiency, will at the least for a certain period prevent him from further demoralisation, and will to some extent deter both himself and others from indulging in the vice or habit responsible for his downfall."

This completes the list of cases in which the

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Commission think that there should be powers of Detention or Continuous Treatment. It is not proposed to leave it to the Public Assistance Authority to exercise these powers without further authorisation, but that an order should only be obtainable after an application on behalf of the Public Assistance Authority before Justices of the Peace and upon such Justices being satisfied that the conditions specified as rendering persons liable to continuous treatment have been fulfilled.

Upon the granting of the powers here asked for depends very largely our success or failure in stemming the stream of pauperism in the future. Unless we can cut off some of the sources from which that stream is being fed the attempt to do more constructive work, whether by Public Assistance or by Voluntary Charity, will continue to be swamped by "hopeless cases"; men and women ruined by bad habits or diseased from infancy, who propagate their own misery and hand on still another generation of "hopeless cases" to the future. A great evil justifies strong measures to remedy it, and those strong measures the Commission now ask the Government to authorise.

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VIII. 4 In the section of the Report dealing with Bastardy the Commission make definite recommendations with regards to the future treatment of young unmarried women who apply for maintenance during their first confinement. Hitherto these cases have been dealt with in the workhouse or workhouse infirmary under conditions which have too often led to a life of permanent degradation. A witness of great experience states :

VIII. 4, 154 "The experience I have gained impresses upon me the duty of representing to the Royal Commission that, for social reasons, I am of opinion that provision should be made for securing separate treatment for the large class which consists of young unmarried women who come into the maternity wards for the first time. A great deal has been said in favour of the classification of the aged poor, and the withdrawal of children from workhouses and infirmaries, but nowhere is classification more needed than in the maternity wards. The unavoidable and close intercourse between the young girl, who often enters upon motherhood comparatively innocent, and the older woman who is lost to all sense of shame and who returns again and again to the maternity ward for the birth of her illegitimate children, constitutes a great danger. Too often the older woman invites the friendless girl to share her home on leaving and so leads her on to further ruin. A young girl comes from the country to seek her fortune as a servant in London, she is led astray, and, not daring to return to her friends, she applies in her lonely despair to

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the workhouse maternity ward. Now while I feel sure that the matron and the nurses make every endeavour to shield and to help such a patient (and as a class they are easily distinguishable) it is impossible to avoid contact and conversation with the older women."

In many places much excellent work is done by ladies who endeavour to help these girls to make a fresh start when they leave the workhouse. But those of the witnesses who were experienced in this work were generally agreed that it cannot be made really effective under present conditions :

"The result has been most encouraging, but the committee have felt that for some long time their work has been very sadly handicapped for the want of a home to which these young girls might be sent, instead of mixing for long periods of time—as many often have to do—with the degraded and vicious women who haunt our workhouses all over the country. We believe that the list of these women, which now appears to be so large, would be wonderfully decreased in the future if we could only rescue all our young unmarried mothers and help them to regain their footing. The moral atmosphere of a workhouse is such that no young girl should be introduced into it if we have any hope or wish to reclaim her." VIII. 4, 157

The same witness says :

"We would urge that a sufficient number of homes should be started by charitable agencies all over the VIII. 4, 162

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country to which Guardians should subscribe, and after due consideration send suitable cases and maintain them in the home for the requisite period."

VIII. 4, 163 The Commission are "strongly of opinion that these recommendations should be carried out in so far that all first cases should be dealt with in institutions apart from the workhouse. Where suitable voluntary homes are available, it would be well that these should be utilised; and the authorities should directly endeavour to promote their establishment as certified voluntary homes to which patients may be admitted direct on the order of the Public Assistance Committee, subject to their making such payments as may be agreed for the maintenance and care of the individual case. Failing these, the Poor Law Authorities should institute homes of their own." With a view to securing the services of charitable workers to watch over the girls on their first return to the world, the Commission further recommend "that there

VIII. 4, 167 should be a Women's Committee connected with every Public Assistance Committee, consisting of members of that Committee and of other voluntary helpers, to advise in regard to all maternity cases; and that members of the Women's Committee, or others suitable for the work, shall keep in communication with the mothers leaving the

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homes, for the purpose of befriending them and their children."

One other important recommendation the Commission make in the interest of this class. Under the Bastardy law the father of an illegitimate child is liable to contribute an amount not exceeding 5s. a week towards the maintenance of the child ; and the practice is for the order to make these contributions payable direct to the mother. It is strongly urged by experienced rescue workers that this practice is productive of much evil :

(1) "The great aim of all rescue workers is to sever all connection between the putative father and the mother of an illegitimate child. For very obvious reasons the man should never be allowed to pay directly to the woman. At present no one but the mother is legally authorised to receive it. By threats or persuasions the man when paying directly has every opportunity to induce the woman either to return to him or relinquish her claim upon him." VIII. 4, 146

(2) "If, on the application of a solicitor acting on behalf of some rescue association or of the mother herself, an affiliation order is granted, payment is required to be made direct by the father of the child to the mother. But the great aim of the rescuer is to break off all connection between the father and the mother. A weekly payment on a magistrate's order involves constant meetings which not only prevent the mother settling down in a respectable way of life, but most undesirable

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results almost inevitably ensue. Either she has to hang about on pay day at the shop where he works (and it very soon becomes well known why she is there), or she has to haunt his home or the place where he lodges; with the result that her shame is blazoned abroad and she becomes at least the centre of a degraded notoriety. If, as is often the case, the father regains his hold upon her, he works upon her affections, and not infrequently drags her down again, with the result that the Boards of Guardians are apt to regard her as an altogether depraved woman, when the blame, as a matter of justice, should be laid on other shoulders."

VIII. 4, 148 The Commission recommend accordingly that bastardy orders should invariably be made payable through the agency of some person other than the mother of the illegitimate child.

It remains to notice two points on which the Commission have made recommendations which will need justification in the eyes of those who rightly dread an injudicious extension of the sphere of public relief.

The first point is that of the introduction of schemes of insurance to meet the distress arising out of invalidity on the one hand, and unemployment on the other. With regard to invalidity it is clear that this is a very much wider problem than that of old age, and that it would be only partially met by any old age

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pension scheme, however extensive. It does not indeed seem that old age is the right criterion to take in framing a general plan of assistance. Many a man of sixty or sixty-five is fully able to earn his living, while others are incapacitated by illness or accident at a very early age. A great work is already done by the Friendly Societies in meeting the needs of temporary sickness, some few make superannuation allowances. But they have not found the way as yet to meet permanent disability on a comprehensive scale. Moreover, there are indications that the Friendly Societies have reached their limits on their present basis, and that they have become practically stationary. The best means of promoting invalidity insurance would seem to be to induce and enable the Friendly Societies so to extend their work as to cover permanent disability on the one hand, and on the other to attract the multitude of workers who still stand outside their organisation, largely on the ground of their low earnings. Without definitely recommending any scheme in particular, the Commission call attention to one which has been successful in Belgium. Under it a State subsidy is paid to Friendly Societies in proportion to the number of members contributing to the insurance fund against old age and invalidity, and

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the contribution of each member is met by a further subsidy. The growth in Friendly Societies, and in the number of those insuring under this scheme, has been very remarkable, and has been due partly to vigorous propagandist work on the part of the State. One of the most promising features, by which it is hoped to reach the poorest class of all, is that the movement is taking hold in the elementary schools, where societies are formed by the teachers, who collect the smallest subscriptions from the children, and are paid a small premium in proportion to the sums paid in.

The benefit to be derived from such a scheme of insurance, if it became at all general, would be far greater than could be attained by any extension of old age pensions, and its cost would be relatively small. The Commission have attempted no estimate of what the charge to the State might be, but the following paragraph is instructive :

VIII. 1, 14 "We have consulted three eminent actuaries as to the weekly premiums for which a man aged twenty-one in good health and employed in a healthy occupation could insure the receipt of 10*s.* 6*d.* a week during the first twenty-six weeks of illness, and 7*s.* 6*d.* a week during the remainder

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of illness up to age sixty-five. Mr. T. G. Ackland, F.I.A., taking a 3 per cent. basis, places the amount at 3·9*d.*; Mr. George King, F.I.A., assuming 2½ per cent. as the rate of interest, estimates the amount at 3·74*d.*, and Mr. F. G. P. Neison, F.I.A., at 3·62*d.* These sums are little in excess of the average weekly fee payable per child at school up to 1891, and remitted by the Act of that year."

If the payments began when the child entered school they would, of course, be much lower.

The Commission's recommendations as to a system of insurance against unemployment have already been quoted in Chapter 5. Here, again, they think the matter of such importance, and the benefit to be derived so great, as to justify a contribution on the part of the State. It can hardly be doubted that if the practice of insuring became at all general amongst the working-class it would result in a great saving to the nation, both in money and in the well-being of the workers. At present the expenditure due to this cause, if we include that of private charity as well as that of the Distress Committees and the Poor Law, is enormous; and the accompanying demoralisation of the recipients is even more to be deplored. Nor can we leave out of consideration the sufferings of

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those who do not apply for assistance. There are many who do not and cannot belong to trade unions at present, who might be drawn into a trade organisation for the purpose of insurance if the payments were brought within their reach; and when a comprehensive system was in working order it would be a fair proof of a man's desire for independence if he had availed himself of it. If after the lapse of a sufficient time it became clear that any large number still continued to apply for public assistance in periods of unemployment, it might become necessary to make insurance compulsory. But there is no doubt that a voluntary system is more in accordance with the development of provident institutions in England, and would be more easily adapted to meet the needs of the workers in various branches of industry.

The second point which calls for justification is the Commission's recommendation that disfranchisement should not follow upon public assistance, except in the case of those who receive other than medical relief for more than three months in the year.

In the case of medical relief it seems clearly illogical that a man should be disfranchised for receiving treatment in a hospital or infirmary which he could not possibly provide for himself,

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while no such penalty attaches to receiving medical attendance, which a very small amount of foresight would have enabled him to provide. The alternative lies between repealing the Medical Relief Disqualification Removal Act and extending its provisions to indoor medical treatment. One consideration which tells in favour of the latter course is, that it will facilitate the much-to-be-desired co-operation and division of work between the voluntary hospitals and those belonging to the Public Assistance Authority.

In drawing a distinction between those who are driven to seek public assistance by temporary misfortune and those who habitually rely upon it, the Commission have made a new departure. They greatly desire that in future all distress, including that due to unemployment, should be dealt with by one authority only, and that as far as possible no reasonable ground should be left for introducing or continuing competing authorities. If this end can be attained it will greatly outweigh any risk which might be involved in the concession contained in their recommendation.

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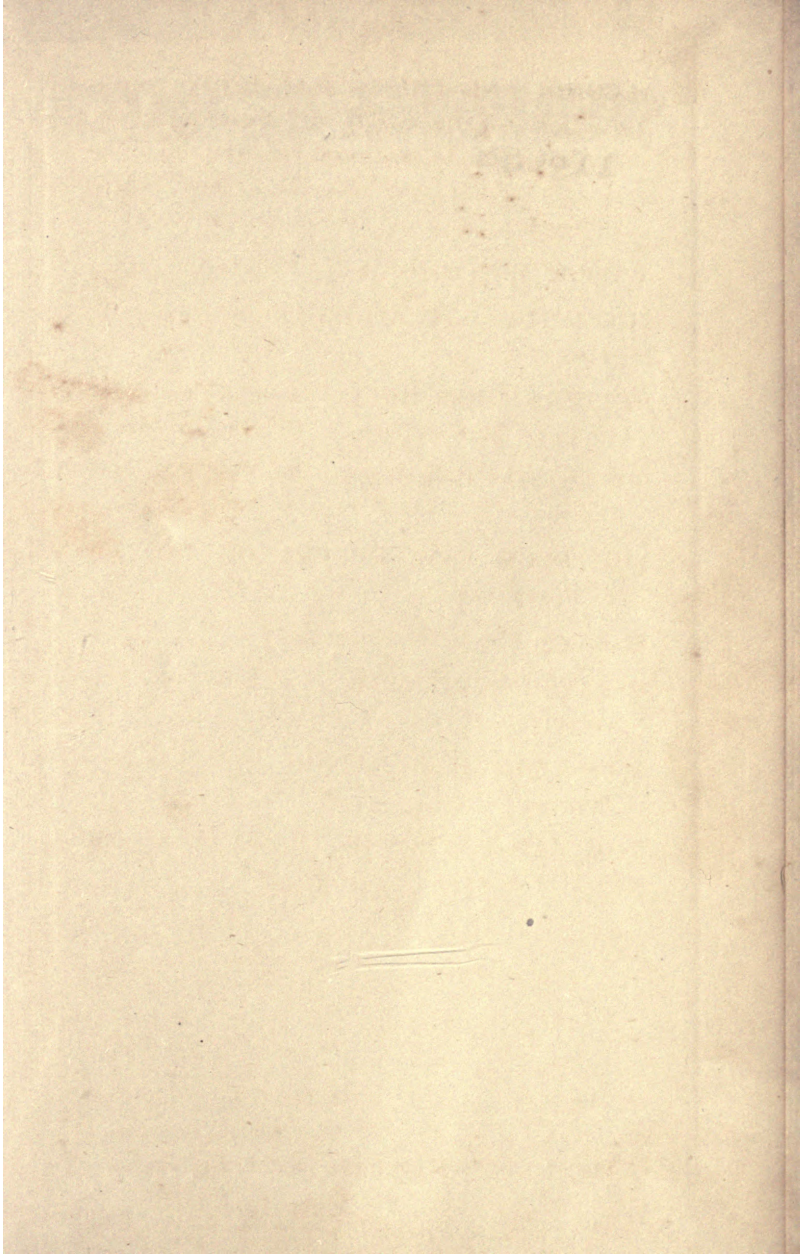

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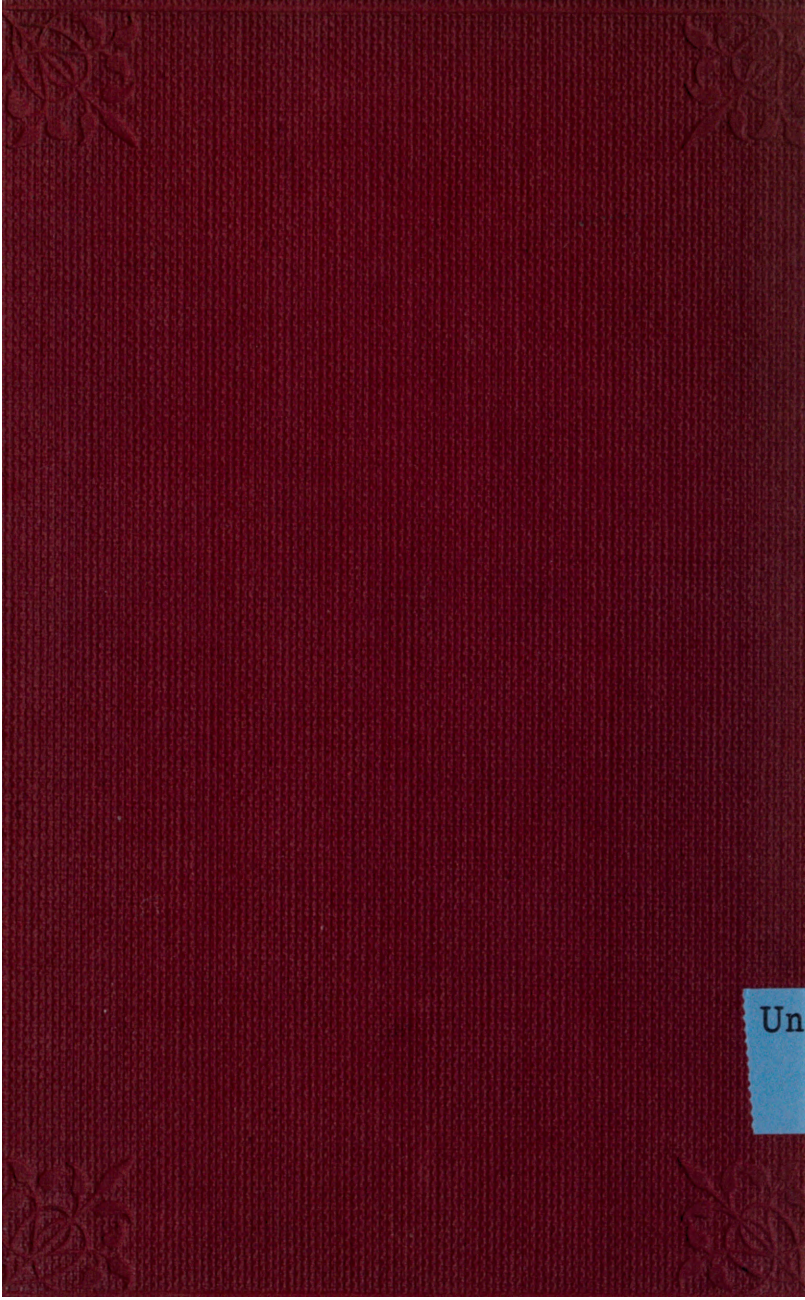

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