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GLIMPSES INTO THE ABYSS.

GLIMPSES INTO THE

ABYSS

BY

MARY HIGGS

Author of "The Master", "How to deal with the Unemployed"

LONDON:

P. S. KING & SON

ORCHARD HOUSE, WESTMINSTER

1906

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

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The author has conducted social research for a number of years on an original plan.

Securing a lodging where a destitute woman could be accommodated, and providing cleansing and dress, she has steadily taken in through a period of six years every case of complete destitution that came to her, willing to undergo remedial treatment. The work grew; accommodation for four was provided, with two paid helpers. The small cottage used acts as a social microscope, every case being personally investigated as to past life, history, and present need, and dealt with accordingly. The writer, as Secretary to the Ladies' Committee of Oldham Workhouse, next became personally acquainted with the working of the Poor-law and studied it by means of books also. By degrees the Rescue work came to cover Police-court and Lodging-[Pg vi]house work, and, as there was no other Shelter in Oldham, cases of all sorts came under her notice. She thus studied personally the microbes of social disorder.

By degrees she came to understand the existence of certain "classes" (classifying them much as observation led her to classify objects observed in physical studies). Also, she clearly perceived that causes were at work leading to rapid degeneration, and was led to pre-suppose currents working for social destruction.

She then commenced investigating remedial agencies and interrogating social observers. She

found among them a similar experience of great waste and lack of salvage through defects not to be remedied by private action.

This led her more and more to consider national aspects of the question. She visited personally Hadleigh Farm Colony, questioned experts at West Ham, visited and interrogated Police, Prevention of Cruelty to Children officers, Vigilance officers, and others; and by degrees obtained a mass of information. But still the root problems of poverty remained dark to her, and she became convinced that nothing but accurate and scientific exploration of the depths would reveal the currents leading to degradation. [Pg vii]

After the idea dawned upon her, some months elapsed before she felt able to arrange to face the ordeal, but during this time proofs accumulated of the uselessness of any other methods. She reflected that exploration was the method of science, and became herself an explorer of "Darkest England." The results amply justified the experiment. She has now carried through the following explorations, each time with increasing knowledge:—

(*a*) A tour through West Yorkshire, embracing one municipal, one common lodging-house, two tramp wards, and a women's shelter.

(*b*) An investigation into a Lancashire tramp ward.

(*c*) Investigation of a Salvation Army Women's Shelter.

(*d*) An investigation into the lodging-house conditions in a neighbouring town. [Pg viii]

(*e*) An investigation into conditions in women's lodging-houses in a Lancashire centre.

(*f*) Investigation into a London casual ward; also enquiry and investigation as to women's lodging-houses in London.

These investigations have placed her in possession of facts which form the basis of the introductory essay.

In addition, however, her possession of experience and knowledge have opened to her many sources of information not available to the general public. She has received much private information embodied in these pages, and has had the privilege of attending and taking part in official discussions. Also by visits to a common lodging-house she obtained much light on the views of the class that occasionally find themselves in the tramp ward. She has also collected information from the Press, and studied the literature obtainable which threw light on vagrancy legislation in other countries.

Recently she has visited Denmark and had the privilege of investigating the working of the Poor-law system. The official view was obtained, and workhouses, etc., visited, and the system seen in operation. But also by a visit to Salvation Army Headquarters in Copenhagen, and from other sources, she obtained as thorough an idea as possible of the actual working of the nation's remedies for poverty. Also the connection of the Poor Law with the Municipality was studied. [Pg ix]

She also undertook a literary investigation into deterioration of human personality, viewed from the psychological, medical, and religious points of view, writing an essay which won the Gibson Prize at Girton (1905).

It seemed to be the necessary corollary to the acquisition of a wide collection of facts to form some unitary theory capable of correlating them.

A very simple theory, which will be found to accord with Plato's diagnosis of the degeneration of a State or an individual, with Meyer's "Disintegrations of Personality," and with James' "Phenomena of Religious Experience," therefore underlies this essay; but it is apart from its objects to do more than state it. It is enunciated more fully in an article in the *Contemporary Review*, now out, entitled "Mankind in the Making." It is this:— [Pg x]

(*a*) The psychology of the individual retraces the path of the psychology of the race.

(*b*) In any given individual the *whole* path climbed by the foremost classes or races may not be retraced. Therefore numbers of individuals are permanently stranded on lower levels of evolution. *Society can quicken evolution* by right social arrangements, scientific in principle.

(*c*) Granted that any individual attains a certain psychical evolution in *normal* development, either evolution or devolution lies before him. Wrong social conditions lead to widespread devolution. The retrograde unit retraces downwards the upward path of the race, and can only be reclaimed along this path by wise social legislation, bringing steady pressure to bear along the lines of evolution, (barring extraordinary religious phenomena, which often reclaim individuals or communities). [Pg xi]

(*d*) Society has now arrived at a point of development when these facts must be recognised, and the whole question of the organisation of humanity put on a scientific basis. It will then be possible to reduce the sciences of sociology and psychology to scientific order, and our national treatment of such questions as vagrancy will be no longer purely empirical.[1]

> NOTE.—The Committee on Vagrancy, before which the author appeared as a witness (see Appendix IV.), was sitting during the months occupied in the writing of this book. Its conclusions, with which the author is in substantial agreement, are therefore added in the form of notes and appendices.
>
> This Preface was not originally written as such, but formed the introduction to the Gamble Prize Essay, in connection with which the essayist was required to furnish a

history of personal research in connection with the subject chosen.

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CHAPTER I.

VAGRANCY.

INTRODUCTION.

The word "vagrancy," from the Latin *vagare*, to wander, now implies a crime against civilised society (Vagrancy Report, p. 3, footnote). Laws to restrain or abolish it form part of the code of European and other civilised States.

Nevertheless, the *fact* of vagrancy is one deep rooted in human nature. The tendency to it recurs both in the individual and in the race. In one stage of development the child, unless restrained by watchful care, is essentially a vagrant, and a "roaming fit" seizes many of us at times. Before considering therefore historically, the legislation and remedies applied to the *crime* of vagrancy, it will be well to dwell briefly on the underlying reasons for it.

I. VAGRANCY AS AN UNDERLYING SOCIAL FACTOR.

If we take the history of any country we find that human life has covered it at different times much as geological strata cover the face of the earth. In Victoria Cave, Settle, for instance, human remains and relics of the corresponding animal and social life were actually found stratified. If you take the lowest stratum of society in any country the aboriginal man was, and still is, in countries where aborigines survive, a vagrant. The nomad is the foundation stone of human society. He is therefore a *survival*, and should be treated as such.[2] So long as mankind was nomad, the only way in which a man could be a vagrant in the modern sense of the term would be by some crime that excluded him from the companionship of his fellows like that of Cain. A man with his hand against every man would be a vagrant. A whole tribe might become vagrant relatively to other tribes, as the Bushmen of South Africa, or the gipsies of all countries. [Pg 2]

As civilization proceeded they remained as representatives of a prior stratification of humanity.

As by degrees men became pastoral and acquired flocks and herds, the man of no possessions would be relatively left behind as the unabsorbed nomad. But the world was wide, the best land alone was appropriated, and even when England had become largely agricultural there was plenty of room for Robin Hood and his merry men, and doubtless countless others, to lead the nomad life. [Pg 3]

Though the great majority of the population was settled on the land, there was an amount of authorised travelling that, relatively to the facilities for travel, was considerable. Pilgrimages to shrines and military expeditions and merchants' journeys led many on to the roads with money in their pouch, and the less wealthy could make use of the hospitality of abbeys. Fuller describes the old abbeys as "promiscuously entertaining some who did not need and more who did not deserve it" ("Church History," ed. 1656, p. 298). Even the funds of the Church did not suffice for the number of people roaming the country in idleness and beggary, as by degrees the country became settled, land enclosed, and the opportunity for sustenance by a vagrant life less and less certain.[3]

As far back as the reign of Richard II., in 1388, it became necessary for the protection of society to legislate against vagrancy.[4] The natural thing when society was almost wholly agricultural, and stationary in villages or towns, was to legislate against and forbid vagrancy. Beggars impotent to serve were to remain where the Act found them, and be there maintained or sent back to their birthplace. This is the germ of the law of settlement, by which every Englishman was supposed to have a birthright in his native parish. The laws were made stricter and stricter, yet vagrancy did not cease, even when the penalty was whipping, loss of ears and hanging for the third offence.[5] [Pg 4]

Even now society does not recognise that units squeezed out of true social relationships *must* become vagrants, as surely as soil trodden on the highway becomes dust.

The amount of vagrancy, *i.e.* of those obliged to revert to primitive conditions, depends as surely on the drying up of means of sustenance as the highway dust on the absence of refreshing showers.

Any change in society that displaces a large number of units is sure to result in increase of vagrancy. Of those forced out many cannot regain a footing if they would.[6]

But as time went on another class was added to the nomad as akin to it, and yet its origin is wholly different. The man unable to settle because of his affinity to a roving life is one thing, the man *squeezed out* of the pastoral or agricultural life is another. The latter is akin to our "unskilled labourer," a social unit unfitted for any but a primitive kind of existence, unfitted for industrial development, but not essentially nomad.[7] [Pg 5]

As early as Henry VIII., 1531, we find a second class, that of the "incapable," those who could not work, who were "licensed to beg."

The formation of this class was accelerated by the failure of the Church to provide for the assistance of the poor, by suppression of abbeys, etc., at the same time that the abolition of villeinage, which was still recent, threw off from organised society dependents very unfit to live a self-supporting life. (See Note 2.) Thus again the drying up of means of subsistence created as it were another layer of easily drifting dust. [Pg 6]

These two classes, that of the "poor, impotent, sick, and diseased," *i.e.* the incapable, and of the

"lusty," form the foundation of our Poor-law system.[8]

It is thus seen that changes in the social organisation left behind another stratum to be provided for by legislation. So long as the half-feudal, half-ecclesiastical framework of society existed, there was nutriment for the individual who was left stranded. He was shepherded in some way or other either by church or lord. But when social change left him unshepherded the charge fell on *the nation as an organised unit*. The Poor Law began. The necessity for it arose at once when "all parts of England and Wales be presently with rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars exceedingly pestered, by means whereof daily happened in the same realm horrible murders, thefts, and other great outrages."

Since, therefore, a transition period leaves behind such a layer of social *débris*, it is only to be expected that we should find the third great change that has passed over society, which is still recent, namely, the change to the industrial epoch, to be productive of another layer of social *débris* or dust.

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II. VAGRANCY FROM THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

If society was profoundly affected by the change from agriculture to sheep farming that took place in the Elizabethan period, and other social changes that followed, how much more must we expect to find the effects of such a tremendous change as the Industrial revolution! John A. Hobson points out (in "Problems of Poverty," p. 24) that "the period from 1790 to 1840 was the most miserable epoch in the history of the English working classes." It is doubtful indeed whether we have really recovered from the "sickness" of that period. The rise in wages has largely been swallowed up by the enormous rise in rent, estimated by Sir Robert Giffen at 150 per cent. in fifty years, which in city life is felt most oppressively. "Classes" have, it is true, risen out of the "masses," including the upper working class, but the poverty of large populations is still extreme. It is a matter of grave moment for civilized society that in London, for example, according to Charles Booth's investigations, it can still be said that out of a population of 891,539, 111,000 might be swept out of existence and "no class nor any industry would suffer in the least." For the origin of such a mass of hopeless poverty, we must look to the miseries of the early factory times, and the oppressive pressure of capital on labour, only slowly being counteracted by legislation.

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We have in fact added to the class of hereditary vagrants and those driven from means of subsistence by incapacity and helplessness, a third class which we may call "inefficient." The origin of this class is directly due to the incoming of the factory system and the specialisation of industry. As the demand for labour in towns grew, numbers of poor were attracted. Of these some were capable of attaining industrial skill, others were not. The latter became hangers-on to the rising industries. It is not sufficiently recognised that the pressure of the demands of capital on labour are continually increasing, and that, therefore, many fall below the standard of efficiency *now* who originally would not have done so. For example, in cotton mills the number of spindles per worker has greatly increased, and also the "speeding" of the machinery. A man who could work at the old pace might not be able to work at the new, and would therefore be rejected as "inefficient," but he would only be *relatively* "inefficient." Yet such is the skill necessary in British industries, that "low-skilled labour" is all that numbers of working lads can ever attain to, through defects in physique or education. It will easily be seen that this mass of "low-skilled" labour furnishes a third class from which vagrancy may easily be recruited, by slight relative changes in the prosperity of the community.[9]

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Also there is another change, due to wide social differences in organisation, between the preceding century and the nineteenth, which has a direct bearing on the question of vagrancy, but has been little noticed. It is evident that *facilities for migration* must have some relation to amount of migration. In the days when it was a formidable journey to travel from London to Manchester, the fact affected all grades of society. The coming of the steam engine has meant more than industrial revolution, it spells social revolution. It has acted as a disintegrating as well as an integrating force. On the one hand the *community* is more closely bound together by newspapers, common customs, facilities for intercourse, and quick transit. On the other hand family ties are loosened, and a vagrant habit of migration, seasonal and otherwise, makes residence in a strange place no longer formidable. As a social solvent the effect of the railway can hardly be exaggerated. But an *individual* separated from family or social ties is easily loosened, if means of support fail, and quite a new form of vagrancy arises from "inefficient" industrials migrating in search of work.[10]

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We must therefore consider next the attempt of the social organism to provide for the vagrancy of the new era, the reasons for its ineffectiveness, and the remedies most likely to succeed.

(1) The *attempt* we shall find in the provision of the tramp ward.

(2) The reasons for its ineffectiveness will best be elucidated by an examination of the actual conditions of things in respect to vagrancy at present. This will be given largely as a result of research work done by the writer, or of facts she has collected.

(3) It will then be necessary to examine first some remedies tried in other countries.

After this some attention may be paid to tentative experiments in our own country.

(4) It will then remain to sketch the lines of future development and if possible elucidate scientific outlines of possible progress from the collected facts.

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The mass of these is so great that for the sake of brevity this historic prelude has been made very short. A most interesting historical study could be made of the relation of vagrancy to the ebb and flow of national life.

III. SPECIAL LEGISLATION FOR VAGRANCY.

With the disturbances due to a change of condition of the working classes, and to the oncoming of a new epoch, arose an impulse towards repression, similar to that which in Elizabeth's time led to the laws against "sturdy beggars." The pressure of poverty, driving off individuals into the unattached or "dust" condition, causes of course an increase of beggary. This is resented by the upper classes, and if they constitute the main proportion of government, the natural consequence is sterner legislation with a view to putting down the evil. Thus, in 1824 was passed an Act, still in force, by which a beggar wandering alone, or asking alms in public places, may be punished as an idle or disorderly person with imprisonment for one month with hard labour. If already sentenced, with three months' hard labour. If again sentenced, twelve months' hard labour with whipping.[11] The severity of this law has been mitigated by the magistrates' unwillingness to convict for "the first offence."

[Pg 12] But all legislation is unavailing to control vagrancy by *repression* if it springs from widespread social evils. The state of England under heavy tariffs grew worse and worse. Rose in his "Rise of Democracy" says that duties were imposed on 1,200 articles—"a system which was disastrous to the nation's finance, and to the manufacturers and operatives who formed the backbone of the nation. Manufacturers had enormous stocks of unsaleable goods, operatives had the bitter experience of an empty larder." "The state of society in England," wrote Dr. Arnold to Carlyle in 1840, "was never yet paralleled in history." "Alton Locke" and Cooper's "Autobiography" reveal something of the prevailing wretchedness. Lord Rosebery (speaking at Manchester Chamber of Commerce, November 1st, 1897) gave a picture of Manchester in 1839: "118 mills and other works were standing idle; 681 shops and offices were untenanted; 5,490 dwellings unoccupied. In one district there were 2,000 families without a bed among them; 8,000 people whose weekly income was only 1*s*. 2½*d*. In Stockport 72,314 people had received relief whose average income was 9-1/5*d*." Wheat was at 65*s*. a quarter. Strikes followed in 1842 and 1844.

Such a state of things must inevitably have led to the gradual breaking down of numbers into vagrancy. The process is a slow one. Homes successfully resist disintegration, often for a surprising length of time, but if trade depression continues they yield. [Pg 13] First the worst go, and then better ones follow. This leads to pressure on public accommodation, at first hardly noticed, but as it increases there arise rumours of need for fresh legislation. This again is accompanied by investigation, often lengthy, and tentative experiment also covers ground, and so time passes.[12] It is not surprising, however, to learn that by degrees workhouses came to be regarded as "poor men's hotels," that the roving vagrant population seriously increased, and that pressure on accommodation led at last to legislation. In London especially the number of "sleepers-out" increased so much that the existence of a poor class practically outside the law of settlement and requiring at any rate temporary accommodation was recognised.[13] It was at first a *humane* measure to supplement the old severe Vagrant Act, 5 Geo. IV. c. 5, of imprisonment for one month with hard labour for wandering about, begging and neglecting family, or for three months, with hard labour if previously convicted, or found in uninhabited buildings, or if vagrants without [Pg 14] visible means of subsistence. This was supplemented by the Metropolitan Houseless Poor Acts, 1864 and 1865 (27 & 28 Vict. c. 116, and 28 & 29 Vict. c. 34), which provided for destitute wayfarers and wanderers and foundlings shelter for the night.

But the creation of a new pauper class, *i.e.* CASUALS, needed a very wise statesmanship. We shall see later that the same need in other countries has led to much wiser measures.

In England, by the extension of this system to all workhouses, the CASUAL WARD was created in 1871.[14] Legislation since has principally been directed to making it deterrent and severe. It has never been a *provision* for migration such as the *German relief station* affords. It does not deal effectively with either vagrant, incapable, or the special product of the industrial period, the ineffective. The charges to be made against it must, however, be backed up by evidence. It will be sufficient now briefly to sketch what can only be considered as a national costly experiment which has failed in its purpose.[15] At first only *shelter* was provided, then *food* to obviate beggary, but of the most meagre description[16]: in many unions still only bread and water and a small portion of cheese is given, even with hard labour,[17] [Pg 15] At first the casual was only detained till 11 A.M. or till completion of task. But as the numbers were found to increase, by the Casual Poor Act of 1882 (45 & 46 Vict. c. 36) it was ordered that the casual poor should be detained till the second day and discharged at 9 A.M., after a full day's task. There are still, however, many unions where this is not enforced.[18]

A task of work in return for food was first demanded in 1842 after the commencement of the tide of vagrancy of which I have spoken.

It will be seen what a tremendous national experiment thus gradually arose under most unfavourable conditions. The nature of these adverse conditions may be summarised thus:

(1) The legislation was at best "hand to mouth," not taking into account the real causes at work.

(2) It was the result to a large extent of class prejudice, and all homeless wanderers, from whatever cause, are lumped together as "vagrants."

(3) It was impossible for the Local Government Board, however much it wished to do so, to secure a *uniform system throughout the country*. It does not even yet exist.

(4) The system attempted to deal with a class without any effective control over them. There is less control over vagrants than over paupers.

(5) Considerations of self-interest would obviously cause guardians to attempt to keep down casuals, regardless of statistics of sleeping out and beggary.

(6) Official opinion would hardly be in favour of a troublesome class, and grave abuses might easily arise.

To show that the casual ward is ineffective and costly, and open to grave abuse, evidence will now be given. It must be clearly noted that *provision for migration* is a new need of the Industrial age, and should not be confused with repression of vagrancy. *Vagrancy proper* was the *crime* of individuals who dropped out of a settled, mainly agricultural, society into the wandering life. *Vagrancy as induced by modern conditions* may be no crime. It is not a crime for a man who cannot obtain work to migrate to find it, or for a man to return home on foot from a distance. Yet, if there is no proper provision for *migration*, a man may, by contact with vagrants proper and degeneration, become incapable of settled existence. To prevent this should be the aim of social legislation. This would be *true* repression of vagrancy.

IV. EXAMINATION OF VAGRANCY AS IT EXISTS AT PRESENT.

Statistics of Investigation.

It is very difficult at first sight to examine the phenomena of vagrancy. Statistics covering the whole nation are comparatively useless, except that a great *general* rise, such as has recently taken place, has grave significance. The policy of guardians in different parts of the country changes. Severer tasks and harsher conditions naturally reduce the number of candidates for the casual ward. Therefore statistics of reductions in inmates may be most misleading.[19] Mr. C. H. Fox, of Wellington, Somerset, has for a long time taken pains to observe the tide of vagrancy flowing through his union, which receives casuals journeying northward. The stringent order of the Local Government Board, February 25, 1896, asking for the detention of casuals for two nights instead of one, and advising the separate cell system, had the following results: "The number of casuals applying for police orders in Somerset from July, 1895, to July, 1896, twelve months before the more stringent order, was 25,062; and the number from July, 1896, seven months after the more stringent order, was 19,789. This shows a diminution of 21 per cent., and the current saying was 'Behold the success of their severity.' But, alas! during the latter period the cases of begging in the country rose no less than 83 per cent. and sleeping out 39 per cent., showing that severity only drove men to beg and find lodging where there was no imprisonment." The same observer shows how casual statistics depend upon statistics of unemployment by the following observation:

> "He lived on one of the main arteries of nomadic travel from London and the north to Plymouth and the west, and had peculiar opportunities for observation, of which he freely availed himself. Casuals applying for police orders 1890-91 (years of fairly good trade), 2,109; casuals applying for police orders 1893-94 (years of depressed trade) 4,705. Certainly the additional 2,596 were not "professional tramps," but, as usual, unfortunate *inferior workmen who were the first to receive notice when trade was bad*."[20]

That the same results are occurring now, namely, the crowding into the tramp ward of unemployed workmen travelling in search of work, I have ample evidence. A few facts will suffice to elucidate this point, but it must also be remarked that in addition to *increase* there is also an actual *displacement* of the ordinary vagrant by the unfortunate ineffective or even effective workman out of work. The reason for this is not far to seek. Times of general distress and unemployment are *harvest times for the man who lives by preying on society*. He who is not ashamed to beg can easily invent a "moving tale," and find his harvest of charity ready. Consequently, he is seldom too hard up to get a bed in the common lodging-house. "Mouchers" of all descriptions, both infirm and otherwise, may be found enjoying themselves, getting usually plenty of drink and food, while the "genuine working man" roams the country with a sinking heart and empty stomach, sleeping in the open or forced into the casual ward.[21]

This little-noticed fact is attested in various ways.

Here are the statistics of male casuals examined in Rochdale by an expert workhouse official during the closing weeks of 1903: "Of 936 persons reported on, the majority were in the prime of life. There were only 26 under the age of 21, and 34 over 66. Only 62 were married; 133 were widowers and 741 single. There were 391 skilled artisans, 555 'labourers,' 125 ex-soldiers and sailors (many with excellent conduct records), and one was an ex-member of the Royal Irish Constabulary."

Thirty-nine admitted that they had lost their work through drink. Doubtless there were others of whom the same could be said (Dr. Pinck, the workhouse medical officer at Rochdale, is of opinion that a comparatively small proportion of true vagrants owe their poverty to intemperance.) Of all the 936 persons reported on, the workhouse master said *he could not describe more than 33 as habitual vagrants*. Mr. Leach himself, who has made a close study of the subject, is convinced

that a large proportion of the men on the road are tramping because they want work and cannot find it at home. The report continues: "Upon these the present regulations press with senseless severity."

A similar investigation, summarised in the "Toynbee Record" for February, 1905, gives the result of two voluntary investigations in the months of November and December, 1904, conducted at Whitechapel casual ward. Of 250 men only 15 admitted marriage, 56 per cent. were between 30 and 50 years of age, 20 per cent. had been in the Army. Dockers and labourers were numerous, but other occupations were represented by quite a few members apiece. There was only one tailor. The investigators "were surprised at the thoroughly decent appearance of a large proportion of the men."[22]

Okehampton found (winter 1904-5) that "a large proportion of tramps were discharged soldiers from the Army, 25 or 30 per cent."[23] At a conference on vagrancy in Manchester (winter 1904-5), attended by masters, matrons, relieving officers, and guardians, similar reports were given, and a unanimous resolution was passed in favour of fresh legislation, while the failure of the present system and its result as *manufacturing* vagrants was freely acknowledged. With regard to the growth of vagrancy as a result of bad trade, the following investigation may be of value. It will illustrate also the *irregularity* of treatment, and the natural tendency of wanderers to go where the treatment is less harsh.

It is self-evident that large increases in vagrancy in consecutive years cannot possibly be due to a *normal increase* in vagrancy, but *must* be due to extraordinary pressure forcing individuals into it. Thus the relation of vagrancy to unemployment is amply demonstrated. (See note 19.)

Investigation into 54 Unions in Eastern Division by Lynn Guardians.—43 replies; 4 had no vagrants; 37 show a striking increase for September, 1904. September, 1903, 2,859 vagrants; September, 1904, 4,082; increase, 1,223. Decrease in 6 unions.

Task.

In 16. Oakum picking, 4 lbs. unbeaten, 8 lbs. beaten oakum.	Remainder. Sawing wood, stone breaking, or working on the land.

Dietary:	8 oz. of bread and water	...	Breakfast.
	8 oz. bread, 1½ oz. cheese	...	Dinner.
	8 oz. bread and water	...	Supper.

In a very few gruel.

Smallburgh.—Task, 12 cwt. granite. September, 1903, none; September, 1904, 9. *This task is considered remedial, as by it the number of vagrants was reduced from 173 (January to November, 1903) to 52 (1904).*

Cosford.—50 per cent. increase.

Henstead, after introducing oakum picking, found "a remarkable falling off." Year ending Lady Day, 1897, 2,337; Year ending Lady Day, 1904, 62.

Docking Union.—Decrease. Task, pumping the well and working on the land.

Freebridge Lynn.—September, 1904, only 4 men. Task, oakum picking. In 1893 the number of vagrants relieved was above 900, but "the tramp of late has given the place a wide berth." Only 24 have been admitted. "Probably the road-army came by another route than Docking and Gayton to the 7-cwt. stone-breaking at Lynn, fighting shy of oakum-picking and well-pumping." *But they come, and the decrease in these two unions has resulted in an increase at Downham, Wisbech, and Lynn.*

At *Thetford* "the cells and stone-breaking have prevented any material increase in the number of vagrants."

At *Halsted*, in spite of oakum-picking, there have been 41 vagrants, compared with 9 in September, 1903.

At *Chelmsford* there were 205, September, 1904, as against 126, September, 1905.

At *Walsingham* a slight decrease, owing to oakum picking being enforced.

So great is the pressure, however, that even oakum-picking or stone-breaking and corn-grinding have not prevented a large increase in Maldon, Ipswich, Saffron Walden, Norwich, Dunmow, Swaffham, and Wisbech.

Downham increased from 64, September, 1903, to 167, September, 1904. No task is imposed save gardening.

V. FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS (PERSONAL).

Investigations from the official point of view are interesting and instructive, and, if conducted in a scientific spirit, would eventually be of great value in solving social problems. But in the present confused state of things there is also special value in the observations of witnesses who, by descending into the abyss, explore its conditions, and form an independent judgment. So far as my personal observation goes, everyone who has done this expresses surprise at the result, namely, that the impression that the vast majority of so-called "vagrants" are "loafers," vanishes,

and the inmates of the casual ward are mostly found to be seekers for work. Little short of a revolution may be made in preconceived opinion by actual experience.

We all know that a rise in pauperism has taken place. In the year ending Lady Day, 1904, £587,131 was expended in poor relief in excess of the corresponding period 1903; 869,128 received relief, as against 847,480 in 1903, on January 1st. But these increases in *actual* pauperism represent enormous increases in *potential* pauperism. The hold of a family or of an individual on sustenance gradually loosens, and the least competent or more unfortunate are shaken off and drop into the abyss. At a meeting of the City Council of Manchester in the winter of 1904 it was deliberately stated that "between 40,000 and 50,000 people were on the verge of starvation." An investigation undertaken by the Rev. A. H. Gray in an area between All Saints' and the Medlock, in Ancoats by the University Settlement, and in Hulme by the Lancashire College Settlement, revealed in 3,000 houses about 900 people without employment, "of whom 442 were heads of families." In addition, numbers were only partially employed. One man "trudged once every week to a smaller town 18 miles off where one or two days' work have been procurable."

It will be seen, therefore, that changes in *averages* of unemployment must result in increase of vagrancy. The average of unemployed returned by trade unions in January for 10 years (1894-1903) was 4.7 per cent.; in January, 1903, it was 5.1 per cent., and in January, 1904, 6.6 per cent. (See p. **76**.) Of course, unskilled and unorganised industries are still more affected.

Mr. Ensor, who tramped for a week, 150 miles, in the northern counties, and whose experiences were given in the *Independent Review*, relates that "where to obtain work" is a "burning question" among the inmates of the vagrant ward. It can hardly be imagined how soon a destitute man is forced of necessity to wander; in the absence of money, being even too poor to buy a newspaper, he is dependent on vague information received "on the road," and naturally is driven to seek food and shelter wherever it is to be had. A slightly more humane treatment in any part of the country may lead to an influx of these unfortunates.[24] Thus the comparative comfort of Welsh workhouses led in the winter of 1904-5 to an "incursion of tramps." Even the prisons were filled by tramps who rebelled against regulations. "Two or three times a week batches of tramps have to be removed from the prisons of Carnarvon and Ruthin to Shrewsbury and Knutsford, and even to gaols in English towns." With regard to this result of the present vagrancy regulations, there is much to be said. A working man cannot sustain himself in a condition fit for work on the tramp ward dietary.[25] I have personal experience of the exhaustion consequent upon it. Unless supplemented by begging, a man must inevitably lose strength if he tramps from ward to ward. Mr. Ensor himself saw a young man throw up work and triumphantly march to prison from sheer hunger. Tramp ward regulation rations (including gruel) contain only 21½ ounces of proteid as against 31½ ounces *in the lowest prison fare*. But this does not represent the real state of the case. In many workhouses there is only dry bread with a small portion of cheese, the gruel being omitted without substitute. (See note 16.) The bread is often coarse, dry and crusty, leavings from the workhouse, and most unappetising. Then dry bread *alone* can scarcely be eaten, and even water is not always to be obtained to wash it down. (Pp. **112**, **124**, **152**.) The following are reports given by tramps themselves as to food to the writer.

A man said he was too disturbed in mind to eat it, but if he could have done so "he could not have lived upon it." This man "had been in two situations over thirty years," and appeared clean and respectable. He said the majority of men in with him at Bury were also working men out of employment.

One man said he had been in a workhouse where the "skilly" was brought in a bucket, and the men had to dip it out as best they could in jampots.

In this investigation, conducted personally by the writer, there was a general consensus of opinion that prison was less hard.[26] (See also Chap. VIII.)

The actual difference in legal dietary is appended:—

Prison Dietary—Lowest Scale.

Breakfast	... 8 oz. bread, 1 pint gruel.
Supper	... 8 oz. bread, 1 pint gruel.
Dinner	... 3 days, 8 oz. bread, 1 pint porridge.
	2 days, 8 oz. bread, 8 oz. potatoes.
	2 days, 8 oz. bread, 8 oz. suet pudding.

Daily Average, 28½ oz. solid, with 2¼ pints gruel, ½ pint porridge.

Prisoners' Task, 5 or 10 cwt. stones, 2 lbs. oakum.

Legal Dietary for Casual Paupers.

Breakfast	... 6 oz. bread, 1 pint gruel.
Supper	... 6 oz. bread, 1 pint gruel.
Dinner	... 8 oz. bread, 1½ oz. cheese.

Daily Average, 21½ oz. solid, with 2 pints gruel.

Casuals' Task, 14 cwt. stones.

Evidence comes from all over the country of increase in prison statistics through crimes due to a desire to escape from tramp ward conditions and preference for prison fare.[27] [Pg 28]

Such instances as this are continually occurring.

"What am I to do if I cannot get work?" asked John Rush, a tramp, when brought before the King's Lynn magistrates on a charge of refusing to break stones in the casual ward.

"You are to go to prison for twenty-one days," replied the magistrate.

Rush had been required to break 7 cwt. of stone. He asked to have it weighed, as he was of opinion that it was 12 cwt. His request was refused, and he declined to do the work.

A large number of tramps at Andover were sentenced to twenty-one days' imprisonment for refusing to do their task.

"Seventeen vagrants were marched from the workhouse to the police-court at Canarvon (*North Wales Chronicle*, 25th February, 1905), handcuffed. Seventeen out of twenty-three inmates refused to work. They alleged that they had been forced to sleep on a wet tiled floor and were [Pg 29] 'almost perishing.' They were sent to prison for a month with hard labour."

Such incidents come from all over the country and are backed up by prison statistics. Prosecutions for offences of this kind rose in 1901 to 5,118, and have risen further. In one prison, Devizes, they doubled the inmates.

It must be remembered that pressure on the tramp ward, as our country's provision for destitution, has been much lightened by the rise of many large shelters. These deal mostly, however, with the town unemployed. It has not been sufficiently considered that owing to the massing of population in towns, the destitute unemployed are sure to appear in the tramp ward, but that our present system *forces* them to migrate, at any rate in a small circle, as after claiming the tramp ward they cannot claim shelter again in the same place *for a month*, except under penalty of four nights' detention. All masters of workhouses witness how this tends to make a *forced migration in a limited circle*.[28] Therefore to the town unemployed the shelter is a boon, as it enables him to remain in one place and look for work, and the testimony of all who are [Pg 30] working shelters and labour bureaux is that numbers who avail themselves of them *do* obtain employment. But if they belong to the "inefficient" class this employment cannot be permanent. [29] So much is the tramp ward disliked, and so useless is it as a remedy for destitution, since at [Pg 31] best it affords only a night's shelter with poor food and hard labour, that numbers prefer to "sleep out." The London County Council's census of the homeless poor, Friday, 29th January, 1904, revealed 1,463 men, 116 women, 46 boys, and 4 girls walking the streets, and 100 males and 68 females sleeping in doorways, etc., a total of 1,797 homeless poor in a small area in London (from Hyde Park in the west, to the east end of Whitechapel Road, from High Holborn, Old Street and Bethnal Green, in the north, to the Thames, in the south). In the winter 1903-4, no fewer than 300 people were known to be sleeping out every night in Manchester.

The fate of many unfortunates is a career of gradual physical and moral deterioration from which there is, humanly speaking, no escape.

A man may *begin* a prison career accidentally. An incident related to me is as follows:—A man went to a place where there was a local merry-making, hoping to pick up a little. There was no room either in tramp ward or lodging-house; he slept out, unfortunately for him, on private grounds. For this he got three months' imprisonment. (See Chap. VIII.)

The case of those who sleep out may end otherwise, but as tragically, after long privation. Here [Pg 32] are two examples:—"Alfred Mather, aged about 33, no fixed home and no occupation, latterly on the tramp. Found ill on a seat opposite Temple Gardens, and taken by the police to Bear Yard Infirmary five days before death. Died from epilepsy accelerated by exposure." "Jos. Lucas, no fixed abode, 'knocked up and down mostly,' getting odd coppers when he could, found dead in yard of White Hart, Royton." Such incidents might be multiplied, but the facts of disease and death are masked, because people suffering from illness in the street usually obtain pity. Recent statistics show that the percentage of the death rate in common lodging-houses is appalling. (See Appendix IX., Vagrancy Report.) No one who has been in a tramp ward can fail to have been struck by the low vitality and even serious illness of inmates, yet by common report it is difficult to obtain the services of a doctor, and illness is constantly taken to be "malingering."

With regard to evidence as to actual tramp ward conditions, however, no clearer account can be given than the following. The writer is personally known to the author of this paper. He is extremely truthful, and where investigation has followed, his statements have been fully endorsed. They furnish most valuable evidence. He is himself a working man of superior education, driven by misfortune into restless habits and occasionally to the tramp ward. Let him speak for himself.

[Pg 33]

VI. TRAMP WARD. FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS.

Extracts from a Correspondence with a Working Man.

"I was an interested listener to your address on casual wards and common lodging-houses. Your experience coincides with mine, with the exception of the casual wards. Your description was much too favourable.

"I have been in several. This is an account of the last one I was in. After walking twenty miles with nothing to eat before I started or during the day, I was received, had a bath, and was put to bed. They gave me nothing to eat or drink; out next morning at six o'clock: for breakfast had a drink of water and a tinful of broken crusts, seven pieces in all, and I should say not more than six ounces. I suppose they had been left by the children or at the infirmaries. Same for dinner (six pieces), with a small piece of cheese; for supper, water and five crusts. On going out next morning, water and six crusts. I should put the value at one penny altogether, and that for cheese; the bread was simply waste.

"This is what I did for the value I received, Sweep, wash, and scrub out twelve or fourteen cells; ditto eighty-seven square yards of cement flooring; ditto a flight of stone steps (about fifty), four feet wide with three landings; ditto one bath-room and two lavatories; clean bath and closet pans; and polish sixty-seven sets of brasses. I started at seven o'clock and had done at 4.30, and was then locked up in the cell. I forgot to say that I had twopence when I went in, which the porter annexed, which, as he said, 'would help pay expenses.'

"I was free from vermin when I went in, but was not when I came out; and whatever the chairman may say about coming out of their place clean, I say it is impossible to do so.

"I may say that I get my living on public works, and this as you know may take you across the country."

Second Letter.

"The remarks made by your chairman on stone-breaking were very misleading. He said, 'The stones required to be broken by a man were ten hundredweight. Why, he knew a man who could easily break two and a half yards in a day, and in each yard was twenty-two hundredweight, so that his hearers could see that the casual's task was not hard.'

"He did not say that the stones his man broke were probably twice the size of those broken by the casual, and that he had no grid to put them through, which takes almost as long as the actual stone-breaking.

"With regard to entering the casual ward early, I myself when I am on the road always make a point of doing twenty miles a day. Is a man after doing twenty miles fit for work? Navvies and men working on public works like to get from one job to another without delay. Very often a man will start, we will say from Yorkshire to Devon: if he can pick up a day's work on the way he will do so; but his object is to get to Devon, and he is going to get there as soon as possible. He is pretty certain of work when he gets there because he is known either to the ganger or the agent, or some one in a position to start him, which is really the reason he goes such a distance. As a rule he sets himself twenty or twenty-five miles a day, and he does it unless it is very wet. He therefore wants a rest at the end of the journey, not work."

Replying that this was not the class for whom the casual ward was intended, I received the following:—

Third Letter.

"I should suggest, for the benefit of the man looking for work, that in all casual wards there should be cells set apart for him at a charge, say of threepence per night. He should be taken in as early as six o'clock and let go next morning at six o'clock; if there is any work going he would stand a chance of getting it: you would not be pauperising him—he would be no charge on the rates, and your pauper returns would be greatly reduced. Very likely the argument would be that the guardians would be interfering with private rights, *i.e.* lodging-houses. In answer to this, I have to say that in a great many towns there are no lodgings of any kind, and in others they are so bad that no decent man will sleep in them. I have paid for a bed in such places as Birkenhead, Chester, Wrexham, and others, and after seeing what they were like have left them, not caring to sleep there. Also the lodging-house keepers, if they found the new system reducing their takings, would waken up to the fact that decent beds may bring them their trade back.

"Many a man is spent up when he left a job to look for another, because if money is found on him in the workhouse he loses it. Give him the opportunity of paying and he will do so if he can get a *decent bed*.

"As regards those on the road who can work but will not, the authorities would not be interfering with the liberty of the subject in taking them off the road and making them work for their keep, and in doing so he need not be classed as a pauper.

"There are others who cannot work, old men and women and children; in all cases such as these I should have them sent to the place of birth, no matter how long they had left there they must go back. There would be a chance of reclaiming them when they knew they had to go back, and there would also be an inducement for their friends and relations to show what they are made of by helping to keep them. Of course there are numbers who do not know where they are born, also foreigners; these the Government

should take in hand. It's the policy of the Government to let destitute foreigners land here, you must therefore make them responsible for them. [Pg 37]

"These suggestions could be easily worked out to the satisfaction of the people at large; you would rescue a great number from self-imposed misery; you would be clearing the roads of a disgrace to the country; and I have not the slightest doubt that you would do away with a great deal of disease and crime. I have noticed on more than one occasion that when small-pox has broken out in a part of the country it has been reported that the cause has been traced to tramps.

"I remember going in at T ... when several of us were in the bath-room at one time, and of course one hot water for all. I noticed one man who had stripped was covered with sores, raw, festering sores. I did not object to his bathing, but of course refused to be bathed in the same water. After drawing the attention of the attendant to the man's state he was sent off without his bath; he was given the usual rugs, which of course were placed with the others next morning, and not stoved, because they have no stove there. This man had been going from place to place, and could not get to see a doctor, he told me himself, and I can well believe him. I have had occasion to ask for the doctor myself and have been refused.[30] Also on this night there were more tramps than they had room for, we had to sleep two in a cell, one on the board let down from the wall, [Pg 38] and the other on the floor underneath. In the cell next me one of the men wanted to go to the w.c., but could get no answer to his repeated calls. Now under these circumstances if disease breaks out who is to blame?

"I think that if the rules laid down by the L.G.B. were strictly carried out things would be better, but there is too much left to the discretion of the guardians, which means the workhouse master and his subordinates, with the result that they do pretty much as they please.

"I think it is generally allowed by guardians that the most successful master is the one who can keep down the number of casuals. Why that is I do not know, because if a man is found sleeping out or begging he goes to prison. I have never been in a prison myself, but from what I hear I should say that he is better off than the man under the thumb of a workhouse master.[31]

"It ought to be generally known that it is only by starvation and heavy tasks that a master can keep down his pauper returns. In passing I should like to say that I have found it a pretty general thing for several men to go through one lot of water."

After travelling from Kent to Devon, finding employment very bad (winter 1904-5) correspondent came north. [Pg 39] He travelled to East Yorkshire to a harvest job where he was expected, but found the harvest short and only got two days. He found that numbers of men who usually found harvest employment could not obtain it, and that hard-working men were roaming from place to place, and, being forced to take refuge in the tramp ward, were fast losing heart. The following is his experience in a tramp ward, where he was forced to take refuge one rainy day. Usually he slept in the open.

Fourth Letter.

"On going in you have your bread, and before you have time to eat it you are taken to the room for undressing. This is not very large, only for nine or ten to sit down, and there were many that night. You will see that room was limited. There were two dirty-looking baths there, but how many made use of them I could not say. I did not. Your clothes are tied into a bundle and put all together into a heap in the room you undress in. Your clothes may be good and clean and free from vermin when you undress, but what will they be like in the morning?

"You have a shirt and two rugs given you, and go to the sleeping room on the boards. Some have a board for their head. I had not. It is a large room, and it need be, for there were twenty-four of us in it. It is infested with bugs. The shirts and rugs, I should say, have not been washed for months, and are full of vermin. Mine was, and the complaint was general, so I suppose they were all alike. [Pg 40] Sleep is impossible. You get up, have your bread and cold water, and are put on the pump, eight on and eight off, every half-hour. There are two pumps kept continually going all day, so it cannot be for the want of water that dirt reigns supreme. Cheese and bread for dinner, bread *and bread* for supper, and then the awful night to go through again. Get up and have some bread and water. Then you are turned out. It was raining in torrents. I was soaked in twenty minutes after I had left."

Walking north in the vain search for work, my correspondent crossed to Lancashire and encountered the following experience.

Fifth Letter.

"I was admitted at 8.10. They gave me coffee and bread, and sent me to a very nice large and well-ventilated room, a room large enough to sleep fifteen men in easily. There were three others there, and after waiting till nine o'clock, during which time nine more arrived, they started bathing us. There are four baths there, three for each

bath, and how many more after used the same water I do not know. Given a shirt, you are sent to the cells. I noticed on going to mine that there were eleven cells on the right, and nine on the left. My cell was four from the top on the left. The right side was full, and the three on the left above mine also full. I noticed three pairs of boots outside each cell; a pleasant prospect. There were two men already in my cell. I made the third. That made forty-five men for the fifteen cells, then there were the eleven men I left in the bath-room, who would fill four others, that would make fifty-six men in nineteen cells. Now when I tell you that these cells are four feet six inches wide, and my two comrades were bigger men than me, and I am not a small one, you can fancy the situation. What I suffered from cramp alone was punishment enough for a lifetime. You have one rug each, not enough to keep you from coming in contact with the other men's flesh. As soon as you are in the door is closed and you are in black darkness, yet the gas is burning in the passage all night. I could see it by the crack in the door, and if they would cut a hole in the door it would serve both for ventilation and light.

"I can safely say that I had never such a night in my life. Sleep was out of the question, even if you had not been disturbed by the groans and curses that were going on more or less all night, a sort of song you would fancy they sing in the Inferno.

"One of my mates was an old man. He had been drinking. Some one had given him a couple of pints of 1½*d.* beer, and I suppose he had had an empty stomach, anyway he said it upset him. 'Diarrhœa,' he called it. Now the foul air arising from other causes was bad enough, but when I tell you."... Here follows a description of consequences. "The old man said it was useless to call to the attendant, he had been in before." When at 5.30 the door was opened it was only to fetch rugs and shirts. Permission to leave the cell or empty the vessel was refused by two attendants, and also to men in other cells. "It's a mercy I did not go off my head," my correspondent remarks concerning that horrible night.

"The second attendant also brutally refusing to allow the vessel to be removed 'because it was against rules,' said 'it would do to go with the ham and eggs.'

"'Ham and eggs' in the shape of coffee and bread appeared at seven o'clock, and those who could consume it had to do so in that atmosphere of horror. We were kept locked up until about 8.20, and then let out. I shall never forget the feeling in all my life.

"I have noticed on more than one occasion that when small-pox has broken out in various parts of the country, that it has been taken there by tramps. Now supposing small-pox broke out in a place having such a tramp ward, who would be to blame?

"The guardians cannot say they had not the room, there is the room I have mentioned. There were another row of cells I noticed, about twenty, that had the appearance of being unoccupied. There were certainly some of them empty; the doors of others were closed so I cannot say if all were, but that can easily be found out.

"There were thirty-four men kept in, and about twenty of us were sent to the wood-yard. I had asked to see a doctor. I was too ill to work, but was told to go to the yard. I went but did nothing. I could not. I felt I had not the strength of a baby, and had a hard matter to keep on my feet.

"At about ten o'clock the labour master came round. At least he was pointed out to me as the labour master, but as I did not see him again all day, I doubted it. Anyhow he asked me what I was doing; I told him I could do nothing, and wanted to see the doctor. He told me that I was a malingerer and that I should not see the doctor. 'Doctors are not for such as thou,' says he, and that I should have no dinner. I asked him to send me before a magistrate: I would have done a month gladly if I could have made this statement before a magistrate. I had forgotten to mention the state of the cell; it was very damp and coated with dirt and spit, quite enough to spread disease.

"Although I was to have no dinner, I was given some, but gave it away, as I could eat nothing until I was coming out next morning. I did not work till the afternoon, when I felt a little better and very cold. I thought I would see what I could do, but I could not do much. At 4.30 o'clock work ceased and we had a roll each. Afterwards I noticed that a number of men crowded round the door leading to the cells. Thinking there was something in it, I got as near the door as possible. At 5.30 this door opened. The rush of boys on opening the doors of a penny gaff was not in it. It turned out that on the second night there are two rooms to be slept in, each containing nine bedsteads, hence the rush. The first eighteen would get them—I was the lucky eighteenth.

"There were thirteen in the room I was in—four on the floor. I could not say if the remainder slept in the other room or not; I had a better night than the one previous. We were up at 5.30, and after having roll and coffee were let out at 7.30.

"I see some of the northern counties are holding a conference, under the chairmanship of Sir John Hibbert, in order to study the vagrant problem, and he quoted the punishment of vagrants in Henry VIII.'s time. I think if Sir John had studied the matter he would have seen that at that time vagrants were favourably dealt with in comparison with their betters. There was many a better head than even Sir John's stuck on Temple Bar for only saying what they thought.

"One of the favourite complaints at this conference will be the burden to the

ratepayers, and the cost of their maintenance will be supplied to them by the various union masters. Now, how does it work out?

"The thirty-four men who were kept for the two nights and a day had 170 rolls, thirty-four portions of cheese, and 102 lots of coffee. This during a year would mean a considerable sum. For this the ratepayers think they would have to do a day's work—but do they? There were twenty-two men put to wood sawing, and here I assert, if the whole of the wood cut during the day had been equally divided between these men, and given to them as a task, it could have been done in two hours. Now, why were these men kept in their cells from 5.30 to 8.20?—why were they not sent to the labour yard at six o'clock and worked for this two hours, given their breakfast, and sent about their business? The ratepayer would have the same amount of work done, and have saved the price of 102 rolls and thirty-four lots of coffee, and thirty-four portions of cheese. To give an instance of the work done. There were two men nearest me who started to saw a sleeper with a cross-cut saw at nine o'clock, they had not finished at three o'clock, and the old man took one away, and I helped to finish it myself. This was the style of work all round, there is no task there; the old man in charge is an inmate and is laughed at, and they do what they like. The professionals dearly love a day's rest and an extra night's rest, and the working man is not going to do much for no pay if he can help it.

"If you want to study the ratepayer, take a man in a night, turn him out after two hours' work, he will have earned his twopenny feed in that time, and it does not cost more. You will give the man looking for work a chance, you will reduce the number of casuals, for you will soon break the professional tramp's heart, and greatly relieve the ratepayer.

"In conclusion, may I say that if you consulted half a dozen men who understood the game, you may be able to solve the tramp problem."

VII. THE COMMON LODGING-HOUSE.

Before we can pass in review the results of investigation into the working of the tramp ward, it is necessary to correlate with it the examination of the common lodging-house. It is not sufficient to look on the tramp ward as a *deterrent from vagrancy*; it is evident from the evidence already given that it most imperfectly fulfils another function, namely, that of a *refuge for wayfarers in extremity*.

How is it that such a need has arisen? It has arisen from a little-considered change in social customs, which has gradually led to accumulating evils. In old times there was a double provision for travelling, for rich and poor, the hospitality of the abbey and that of "mine host" at the inn. When the abbey was suppressed, more must have devolved on the inn. Accommodation there could be found both for rich and poor, though that for the latter might be only a bed of straw.[32] But by degrees, as travelling became common, the rich absorbed the accommodation of the inn, which itself evolved from "hostel" into "hotel," and catered for the rich only. A travelling poor man therefore was put to it to find some other shelter. Hospitality is most freely exercised still by the very poor. By degrees some individual became known as willing to entertain strangers for a small charge, and so by degrees also evolved the *common lodging-house*. A description of one such formed by natural evolution will be found in Chap. II., pp. **97** *et seq.* It was simply an old house, probably once a farmhouse, now situated in a slum quarter of a northern town. The sanitary arrangements for numerous lodgers were a sink in the common kitchen, and a w.c., perfectly dry, and in a dreadful condition. The house was kept by a widow woman, who could exercise no effective control over the motley inmates. Men, women and children were crowded in the dormitory, separation of sexes being quite insufficient. Insect pests abounded, and cleanliness was but of a surface character. Yet this, and one reputed to be worse, constituted the only accommodation for working-class travellers, men and *women*, in a fairly large town.

Investigation in another direction, on the main route from Manchester to the south, revealed a similar state of things. The "best lodging-house in the town" contained no separate sitting-room for women, and a small sink without water laid on was all the accommodation for washing purposes. This was in the common kitchen, and water had to be fetched from the single men's room. The bed slept on was infested with vermin.[33] A London investigation revealed that similar accommodation, which in the north cost 4*d.*, cost 6*d.* A description is given by a male investigator of the state of such a lodging-house. The common sitting-room was a half-cellar with a concrete floor, very dirty, *débris* of meals and dust were just swept under the tables. Spitting was in evidence everywhere. In the dormitory of another a notice was posted that "Gentlemen are requested not to go to bed in their boots!" Nevertheless it was evidently not obeyed. The state of the beds was such that my informant left without trying them. (See Chap. VII., p. **257**.)[34]

It is true that a somewhat perfunctory "inspection" is supposed to enforce sanitation. But inspection is insufficient where the accommodation is not of the right kind to begin with, and it appears to be easily evaded. The fact is that it is not to private interest to provide anything but *minimum* requirements. Nor is it likely that there will be *sufficient* accommodation for the maximum demand. It is reckoned "lucky" to get into some lodging-houses if you apply even as early as seven o'clock for a bed. It is quite possible to be crowded out.

Dr. Cooper, of the London County Council, said recently:

> "No civic community ought to allow what is going on at the present time. No man can afford to build really good lodging-houses, because the return for his money is so small. This is a public danger, both as regards the safety of the streets, and also the character of those who are unfortunately homeless." He thinks that "the whole of the outcasts should be absorbed into London County Council shelters."

The following is an account of the state of things at a lodging-house *repeatedly warned*:—"The floors of the kitchens and bedrooms were in a very dirty state. The beds and clothing were very dirty and insufficient. The bedding was so filthy that on the lodging-house keeper's attention being called to it he took the sheets off and put them in the fireplace."[35] Defendant was fined £3 and costs, but the lodging-house was not suppressed.

Such places as this breed disease, yet an honest working man travelling with money in his pocket to pay for his bed cannot be *sure* of a cleanly place. Even in a *municipal* lodging-house there may be only "surface cleanliness." (See Chap. II., p. **33**.) *Every one not sanitary is a centre of contagion.*

There exists even in the mind of such social adepts as Mr. John Burns, a prejudice against "Rowton Houses," and other "poor men's hotels," possibly grounded on the supposition that they cater for and encourage the life of vice and idleness. But the fact is one that cannot be denied, that in the present precarious condition of things these masses of homeless men exist. It would seem more sensible to bring them under effective sanitary control, and by investigation of their needs remove, if possible, obstacles to matrimony than to condemn them to insanitation, disease, and death. The following account gives an inner view of a Rowton House. It is not to be supposed that the majority of inmates would *prefer* such a life, if only they knew a way out.

> "It is possible to live there fairly comfortable on 10*s*. a week, and to exist on about 7*s*. Of course, there are all kinds of men there; some of them have known considerably better days. A lot are working men. A lot of men there seem to live by addressing envelopes; they have a nice warm room to sit in and work, but it is a heart-breaking job when all is said and done, for they only get 3*s*. per 1,000, and it will take a good man to do 1,000 a day. I made a good many enquiries about labour bureaux; they are to be avoided like poison, except the Polytechnic, the others keep you moving about the place, and you are lucky if you don't get charged heavily for doing so." The isolation and selfishness of the life impressed my informant. It was by no means one to be sought.

It will at any rate be seen that the question of absolute destitution and the question of provision for migration are bound up with the question of proper sanitary lodging-house accommodation. Before a travelling working man, even with money in his pocket, there lie at present three alternatives:—

1. He can find a common lodging-house, which means too often dirt, or worse.

2. He can enter the tramp ward. To do this he must make away with his money or hide it. He will, it is *supposed*, get clean accommodation, but endure hardship and degradation.

3. He may "sleep out." This is best; if he can find a cosy corner he can "keep himself to himself," and sleep clean. But it is *illegal*. Numbers of men are condemned all over England even in the depth of winter for this offence.[36] Unauthorised promiscuous herding in the open, such as occurs on Manchester brickfields, is a grave social evil. "A night on the Thames Embankment" is hardly an "earthly paradise." But neither is a night in a doss house or a tramp ward. It will be seen that there is *real need* for social provision of shelter for the homeless or migrating poor.

VIII. SUMMARY OF RESULTS OF INVESTIGATION.

We may summarise results as follows:

1. There exists at the bottom of society the hereditary vagabond or "tramp" proper. He is the remains of a vagrant class squeezed out of society and preying upon it. He may be "born" or "made." He knows how to get his living, and is usually to be found in the "doss-house"; if he frequents the tramp ward, it is for cleansing purposes or casual need. These are estimated by experts to be only about ten thousand in all England.[37]

2. There exists also a class of "incapables," *i.e.* those infirm, old, blind, lame, epileptic, etc. These are supposed to be provided for by our Poor-law system, and should be inside workhouses. But numbers of them are allowed to wander in penury and beggary. They "earn" a precarious livelihood, and often drift into tramp wards, but cannot as a rule fulfil the labour conditions, which often are not demanded from them. (See Chap. III., p. **148**.)[38]

3. There exists a large class of "inefficients," the special product of the Industrial revolution. It is not probable that they will disappear as a factor in social evolution, save by means of wise social arrangements, because:

> (1) They are continually renewed from the lower levels of the population, who breed quickly.
>
> (2) The standard of industrial requirements rises, and leaves many behind stranded.
>
> (3) Employment after middle age is difficult to obtain.

(4) The shifting of industries and changes in employment leave units unprovided for.

It is evident therefore that the whole legislation of our country must be remodelled, for *it is on the social organism as a whole* that social provision now devolves.

Green relates that the whole mass of Elizabethan poverty was absorbed into healthy life by a wise poor law.

It will be our next duty to examine how far other nations furnish us already with an object lesson in this respect.

We may summarise the case against the tramp ward as follows:

1. It makes no attempt to classify.

2. It pauperises without relieving distress.

3. It is unequally and often unjustly or defectively administered.

4. It provides for destitution a worse treatment than that of prison for crime. [Pg 54]

5. It therefore exerts pressure towards vagrancy and crime instead of acting as a true deterrent.

6. Its existence blinds the public to the fact of *the absence of public provision for migrating*, and the evils of sleeping out and unsanitary lodging-houses accumulate.

IX. VAGRANCY LEGISLATION IN OTHER COUNTRIES.

We have now to consider the treatment received by vagrants in other countries. Have they been more successful than ourselves? If so, why? Count Kropatkin shows in "Farms, Fields, and Factories," that the Industrial revolution is not confined to England. Belgium for instance is a country with large manufactures. It is also a small country, and it is easier to examine the entire working of a Poor Law in a small country than in a large one. A most interesting account is given in a pamphlet printed by W. K. Martin, 290, High Street, Lincoln, of the Belgian Labour Colonies, personally visited by H. J. Torr and R. A. Marriott, Major, D.S.O., Governor of Lincoln Prison.

A vagrancy committee was appointed from Midsummer Sessions, Lincoln, in consequence of the number of vagrants committed to Lincoln Prison and the unsatisfactory nature of the prison [Pg 55] treatment. They report "that the present short sentences, especially in view of the improved prison dietary, are a treatment of no deterrent value." They are of opinion "that the present methods of dealing with offences under the Vagrancy Acts are not satisfactory in their effect on the habitual vagrant, whilst they make no provision for the man who, gradually slipping out of employment through inefficiency, forms the readiest recruit for the professional vagrant class." "Prison conditions indeed, to persons with so low a standard of physical comfort as the average vagrant, must be extremely comfortable and even attractive." (See note 25.)

They show that in Lindsey alone 722 vagrants were committed to prison from January to July, 1903, while in Holland only 178 were admitted. The number of vagrants in Lincoln Prison during six winter months increased from 703 in 1901 to 1,002 in 1902.

The vagrancy returns from different unions likewise increased as follows:

1900	11,980
1901	15,053
1902	20,556

They gave cases of two men aged thirty and thirty-seven, against whom there were twenty-two and thirty-one sentences, each one being short, showing that the men entered prison almost as soon as out of it. The cost *without subsistence* for travelling expenses of prisoners and escort [Pg 56] amounted to £28 10*s*. for the two. They believe that "the workman slipping out of employment" should be treated in a penal labour colony as "a patient requiring care, not as a criminal requiring punishment," and that his downward career should be checked before his industrial skill is lost. "The large amount of highly-skilled labour found at Merxplas, compared with the utter incapacity of the average English prisoner committed for vagrancy, indicate, they believe, the measure of the difference between the tramp at the commencement of his career and the same man after any lengthened period of life on the road." They point out that while this skill may not maintain the man outside, in face of the drink difficulty, it may make him nearly self-supporting inside, and forms a valuable national asset. The annual cost per man in these colonies is smaller than that of prison or workhouse.[39] It will be seen therefore that whereas we *manufacture* vagrants, the Belgian labour colonies *arrest* their development. It is impossible to give a full account of the Belgian labour colonies. It will be found in the Report referred to. There are five, two for women and three for men. Those at Hoogstraeten and Wortel constitute a *Maison de Refuge*, and that at Merxplas a *Depôt de Mendicité*. (See Appendix III.) [Pg 57]

Simple vagrancy, on first detention, would involve detention at Wortel for one year or until the man had *earned* fifteen francs. For the second offence, and more serious ones, the man would be committed to Merxplas for not less than two years or more than seven years. Laziness, habitual drunkenness, or disorderly life as vagabonds, qualify for admission.

Inside the colony there is a sixfold classification. The worst classes, *i.e.* men sentenced for

immorality or arson, men sentenced after imprisonment, and men known to be dangerous, never mix with the others. There is a *quartier cellulaire* for the refractory. To these belonged on September 3rd, 1903, only one hundred and forty-two men.

On, the other hand, the class of "vagabonds, mendicants and inebriates" numbered three thousand and sixty-six.

Besides this there is a class for "infirm and incurable," who do light work or none. The latter are allowed three centimes daily for small luxuries, and may play games.

Those under twenty-one form another class and are given schooling. All except the infirm work nine hours a day, receiving board and lodging and from three to thirty centimes a day. They can spend it by means of tokens, or it is banked for them until they leave the colony. There are quite a number of trades. Very little machinery is used, so that more men are employed. As far as possible materials used are grown on the farm. The colonists themselves do all the work of every kind. [Pg 58]

There is only a small staff. Control is mainly by means of transfer from one class to another, and, in the last resort, summary punishment by the Director, consisting of solitary confinement on bread and water. Escape is easy and frequent, but men, if unable to support themselves, are soon committed again.

The cost is under £10 per year *including* cost of buildings, etc. (See note 33.)

At Lincoln Workhouse it is £16 per year *exclusive* of cost of buildings, etc.

English prisons cost £22 11*s*. per year *exclusive* of cost of buildings, etc.

English convict prisons, £28 per year *exclusive* of cost of buildings, etc.

The writer has personally examined the *Danish* system of penal poor law. She is assured, however, that there are in Denmark *no vagrants proper*. The penal workhouse in Copenhagen is about to be replaced by a new one surrounded by a moat. The working of the system can however be understood by the present arrangements. If a man fails to support himself, his wife and family, or his illegitimate child, he can be committed for six months, or a destitute man can claim admission. The men in the lightest class of labour are sent out in gangs to sweep the streets. Others are employed in breaking up stone to obtain crystals: these sit at benches. This is comparatively light labour, and the task is apportioned to the worker, not uniform; others carry on weaving, spinning, wood chopping, etc., etc. [Pg 59]

All these workers receive one kroner a month, which is saved up for them. From the higher classes a man can go out if he has certain work. The earnings of a defaulting husband are appropriated. The severer side of the workhouse contains the refractory or dangerous; here also the work is paid for, but on a lower scale. Solitary confinement and also changes of rations are used for discipline. It is said that a law authorising, in extreme cases, corporal punishment is likely to be passed. A man can rise from grade to grade, or sink if "malingering." Accommodation on the premises is provided for fourteen days for those who become homeless; their furniture can be brought in, and the home carried on. Meanwhile, by means of the municipal labour bureau, efforts are made to find the man work and prevent the final breaking up of the home. The commune will pay house rent for *three months* for a genuine case of unemployment. Thus no one need be destitute in Denmark, and the consequent tightening up of the whole national life is evident even to the casual visitor. Institutions exist for the proper care of the aged (who also, if deserving, have old age pensions), for destitute women and girls, for the feeble-minded, etc., while the relieving officer is *the friend of the poor*. All poor-law relief is regarded as a debt to be repaid to the State. [Pg 60]

In *Germany* again we have a national provision which cannot fail to excite our admiration, though its working is not quite so perfect.

The example of Germany is chiefly valuable as showing us how to deal with the problem of industrial migration. Throughout the land exist numbers of Relief stations. These are places to which a man can go, and by doing a certain task of work *earn* tickets entitling him to bed, supper and breakfast. In Germany, even more than in England, it is the fashion for a workman to migrate. No young man's education is considered complete unless he has been on *wanderschaft*, and thereby gained experience of various workshops. Consequently all over the country "Workmen's Homes" exist. At these a man can do a task of work in return for food and lodging. They are said to be *superior* to Rowton Houses at *less* cost. If a man is without money he can work his way from Relief station to Relief station. The Relief stations are maintained by local authorities, the *Herberge* or lodging-house by a society. Each station is practically a labour bureau. They are in telephonic communication all over the country. Consequently a man can tell if he has a chance of employment. He is given a "way-bill," and must pass along a certain route. If he fails to get employment he is relegated to a labour colony. The defect of Germany is the want of classification in the latter, but this will probably be remedied.[40] [Pg 61]

The following account of Berlin will show how the vagrant is treated there: "Let a ragged man appear in any of the numerous open spaces and a policeman is on him in a minute. 'Your papers!' If it is proved he has slept in an asylum for the homeless more than a certain number of nights he is conducted to the *workhouse* and made to labour for his board and lodging. Every person is known to the State, and also insured by it." "Fall sick," says the State, "and we will nurse you back to vigour; drop out of employment, and we will find you work; grow old, and we will provide you with bread and butter; but become lazy and vagabond and we will lock you up and make you work till you have paid the uttermost farthing of your debt." (See note 27.)

Berlin has a huge building, like a factory, where the unemployed—whole families—are received and provided for. But no one can use this hospitality more than five times in three months. Otherwise they are sent to the workhouse. Private enterprise has provided an asylum where men can go five times in one month. "Dirty, ragged, unhappy wretches dare not show themselves in the decent world as they do in London. They slink into these asylums at five o'clock, have their clothes disinfected, cleanse themselves under shower baths, eat bread and drink soup, and go to bed at eight like prisoners in cells. Everybody feels it is better to work than to fall into the hands of the law. There is a central bureau for obtaining employment. The State placed out 50,000 men in one year."

[Pg 62]

With regard to the labour colonies, which provide mainly for men weak in character and physique, one interesting fact is the merely nominal expertise at which they can be run. The Luhterheim Colony costs £3,200 per annum, but the average cost per man after *all* expenses, including interest on borrowed capital, have been paid, is only 2*s*. 7*d*. per week. An error in the Board of Trade Report, 1893, describes the inmates as mainly criminal. This is not the case. Of the 40 per cent. in German colonies classified as criminal only 20 per cent. are criminal in the English sense, the remainder being "casual warders," while 60 per cent. are not *in any sense* criminal. (See article by Percy Alden, *British Friend*, October, 1904.)

Holland has also interesting colonies, "free" at Frederiksoord for the deserving unemployed (chiefly deficient mentally or physically) and "penal" also.[41]

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Switzerland also has diminished mendicancy of late to an extraordinary extent by the following measures:—

(1) Providing special facilities for men travelling in genuine search for employment.

(2) Taking steps against the lazy.

(3) Adopting stringent police measures.

Forced labour institutions are the means employed. At the farm at Witzwyl with 150 inmates, two officers are in charge of each group of ten or twelve, and *work with them*. The men sleep and eat in cells and have a liberal diet, and a fair chance when discharged of commencing life afresh. At St. Johannsen the older and more hardened offenders are confined.[42]

In order to facilitate migration there is an Inter-Cantonal Union over fourteen of the twenty-two cantons. The Union issues a "Traveller's Relief Book," by means of which the workman may tramp all over the country and be fed and lodged. He has not to work his way, but beggars and drunkards and idlers fall into the hands of the police, for if work is refused when provided, the man proved "work-shy" is sent for from three months to two years to the "forced labour" institution. The loafer may be sent *either* to prison, for from two to six months, or to the forced labour institution, for from six months to two years. Almost every canton has its forced labour institution. In Canton Schwyz persons giving alms are *fined* up to ten francs![43]

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A description could also be given of the Austrian Poor Law, which appears to be very similar to the Danish. It will thus be seen that there already exist in several Continental countries methods of dealing with vagrancy far superior to English methods. In fact our present chaos may be considered as the effect of gradually accumulating errors. Ten years before we formed the tramp ward the Germans began the Relief station. We can hardly overestimate the results that would have followed, in toning up our national life, from the substitution of real remedies for futile attempts at repression, adapted to a bygone age, but not to present conditions. It is time we retraced our steps, as all such evils are cumulative in their effects.[44]

X. TENTATIVE ATTEMPTS IN ENGLAND.

[Pg 65]

It may first be stated that the stringent order of February 25th, 1896, asking guardians to enforce the Casual Poor Act of 1882, not only has not been universally obeyed, but also in some parts of England met with opposition. The Poor-law Conference of the Western Counties felt that while a stringent application of the Board's regulations would lessen the number of vagrants applying at casual wards, "what would have happened would be this, that those who would otherwise apply for legal shelter would be driven to join the majority of 'sturdy rogues' who now subsist in comfort by begging, who sleep in outhouses or pay for lodgings, and never enter a casual ward with its restrictions and taskwork." They considered that the only true way of dealing with the question is to provide simple but sufficient food and a night's lodging, demanding an equivalent of work for food, with no punitive detention, "which is simply another expression for imprisonment for twenty-four hours with hard labour." They recommend a mid-day dole to prevent begging.[45]

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That such results as they mention *did* follow the application of the more stringent order is shown by careful statistics kept by Charles H. Fox, at Wellington, Somerset, on the high road to the west. From August to October, 1896, police orders to the casual wards were 536, those sleeping in lodging-houses 1,152. Thus about two to one did not seek the legal shelter, besides those "sleeping out." As the number of casuals was decreased by the severity, the number in lodging-houses increased, and also there was a large increase in the percentages of offences of sleeping out and begging (as shown in a previous section, p. **18**). It is evident that the only result of the change of policy was that mentioned by the Conference.

Opinions such as these were expressed also in a practical form by what is known as "the Gloucestershire system." A valuable report as to the working of this is given by Colonel Curtis

Hayward. Quotations from it run as follows:—

> "To prevent migration in times of great disturbance in the labour market—if desirable—is not possible; but we should take care that those who are driven by stress of circumstances to take to the road do not find it so pleasant or profitable as to induce them to take to it as an occupation, and join the ranks of professional vagrants.
>
> "We, in Gloucestershire, in normal times have reduced vagrancy within very narrow limits."

The principle proceeded on is to discourage *almsgiving* by *providing* for migration, and so respecting the feelings of the public. "Severity never had a good effect."[46]

The system adopted in Dorsetshire of giving bread tickets to the public to give to wayfarers failed because of defects in working.

The authorities in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire resolved to co-operate, as Gloucestershire is a great thoroughfare. In 1879, 1880, 1881, the annual average of casuals was 60,882.

The result of a memorial to quarter sessions was the adoption of what was then known as the Berkshire system. It failed in Berkshire owing to want of co-operation. [Pg 67]

It is as follows: A wayfarer on entering Gloucestershire or Wilts receives, on application to the relieving officer, a ticket, on which is written his general description and the place he is bound for, viz., his *final* destination. With this he goes to the vagrant ward, where he is fed night and morning, for which he has to do a certain task. On his discharge the name of the union to which he is to be admitted the following night—the direct route—is written on his ticket, also the name of the intermediate station he passes on his road, where between the hours of one and three he is supplied with his mid-day ration of half a pound of bread by the constable on duty. Leaflets explaining the system and requesting the public not to give to beggars are periodically left at every house in the county. The cost of the rations is defrayed by voluntary subscriptions.

It is claimed that this system during the first quarter reduced vagrancy returns 50 per cent. Colonel Curtis Hayward does not think that compulsory detention acts as a deterrent. In 1891 when trade was brisk, in March quarter, this system reduced the numbers to 4,497 as against 13,313 in 1881, and on the whole year from 60,000 to 22,000, whereas other counties tell a different tale, the numbers being stationary or only slightly smaller for Bucks, Oxford, and Warwick.

Worcestershire gives bread tickets to "selected honest wayfarers," but nearly double the amount was spent, namely, £65 3*s.* 5*d.*, to that spent in Gloucestershire without selection. Colonel Curtis Hayward thinks discrimination impossible. Exact statistics for Worcestershire are not obtainable, but in nine unions the figures are:— [Pg 68]

1881.	1891.	1894.
10,392	6,349	12,935

so that this system does not appear to have affected the returns.

From the Chief Constable's office, Dorchester, I have obtained a valuable report of the Dorset Mendicity Society. It has been established thirty-four years and provides food for the wayfarer in exchange for bread tickets. Posters displayed at police stations deter the public from giving doles. A large increase of vagrancy is admitted, but it is claimed that there has been no increase in vagrant crime. The professional beggar is said to avoid the county or to hurry through it.[47]

In this report W. P. Plummer says: "It is a generally accepted idea that all wayfarers are worthless idlers, and the only proper way of dealing with them is to make the regulations of casual wards so universally severe that men will avoid them. I have no hesitation in saying that a more erroneous idea could not exist. My experience is that when a *bonâ fide* working man finds himself out of employment he very naturally commences to search for fresh employment in his own neighbourhood, but when funds get low he finds he must go further afield to try his luck, and the casual ward must be his hotel. For what reason should he be so treated as to make him prefer the shelter of a barn or rick? Every facility should be given him, but where is there an employer who will start men in the middle of the day when discharged from casual wards? What about a mid-day meal? *He must beg to live.* He follows it up for a week or two of necessity and he finds it pay. In a few weeks you have a *properly manufactured moucher*." He suggests that in place of casual wards there should be in each municipal borough or urban district a State common lodging-house with labour yard, used also as a labour registry, and backed by labour colonies under control of the Prison Commissioners.[48] In 1904, £176 2*s.* 9*d.* covered expenses of 38,998 bread tickets, and administration. He wishes the justices, if they convict, to have no option but to commit for third offence in one year (or on the sixth altogether) for begging, sleeping out, hawking without licence, disorderly conduct, etc. Tramps should be identified by finger-marks. The governor of the prison should on receipt of list of previous convictions re-arrest and charge the man before justices as an habitual vagrant, and the justices should commit to a penal labour colony.[49] [Pg 69] [Pg 70]

The various experiments of the Church Army, Salvation Army, Lingfield, and other charitable agencies show the existence of a large class of men willing to live under restraint and work for bare livelihood. All such charitable agencies however are handicapped by the absence of *compulsion* at the bottom of our social system. Those on whom it is most necessary to *enforce*

labour throw it up.[50] As experiments these institutions are most valuable, but in the absence of definite State provision they themselves often add to the confusion existing, by providing merely temporary control for undesirable cases. A certain amount of eligible deserving cases are rescued, the rest sink down after considerable and disheartening expenditure of time and money.[51] It is impossible for *private* enterprise to tackle effectually what is the duty of the community as a whole, or to undo the mischief wrought by a radically wrong vagrancy system.

At the same time it is invaluable to know that numbers of men eagerly desire to obtain employment, and that such an institution as the labour house connected with Central Hall, Manchester,[52] can be made practically self-supporting, after first cost, by wise management. *Experiments* must at first be costly, but pioneer work is necessary to find out what suits English conditions. This is what makes each attempted colony now most valuable. Lingfield appears to be especially so, both as redeeming 40 per cent., as fitting them for emigration, and also training helpers for social service. The capital cost was £160 per head, the cost per man is £33. The inmates received are very debilitated, and their work counts for *nil* on arrival. Hollesley Bay and Laindon have also been recently established.[53] We must now proceed to consider the question from a national standpoint.

XI. REFORMS HAVING REFERENCE TO VAGRANCY.

Having endeavoured to make it clear how essential to organised society is a proper treatment of the vagrancy question, it remains to consider what reforms are necessary in England. It must be remembered that we cannot adopt wholesale the policy of any other nation. We must work out our own salvation. It is not possible, if it were desirable, to have the individual as much under Government surveillance as in Germany for example. Individualism and liberty of the subject are deeply rooted in English soil.

It will be well if we first outline the objects to be aimed at.

(1) There should be at the bottom of society a *provision for destitution* to be *earned* by honest work, sufficient to deter from beggary and crime. This provision should be meagre but not worse than prison fare. (See note 23.)

(2) There should be provision, ample and sanitary, for migration.[54]

(3) For women there should be some provision more eligible than vice. (Appendix IV.)

(4) It is a national mistake to recognise a tramp class of women.[55]

(5) Those willing to work should be sorted from those unwilling.[56]

(6) It should be so arranged that the public understand there is *sufficient* provision for destitution, and are themselves deterred from promiscuous charity.[57]

(7) Some place of detention other than prison should be provided for vagrants convicted.[58]

(8) It is desirable also to provide labour colonies for defective industrials.[59]

In discussing the *method* by which such reforms can be brought about we must recognise that there are many "lions in the path." It is not certain that the necessary reforms can or will be carried through by Government. In other countries an example has been set by private enterprise, and has afterwards been adopted or subsidised by Government.[60] We must, however, recognise that our English problem is a huge one, that we have to make up for years of neglect, and that evils are accumulating.

The great majority of our population live in towns. Vagrancy is therefore one of our town problems, closely woven with the unemployed problem. But we have not the great advantage possessed by many Continental towns, that the Poor Law is under the control of the municipality. In Copenhagen, for instance, the four burgomasters control education, poor law, charity, municipal labour bureau, and old age pensions, as well as municipal organisation. This gives unity to city life. The new legislation in connection with the unemployed gives power to the *Municipality* at present mainly permissive, yet the *Poor Law* is still separate, also the magistracy often works against the poor law by the extreme leniency of their sentences. A poor-law officer cannot be sure of convictions.

If lodging-houses are provided this falls to the municipality also. There seems to be great need for unification of authority, and a thorough over-hauling of our poor-law system in view of modern conditions. It is also to be feared that the old traditions with regard to treatment of tramps are very deeply engrained in the minds of poor-law officials. The labour yard also is very seldom run on true business principles, and it would be difficult to create through the length and breadth of the land a thorough reform of the tramp ward, as difficult as it has been found already to secure uniformity.[61] Nevertheless, to create entirely new machinery when expensive buildings already exist seems foolish.[62] The imperative need for reform, however, calls for Government action, and so urgent is the call for a *universal* system, and so large are the issues at stake, that it would seem to be the best to recognise the whole matter as a cause for Government interference. It might be best if both the migratory and the unemployed questions were recognised as calling for a new Department of Labour, and the tramp ward or its substitute placed under the new authority.[63] In the case of the Poor Law Reform of 1834, Poor Law Commissioners were given wide authority to work radical reforms and unify the parishes for

poor-law purposes. Something like this seems to be again necessary, but with still wider national needs in view.

These, for instance, are some of the reforms necessary:—

(1) To arrange definite *national* routes of travel, and settle the migration stations along these routes, including ration stations (unless mid-day ration is given on leaving a station).[64]

(2) To close *unnecessary* tramp wards, and publicly notify the available routes.[65]

(3) To arrange for centres of population some plan by which a man may make use of the tramp ward for three or five nights, and search for employment.[66]

(4) To arrange a national system of Labour Bureaux.[67]

(5) To arrange the incidence of taxation for support of the stations. The Poor-law Unions might be debited in proportion to percentage of vagrants over last 10 years, and deficiency nationalised, or tramp wards transferred to police.[68] (Appendix I.)

(6) To secure sufficient sanitary accommodation in every large centre and on national routes, both for the destitute and for the *bonâ fide* working man.

(7) To make uniform the supply of rations, the accommodation, and the task of work, and see that the latter is on a proper business footing.[69]

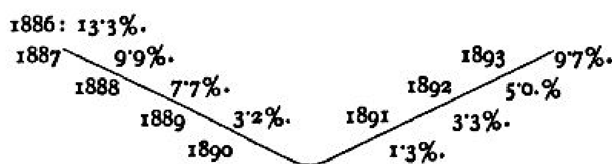
(8) To arrange for public charity to flow into authorised channels, and discourage promiscuous almsgiving.[70]

(9) To provide detention colonies for the confirmed idler, vagrant, and habitual drunkard, if committed by the magistrate.[71]

(10) To arrange a system to distinguish between the idle and the "willing to work" unemployed.[72]

In addition to this, the facts in relation to unemployment show, that there are periods of good and bad trade, leading to wane and flux of employment.

Thus the wave from 1886 to 1893 in skilled trades was as follows:—



It will be seen that unemployment almost disappeared in 1890. There are also seasonal waves, summer and winter. It is for the equalisation of such differences that some provision must be made, as well as for the care of the "industrial invalid." In times of depression individuals are thrust out who become a burden on the country all the rest of their lives, either by idleness, beggary or crime. It must not be forgotten that each of these *at present* costs the community a far greater sum than they would cost if provided with labour. Therefore:—

(11) Arrangements should be made whereby, by work specially arranged to coincide with seasonal unemployment, the national cost of the incapable, the inefficient, and the temporarily unemployed could be minimised. (See "How to Deal with the Unemployed": Chap. V., "The Labour Market," by the author.) (Brown, Langham & Co.)

(12) It would only be possible for *Government* to carry out such large schemes of afforestation or of reclamation of waste lands as would effectually grapple with the whole problem.

There is, however, one question we must briefly deal with in considering either private or public action.

It is said that if employment is found for the unemployed, if vagrant and other colonies are formed, the result will only be to displace by their products other workers. There is, it seems, a kind of vicious circle, by which, for example, if prisoners made brushes, other brushmakers are displaced, and so on.

It is forgotten that every day new and extensive businesses arise, and their competition with others is not regarded as an evil. (These often undersell, colonies need not.) But besides this it has been found by investigation into the working of German labour colonies that their products do not disturb the labour market. To a great extent the colonists are engaged in supplying their *own* need.[73] Kropatkin also shows how the more careful cultivation of the land enables it to maintain a larger population. To place the waste man on the waste land seems to be true social economy. It must be remembered also that, to the extent to which a pauper is made self-supporting, the money that before supported him is set free. If, for instance, the cost of a pauper could be reduced from £12 (English workhouse) to £5 (Belgian labour colony), £7 would be set free for other expenditure. The weight of the Poor Law is heavy upon us. In London alone indoor paupers rose from 29,458 in 1857 to 61,545 in 1891. Besides this, enormous sums are spent in charity,[74] which forms as it were an additional tax on the well-disposed. An effective law dealing with idleness would tone up our whole population, and dispose many to work. The home market would improve as taxation was lightened. We must go to the *root* of social disease.

The Continental system of providing an incentive to labour in the shape of a very small wage is well worth consideration.[75] It makes government easy and provides for sifting one class from another. It is not sufficiently recognised that undesirables act as social microbes. If they can be got to live under restraint, much evil is averted. The modern organization of labour is such that it ought to be possible to place our Poor Law on a sound economic basis, instead of the present haphazard system. The cost of administration as it is, goes up by leaps and bounds without adequate return.[76]

I have outlined above the *national* reforms necessary. But we are slow reformers, and it may be well to indicate reforms *immediately* possible. These are outlined in a series of articles published last March in the *Poor Law Officers' Journal*. They include changes in administration of the tramp ward, such as the provision of a diet equal to the lowest prison fare, suitable drink, and a mid-day ration, a proper bed or hammock, absolute prevention of overcrowding, clean water for the bath, and thorough carrying out of Local Government Board precautions for cleanliness.[77] With regard to women, I strongly advise admission to the workhouse proper, detention of children, and the appointment of a lady protectress in connection with each workhouse, whose duty it would be to investigate cases of need. Women should not be allowed to tramp the country. A detention colony is badly needed, and proper provision for the feeble-minded. In the case of women the moral danger is a grave additional reason for prevention of vagrancy.[78]

I also recommend an *immediate* modification of our tramp-ward system, which would sort vagrants into two classes. By early admission and a half-task of work, the wayfarer might be enabled to earn one night's bed and board and go on his way, having a way-bill for his route. The unemployed town-dweller might be given an identification note enabling him to return for from two to three nights and to seek work meanwhile. If he did not find it he could have a way-bill to another town. The idle man who came late would be detained *two* nights with double task. Identification marks would be taken. If a man fell into the hands of the police for offences against the law he would be deported to a vagrancy colony.[79]

These changes would only need:

(1) The formation of one experimental vagrancy colony.

(2) Local Government Orders modifying the present tramp ward regulations.

They are therefore *immediately* possible, pending a further national reform movement.[80]

As, however, even this would require a good deal of discussion and delay, it would be well if the admirable suggestions made by Mr. J. H. Jenner-Fust at the Conference on Vagrancy, held at Lancaster on Sept. 1st, 1905, could be carried forward. He suggests a combination of unions, for relief of the casual poor, (under sect. 8, Poor Law Act, 1879). A joint committee holding office three years could be formed. This committee would have power to acquire land and erect buildings, and maintain inmates, etc. If a combination of several counties were effected, a 1*d*. rate on No. 11 district and Cheshire would produce £129,000. Such a committee could arrange to dispense with certain workhouses and rent or lease others, to arrange for rules of travel, uniform administration, keeping children from vagrancy, the way-ticket system. Also for "test-houses" for the "work-shy" able-bodied. Perhaps also for a labour colony, as experiments must be tried.

The Conference passed a resolution in favour of farm or labour colonies under State control, or under control of the guardians of a county, for detention of the habitual tramp, and also in favour of the provision of a mid-day meal.

A committee was appointed to give effect to the resolutions, to consist of representatives from each union in the conference district.

XII. CONCLUSION.

It remains now to place on a *scientific* basis the facts related and the reforms proposed.

Mankind has evolved from the nomad to the pastoral, from the pastoral to the agricultural, from the agricultural to the industrial. These stages represent also the development of the *individual*, and are expressions of an underlying *psychical* development.

The child is at first unable to fix his attention long on any one object. He roves from one thing to another, and is essentially *nomad*.

By degrees certain objects become centres of consciousness with memories attached. He cares for these, they are to him what flocks and herds are to the *pastoral*, but he is still restless, unable to concentrate long on one object. By degrees, as he unifies, some one object becomes supreme, or rather he himself assumes the supremacy of his environment. He arranges it so as to minister to his dominant passion. The girl craves for the doll, the whole nursery ministers to the beloved object. The child in this stage is essentially *agricultural*. In the next stage, the *industrial*, he or she becomes plastic to educational influences, and is "educed" or drawn out in the direction of natural specialised ability.

This is the *normal* development. But multitudes stay in one or other stage. There are grown-up people incapable of concentration or of true industrialism. Yet they may be efficient examples of "a lower type," *i.e.*, capable of toil in a limited environment under direction.

Multitudes again are incapable of fixity of occupation continued over long periods. Yet alternation of employment will keep them busy and happy.

Others again cannot fix their attention any more than a child, only the simplest of occupations is possible to them, yet they can be restrained from evil.

It must be noted also that human nature *degenerates* down this ladder. The industrial highly skilled loses his trade. He is quite "at sea" out of his usual environment. But at first he has no desire to rove. He would cling to any environment that found him sustenance; and take eager interest in a new trade. Thus in the Lancashire cotton famine many industrials became skilled out-door workers. But if he cannot get employment he roves to find it, and becomes "unsettled." It is hard then for him to "settle down," he becomes fond of a day or two's work and a day or two's play alternating. Finally, he becomes a true vagrant—a nomad. It will be seen then that the arrest of vagrancy depends on the application of scientific principles. Habitual and hereditary vagrancy could soon be suppressed, or might even be neglected and allowed to die, by gradual absorption of the *children* of vagrants into the ranks of the more developed population. It is the constant *recruiting* of vagrancy that is such an evil. It would seem as if the free leave given in Germany for a man to enter and leave a colony, and then enter and leave another, but at the same time to be under compulsion to earn his living, is adapted to the "pastoral" class, who cannot easily settle yet will intermittently work. To let them degenerate into "loafers" is fatal. [Pg 84]

Then again the slum dweller clings to his environment, and it is useless to *force* him to wander, and so send him down the ladder. For such populations as West Ham, work on the land in return for sustenance seems to be the way out. They are essentially "agricultural" in attachment to environment, and would no doubt be suitable subjects for schemes of Home colonisation. [Pg 85]

A fully developed industrial, on the other hand, is best employed *as* an industrial. In connection with new developments, there will be need for such industrials. Therefore, if, as in Belgium, the needs of the colony were supplied by "industrial" inmates, but the more untrained were kept to farm work, on some form of simple manual labour, it would seem as if the right organisation would be arrived at.[81]

It is probable that in our towns many forms of social waste occur, and that new industries might be developed in connection with Labour Bureaux, for temporary employment over crises. Much lies in the power of the municipality. An interesting *new* industry for utilisation of old tins (waste) has arisen in connection with Central Hall, Manchester. In the cotton famine the laying out of building plots gave employment to many Lancashire weavers, and was ultimately remunerative.

It will be seen that the Tramp Ward, though in itself apparently only a minor provision in our complicated poor law, is really a foundation stone for our national treatment of destitution. Unless we get back to the sound principles that underlie organised society, that if a man will not work he must be made to do so, and that to enforce honest toil is a social duty, we shall see national evils accumulate to national destruction. Let me now pass in review the personal investigations which led me to these conclusions. [Pg 86]

CHAPTER II. [Pg 87]

FIVE DAYS AND FIVE NIGHTS AS A TRAMP AMONG TRAMPS.[82]

I. A Night in a Municipal Lodging-house.

Having gradually been brought to the conviction, by investigation of numerous cases of destitution among women, that there were circumstances in our social arrangements which fostered immorality, I resolved to make a first-hand exploration, by that method of personal experiment, which is the nearest road to accurate knowledge, of the conditions under which destitute women were placed who sought the shelter of the common lodging-house or the workhouse.

It was necessary to find a friend willing to share the possible perils of such an experiment, and to arrange in such a way that it should be unknown to all but a few. I was fortunate in finding a fellow-worker willing to go with me, and as to the truth of the following story she is a sufficient witness.

We dressed very shabbily, but were respectable and clean. We wore shawls and carried hats, which we used if desirable, according to whether we had sunshine or rain, or wished to look more or less respectable. We carried soap, a towel, a change of stockings, and a few other small articles, wrapped in an old shawl. My boots were in holes, and my companion wore a grey tweed well-worn skirt. My hat was a certificate for any tramp ward, and my shawl ragged, though clean. We had one umbrella between us. [Pg 88]

Our plan of campaign was to take train to a town some way from home, arriving in the evening, and then to seek lodging. We had five nights to spend, and were expected at a town some way off by friends who thought we were on a "walking tour"! We cut ourselves off from civilisation on Monday with 2*s*. 6*d*. in our pockets and a considerable distance between us and home. We were expected on Saturday by our friends. We thought that we should be able to sample only two workhouses after the first night, expecting to be detained two nights at each.

Escaping observation by going to a country railway station, we took train to a town about fifteen miles from home. We enquired of the police and others, and found that there was a large

municipal lodging-house, so we bought a loaf and a quarter of a pound of butter, and applied for beds. We were just in time to get a double bed in the married couples' quarters, for which we paid sixpence. We were shown by a servant—a young woman, about twenty-three apparently— [Pg 89] into a large, lofty kitchen, furnished with wooden tables and benches. There was a splendid kitchen range, and all was clean and tidy; hot and cold water were laid on to a sink, and boiling water for making tea could be drawn from a tap. Pots and pans, and *basins* to drink out of, were kept in a handy cupboard. One roller towel, however, was all the convenience for personal washing or for wiping pots. There was a dish-cloth, and we preferred to wash our pots and put them away to dry rather than to wipe them on the towel used by our fellow-lodgers.

Our first difficulty was as follows: We had bread and butter; we had, also, in our bundle, some tea and sugar, the latter mixed with plasmon, as we feared we might not keep our strength up till the week-end without some such help. But we had neither spoon, knife, nor fork, so we could not spread our butter nor stir our tea. A woman, with a girl of twelve, whose language left much to be desired, told us we could have the three necessary articles, and also a locker in which to keep our food, by depositing one shilling. We accordingly did this, but were not given a locker, as we were only staying one night. We had to put our provisions in the corner of a cupboard used by others, but they were not touched. Provided with the necessary implements, we proceeded to make tea, and to cut our bread and butter receiving friendly hints from people who saw we were novices, and studying our companions. We drank out of basins. Besides the loud-voiced woman [Pg 90] and child of twelve, there was a man and his wife, and a very nagging woman, whose husband received a great deal of abuse. The inmates appeared to know each other somewhat, and talked about others who had lived there.

We made enquiries for the closet, and found that the key hung by the fireside, and gave admission to a single water-closet, very small, in a yard through which everyone passed to the kitchen. This appeared to do duty for the single women also, as they used the same kitchen and sitting-room as the married couples. There was a good flush of water caused by a movable seat. There was no lavatory or any convenience for washing except the sink in the kitchen used by all the lodgers, men and women alike, but there was a notice up that "slipper baths" could be had for twopence. This absence of any opportunity for personal cleanliness, apart from extra payment, must lead to uncleanliness of person where people are all living on the edge of poverty; it is, too, most desirable that women should be able to wash apart from men.

After tea we found our way upstairs to a sitting-room, also furnished with wooden tables and benches and fairly clean. Beyond it was a bedroom for single females, separated by wooden partitions into cubicles. The servant was in attendance, and was the only official we saw during our stay, except when we purchased our bed at the office, and obtained and returned our knife, [Pg 91] fork and spoon. Being very tired, we asked for our bed, and were shown a boarded-off cubicle, the door of which we could bolt. It was lighted by a large window, and in the dim light looked fairly clean, but the floor was dirty. The top sheet of the bed was clean, the bottom one dirty, and the pillows filthy. We spread a clean dress skirt over them and resigned ourselves. The bed was flock, and was hot and uncomfortable; it smelt stale. We opened the window. There was no furniture besides the bed; we hung our clothes on nails in the partition. I killed a bug on the wall close to my head.

Compared, however, with our further experiences, this lodging-house was fairly comfortable—indeed, one of our fellow-lodgers, who apparently was a respectable working-man, said it was "a palace" compared to others!

We had a restless night, disturbed first by the coming to bed of several married couples in adjacent cubicles. We could hear all the conversations, and the nagging woman kept telling her husband, in a tone of voice much louder than his own, to "Shut up!" Then sleep was difficult in such strange surroundings: outside, trams went past till after midnight; inside, many of our companions were audible by snores. We got some uneasy sleep, but were awakened very early as some of the men were called about five o'clock. Towards six o'clock we got up ourselves, with a longing for fresh air. We dressed, but could find nowhere to wash but the sink in the kitchen, [Pg 92] with all our clothes on, as a man was already in possession, and was washing up his pots when we came down. We reflected that with only this poor lavatory accommodation, however clean our fellow-lodgers looked, they *could* not be personally otherwise than dirty, if they stayed on here; unless, which is very unlikely, they kept on spending twopence for "slipper baths"!

We got our breakfast in the same manner as tea, and were prepared to go, but had to wait an hour before we could get our one shilling deposit returned, the office not being open till eight o'clock. We sat in the sitting-room, watching and talking to our fellow-lodgers. Their talk was very free and often profane. Several women and the little girl were sitting round a table, crocheting the articles which are hawked from door to door. Men were reading papers. One by one the single women lodgers came out of the inside room and went downstairs to wash and get breakfast. The servant was sweeping the room. Her language was not altogether clean; she smoked a pipe and mentioned a drink. It did not seem altogether desirable that a young woman should practically be left in charge. Her presence could be no guarantee for conduct or language, and she might easily herself be tempted into immorality by men lodgers. Her language showed that she was not much above the rest of the inmates.

[Pg 93] The conversation turned first to the accommodation. We learned that we had been fortunate in our cubicle, as some were infested with bugs. One woman described how they harboured in the crevices between the woodwork of the cubicles, which were not close fitting, and how she cleared them out with a hatpin and exterminated them. The relative merits of various cubicles in relation to the absence or presence of these insect pests were discussed at length. The

conversation naturally turned on the accommodation at various lodging-houses, and we heard of horrors that explained why this was called "a palace," and was so much appreciated, that we were reckoned lucky to obtain a bed after seven o'clock at night. We were told of a place where eight married couples slept in one room, with *one bucket* for all purposes. As the time went on the conversation turned to visitors, and we learned that people came once a week to sing and speak, and were much appreciated. "It was only what they ought to do." We tried to get a little more information on this subject, but the talk veered round to the Moat Farm murder. The execution was due just at eight o'clock, and all eyes followed the clock, and surmises as to the murderer's feelings were coupled with references to the crime, with which all present seemed to be familiar. We were glad when eight o'clock put an end to this topic and our sojourn, as we could obtain our deposit and depart.

II. A Night in a Common Lodging-house.

The morning was fairly fine, though grey, and we inquired our way to a town on our route, about nine miles distant. We left the road for the canal side, and sat down in the fields to rest a little, and then walked on. We passed some men who were working in a barge; they shouted to us, and invited us to come to them. We walked away and took no notice, but repeatedly on our journey we were spoken to, and I could not help contrasting the way in which men looked at us with the usual bearing of a man towards a *well-dressed* female. I had never realised before that a lady's dress, or even that of a respectable working-woman, was a *protection*. The bold, free look of a man at a destitute woman must be felt to be realised. Being together, we were a guard to one another, so we took no notice but walked on. I should not care to be a *solitary* woman tramping the roads. A destitute woman once told me that if you tramped, "you had to take up with a fellow." I can well believe it. About mid-day we dined on our loaf and butter, as well as we could without a knife. A woman, also tramping, came to sit by us; she was going to seek her husband, she said, in the town to which we were also going. She was accustomed to tramp, as he went to different towns in search of work, and she was anxious to push on to get there early. As she seemed to know the neighbourhood, we asked her about lodgings. We had determined to sample a common lodging-house, as we were not yet sufficiently destitute to claim the workhouse. She told us of two lodging-houses where single women were taken, but one was "very rough, and the beds so crowded that heads almost touched heels." She recommended the other one "on t'hill" as a respectable lodging-house, suggesting that we could get a married couple's furnished room for sixpence a night. We decided, therefore, to make for this *respectable* lodging-house.

Towards one o'clock, after we resumed our route, it began to rain hard. We found a path off the main road that led into a wood, and managed to rest and shelter under the trees till the rain began to drop heavily upon us. We then began to walk again, and found that outside the rain had moderated. We were rather stiff and cold, so as soon as we came to the houses we looked out for somewhere to get a cup of tea, and were fortunate enough to find a coffee-shop, where we got a mug of hot tea each for one penny, and ate some more of our loaf. We still had a good walk, through outlying streets, before we reached the town, and by dint of many enquiries we found the lodging-house. We first asked a postman (after sending a post-card home, which we wrote at the post-office). We gathered from his looks that, if respectable, our chosen lodging-house was nothing very special; but it was "Hobson's choice" apparently, for a man in charge of another lodging-house, where we made enquiries, said it was the *only* place where they took single women, the "rough" place having given up taking them. So we found ourselves, between six and seven o'clock, at the door of the house, which was not bad-looking outside—an old-fashioned, roomy-looking, stone house, which might once have been a farmhouse and seen better days. The landlady, a stout, pleasant-faced woman, received us cheerfully. She told us that the "furnished apartments" were not in order, but we could have a boarded-off apartment and sleep together for eightpence the night. The bed would be clean. This sounded just as good as we could expect, so we paid her eightpence and turned in. I shall never forget this interior. Fortunately it was getting dark, and not till morning did we fully realise the state of the place. We found ourselves in a double room, consisting, probably, of a kitchen and front room thrown into one, each possessing a kitchen firegrate, and the back room a tiny sink. Round the wall was a wooden seat, and wooden tables and benches completed the furniture, except that the corner was occupied by a large cupboard. Numerous articles of apparel were hanging from lines; saucepans, tea-pots, etc., were to be found on the kitchen mantelpiece and over the sink (all more or less dirty), and mugs, to be had for the asking. Two perambulators partly stopped the large opening between the two rooms; one belonged to a mother with children, the other to a blind man and his wife, and contained their musical outfit and belongings. Two doors led into this double apartment; one gave access to the entrance passage and the landlady's rooms, the other to a small yard. In this was the only sanitary convenience for at least forty people, the key of which hung by the fireside —one small water-closet, *perfectly dry*. The stench in it was enough to knock you down; one visit was enough to sicken you. Yet some of the lodgers had been there *six weeks*. This and the small sink by the fireside were the only provision we could discover for sanitary purposes of all kinds.

Yet it was not the place itself, but its inhabitants, that are quite unforgettable. We sat down on the wooden bench behind a table, and immediately facing us was a huge negro with a *wicked* face. By his side a quiet-looking woman, who had a little girl and boy, was sitting crocheting. An old woman, active and weather-beaten, was getting supper ready for her husband, a blind beggar, who shortly afterwards came in led by a black dog. A woman tramp was getting supper ready for the negro; she wore a wedding ring, but I question if she was his wife. Several young children, almost babies, were running about, or playing with the perambulator. A young man on the seat near us was tossing about a fat baby born "on the road," whose healthiness we duly

admired. It was not his own, but belonged to a worried-looking woman, who also had a troublesome boy. [Pg 98] The next room was full of people, whom we could hear but not see distinctly. The little boy of two caused much conversation, as he was always doing something he should not, and caused disgust by his uncleanliness, freely commented on. His mother made raids on him at intervals, but neither cleanliness nor discipline was possible in such surroundings. The most striking character, next to the negro, was a girl, apparently about twenty. She wore a wedding ring, and belonged to some man in the company, but from the character of her conversation I doubt if she was married. The negro told some story, and she capped it with another; evidently she was noted for her conversation, as she was laughingly offered a pint to keep her tongue still! Her face would have been handsome, but for a crooked nose and evident dissipation. All the stories were more or less foul, and all the conversation, on every side, was filthy or profane. The negro told how he had outwitted a harlot who tried to rob him. The whole story of his visit to her house was related in the most shameless way, with circumstantial details, no one appearing to think anything of it. He told how he discovered where she kept her money—in a flower-pot—and hid *his* money there, shammed sleep, and watched her surprise when she found nothing in his pockets, coolly took all her money in the morning, driving off in a hansom after a good breakfast. He *said* he bought new clothes, and danced with her the same night, being taken for a "toff," and hearing the story of her wrongs, but refusing her blandishments! [Pg 99] The girl told, sitting on the table near the negro, how she had got her nose broken by an admirer and made him pay for it. A conversation sprang up about the treatment of wives, and it was stated that a woman loved a man best *if he ill-treated her*. This theory was illustrated by examples well known to the company. The girl related that she had lived in the same house with a man who used to beat his wife. If he came home singing a certain song his wife knew she was in for it. She used to try to hide, but one day he caught her and beat her severely with a red-hot poker. The police got him, but *she refused to bear witness against him*. Similar instances were given both by men and women. Such sentiments augured no very good treatment for wives of this class—in fact, the position of a mistress seemed preferable. All the conversation was unspeakably foul, and was delivered with a kind of cross-shouting, each struggling to make his or her observations heard. A man read—or tried to read—amid frequent interruptions, replied to by oaths, the story of the execution of the Moat Farm murderer that morning, and other interesting police news, freely commented on. Little children were running about all the while, and older ones listening. As time went on more and more came in, including the landlady and her children, and a married daughter with a baby. [Pg 100] It could not be possible for a woman to exercise any effective control under such circumstances, as it would be her interest to keep on good terms with her lodgers. The strongest man might be needed as a "chucker-out" if there was a row. All present that night were "down in their luck." A gala day at the park near by had been very unsuccessful owing to the wet, and there was but little drink going; otherwise we might have seen and heard still worse. One could imagine how swiftly a brawl would arise. A rascally-looking "cadger" came in from his rounds, and proved to be the father of the troublesome boy and husband of the worried mother. He and a companion had been doing a regular beggar's round, but had missed each other. His luck was so bad that his wife had to borrow his supper. All the company except a few appeared to be of that sort that preys upon society. The black man had been on board ship; he was powerfully made, and looked cruel and lustful. I avoided his eye, he kept staring at us. His mistress was, however, kind to us; she brought us a mug of their tea, which we drank for courtesy with considerable difficulty, eating some of our food with it. I suppose the company thought us very poor, for almost everyone had something tasty for supper, and the smell of fried bacon, onions, potatoes, and beefsteak, the steam of cooking and drying clothes, mixed with tobacco smoke and the stench of unclean humanity, grew more and more unbearable as the doors were shut and all gathered in for the night. [Pg 101] The continual shouting made one's head ache, and no one seemed to think of putting a child to bed. At last, about nine o'clock, we decided that upstairs would be preferable. I may say that no one interfered with us or questioned us, except one old woman, who was satisfied when we told her that we had spent the last night in a Model, and were going on tramp to a neighbouring town. She saw we were new to "the road," and descanted on the *healthiness* of the life, pointing to the baby in proof of it, and assuring us we should "soon get accustomed to it." She told us this was a very decent lodging-house, and that there were "nice, clean beds." We hoped so, and asked the landlady to show us upstairs. After we left the fun waxed still more fast and furious. Just before we went upstairs a man in the inner room propounded the question, "Who was Adam's father?" The conversation on the subject seemed to cause great amusement. Afterwards they began to sing, not untunefully, various songs; amongst others several hymns. I wished almost that we had stayed below to ascertain what led to the singing of "Jesu, Lover of my soul." It sounded odd, sung lustily by lips so full of profanity; yet I could not but thank God that there was *One* who loved sinners, and lived among them.

Upstairs we found rooms full of beds, but we were to have a "cubicle." Apparently it was the only one, and it was very imperfectly partitioned off. [Pg 102] The door fastened with a wooden button, but by the head of the bed was an entrance, *without* a door, to a compartment which held a bed occupied by a man, this again being accessible by an entrance without a door to the rest of the room. Anyone could therefore enter if so disposed. Three beds, occupied by married couples and their children (who shared the same bed), filled the room, and beyond was another apartment crowded with beds, and, so far as we could see, without partitions. The landlady told us not to mind the *man* who slept in the next bed, for he was blind! He slept there, and so did his dog. The other occupants of the room, who came to bed later, we could not see, but we could hear them plainly. From the conversation we think the nigger and his mistress slept just outside, and next to them (no partition) a married couple with a baby and a child. A third couple would be round the corner. The room barely held the beds and partition, with room to stand by the side; there was no

ventilation but a chimney close to our bed. We could hear someone continually scratching himself, and the baby sucking frequently, and other sounds which shall be nameless.

When we first went to bed, however, we were in peace, except for the noise from below. We found our sheets were clean, and fortunately could see no more by the light of the candle, without candle-stick, which our landlady gave us. For two hours the noise went on downstairs; comic songs and Sankey's hymns alternately came floating up the stair. Then, at about eleven o'clock, suddenly everyone came to bed with a *rush*. It almost seemed as if they were coming *on top* of us, so great was the noise, and all was so near. The blind man stumbled in so close, and half-a-dozen people, all talking, got to bed close by. My companion woke frightened and clutched me. A candle flickering in the next compartment revealed a huge bug walking on the ceiling, which suddenly *dropped* over a neighbouring bed! By degrees, however, the noises subsided, and my companion and I fell into an uneasy slumber. I woke in an hour or two, in dim daylight, to feel *crawlers*. The rest of the night was spent in hunting. I had quite a collection by the time my companion woke. They were on the bed and on the partition. I watched them making for our clothes; but there was no escape till morning was fully come. Besides, my companion was resting through it all; so I slew each one as it appeared. We found that the clean sheets concealed a *filthy* bed and pillows. [Pg 103]

About five o'clock two working men were roused by their wives' admonitions, and got up to go to work. We rose at six o'clock, leaving our neighbours still slumbering. We searched ourselves as well as we could (with a sleeping man next door, audible if not visible). We could see him if we stepped forward a pace.

We thankfully bundled up our things, including food, which we had brought upstairs to be safe, and we crept downstairs, hoping for cleanliness. The kitchen fire was lit—apparently it had never been out—and a kettle was on the bar; a working man was getting his breakfast ready; a girl, the landlady's daughter, apparently about 12, was sweeping the floor. We could now *see* the filth. The floor was strewn with dirty paper, crumbs, and *débris*, and dirty sand. All the cleaning it got was that it was swept and then freshly sanded by this small child. It then *looked* tidy. "Appearances" are proverbially "deceitful." But what we were not prepared for was, that all the wooden benches were occupied by *sleeping men*. The small child sweeping was at first quite alone with them. There was no place to wash but the small fireside sink: one man considerately cleared out from its neighbourhood, and I thought we were alone in that half of the room till I looked and saw a slumbering man on either side. They moved, as if uneasy on their hard couches. Of course, it was utterly impossible to attempt cleanliness, except hands and face. Yet our fellow-lodgers had some of them lived there for weeks, and it was reckoned by their class a *superior* lodging-house. I can hardly describe the feeling of personal contamination caused by even one night in such surroundings. Yet we escaped well, finding afterwards only two live creatures on our clothes. Cleanliness of person would be so *impossible* under such circumstances that it would soon cease to be *aimed* at. Yet most of the inmates had fairly clean hands and faces, and the tiny sink was used for washing clothes, which were dried in the room, and were hanging overnight from lines. Is it any wonder that such places are hot-beds of disease? How can one of this class possibly avoid spreading contagion under such bad sanitary conditions? It struck me that public money would be well spent in providing lodging-house accommodation under good sanitation and management, rather than in extending small-pox hospitals. [Pg 104] [Pg 105]

We did not feel inclined for breakfast, but the kettle was boiling, and a working-man showed us where to find things. We carefully washed the dirty-looking tea-pot and mugs, and borrowed a knife and spoon: no one insulted or questioned us. If our stay had been longer, however, doubtless we should have been obliged to get on friendly terms with our fellow-lodgers. We ate our food at the table farthest from the sleeping men, the sweeping still going on, and then we bundled up our things and left without seeing our landlady again.

The fresh air was sweet. Nowhere inside *could* be clean. Vermin might harbour in the wooden seating, doubly used by day and night: the imperfectly washed clothes, the *un*washed humanity, the crowding, the absence of proper sanitation, would break down personal cleanliness in a very short time if a respectable woman was forced to sleep in such a place. Yet two shillings and fourpence a week, at fourpence a night, should surely finance some better provision for the needs of a migatory class. It must be considered that social conditions have entirely altered since the days of railway travelling have loosened social ties to particular neighbourhoods. Work is a fluctuating quantity, and men and women have to travel. [Pg 106]

My own experience had taught me that single women frequently get shaken out of a home by bereavements or other causes, and drift, unable to recover a stable position if once their clothing becomes dirty or shabby. The question, To what circumstances and surroundings will a respectable destitute woman drift if without employment? is one which concerns society deeply, as immorality must be fostered by wrong conditions.

III. A First Night in the Workhouse Tramp Ward.

We were glad that the next ordeal before us would be the workhouse bath! For we were now really "destitute"; after purchasing a little more food we had only twopence left. We were so jaded by the imperfect sleep of the two last nights that we decided not to leave the town, but to wait about all day, and enter the workhouse at six o'clock. We had noticed a reading room and a park: to the latter we found our way. The day was gloomy and damp, but not actually wet, except for a slight drizzle at intervals. In the park we found shelter, drinking water, and sanitary convenience. We disturbed a sleeping man in a summer-house, and quickly left him. We [Pg 107]

wandered into every nook in the park, and talked, rested, or slept. The hours went very slowly, but we grew refreshed. Towards mid-day we made a frugal meal on our remaining provisions, drinking from a fountain. We still had a little sugar-plasmon left and a pinch of tea. In the afternoon, growing cold and stiff, we went to the free library, and stayed there reading an hour or two. Two or three ladies were there reading, but they took no notice of us beyond a stare; we had put our shawls over our heads, and might be taken for mill-hands. As soon as we thought it was time we set off to find the workhouse. It was about two miles, as near as we can guess, from the centre of the town, and on the way to it we made the acquaintance of an old woman who was going there. She was lame in one leg with rheumatism, and walked slowly, and she also stopped to beg at houses *en route*. She got a cup of tea and a glass of hot milk between the town and the workhouse. She was walking from P—— to H—— to find her brother, having been in the workhouse infirmary for many months. She said she had received a letter from her brother, offering her a home if she would come to him. She lost his address and could not write, so she had no resource but to walk from workhouse to workhouse till she reached her destination. She [Pg 108] was very tired, and groaned with pain during the night, and almost lost heart and turned back, but in the morning she plucked up courage to go on. She had the advantage of being too infirm to be made to work hard, and she evidently knew how to beg food. She seemed a decent woman, and had reared a large family of children, who were all married, and had "enough to do for themselves." Her brother, she said, was in comfortable circumstances, and she would be all right if she found him. Her clothing was well mended, but not clean.

We arrived, alone, a few minutes before six, at the workhouse lodge, which stood all by itself down a long lane which ended in iron gates. This lodge was very small, and was occupied by a man, the workhouse buildings being a little way off. There were a good many trees around, and it was a pretty spot, but lonely. The man was a male pauper, and no one else was in sight. We had to enter his hut to answer questions, which he recorded in a book, and we were then out of sight of the house. The nearest building was the tramp ward, the door of which stood open; but there was no one in it, as we afterwards found. A single woman would be completely at the mercy of this man. If our pilgrimage has had no other result, I shall be glad to be able to expose the positive wrong of allowing a male pauper, in a lonely office, to admit the female tramps. When we [Pg 109] first arrived at the gate he told us to wait a few minutes, as we were before time. Some male tramps came up, and we saw him send away one poor, utterly ragged man, who begged pitifully to be admitted. The lodge-keeper told him he could not claim because he had been in that workhouse within the month. So he limped away. He could not possibly reach another workhouse that night. The man admitted three others, and sent them on to the male quarters. He let us in at five minutes to six. We thought this was kind, as he might have kept us waiting, and it had begun to rain. He took my friend's name, occupation, age, where she came from, and her destination, and then sent her on, rather imperatively, to the tramp ward. She stood at the door, some way off, waiting for me. He kept me inside his lodge, and began to take the details. He talked to me in what I suppose he thought a very agreeable manner, telling me he wished I had come alone earlier, and he would have given me a cup of tea. I thanked him, wondering if this was usual, and then he took my age, and finding I was a married woman (I must use his exact words), he said, "Just the right age for a bit of funning; come down to me later in the evening." I was too horror-struck to reply; besides, I was in his power, with no one within call but my friend, and all the conditions unknown and strange. Probably silence was best; he took it for consent, and, as other [Pg 110] tramps were coming, let me pass on. I made a mental vow to expose him before I left the place. He took my bundle, and asked if I had any money. I gave him my last penny. I received a wooden token for the bundle. I then joined my friend, and told her she had better give up her umbrella and her penny. She went to do so after some tramps had passed, and though I stood and waited, and she was only gone a moment, he tried to kiss her as she gave him the things!

When she joined me, very indignant, we went forward into an oblong room containing six bedsteads with wire mattresses and filthy straw pillows. A wooden table and bench and "Regulations for Tramps" were the remaining articles of furniture. There were big, rather low, windows on three sides; the bottom panes were frosted, except one, which had been broken and mended with plain glass, and overlooked the yard where the male tramps worked. Presently our wayfaring friend arrived, and we all three sat and waited a considerable time. A solitary woman might have been at the mercy of the man at the gate some time. No one was in sight, or came near us, till at last a motherly-looking woman entered by a door leading to a room beyond. She asked us if we were clean. Our fellow-traveller (whose garments were at any rate *not* clean) was let off, as she had spent the last night in a workhouse tramp ward. We said *we* should like a bath, and were shown into a bath-room and allowed to bathe ourselves. Our clothes were taken from [Pg 111] us, and we were given blue nightgowns. These looked fairly clean, but had been worn before. They were dirty round the neck, and stained in places; we *hoped* they had been stoved! The old woman dressed in one without bathing. We found in the morning that both blankets and nightgowns were folded up and put away on shelves, just as we found them, apparently, and left for new comers. We were told that the blankets were "often stoved," but I have since ascertained that they are not stoved at all workhouses every day. All kinds of personal vermin might be left in them by a tramp who went straight out of dirty clothes to bed, and even a bath might leave them open to suspicion. We saw several bugs on the ceiling in this ward. Perhaps the using of others' dirty nightgowns was the most revolting feature in our tramp. At neither workhouse were the garments handed to us *clean*. We found afterwards that by Government regulation clean bath water and a clean garment can be *demanded*, but this we did not know. It should be *supplied*. After the bath we were each given four blankets and told to make our beds and get into them. The art of bed-making on a wire mattress, without any other mattress to cover it, is a difficult one, even with four blankets. The regulation number is two, and with these I fancy the best plan

would be to roll yourself round and lie on the mattress. For the wire abstracts heat from the body, and *one* is an insufficient protection. Even with one spread all over and another doubled under the body and two above I woke many times cold. In winter the ward is warmed by hot-water pipes, but the blankets are the same. A plank bed, such as is given in some workhouses, would probably be warmer, though harder. Put to bed, like babies, at about half-past six, the kind woman in charge brought us our food. We felt rather more cheerful after our bath, with the large, airy room, instead of the foul, common lodging-house; only one thing had exercised my mind—"What did that pauper mean by my going to him later?" However, I told the portress all about what he said. She was very indignant, and said I must tell the superintendent of the tramp ward next morning, that she had to leave us, but would take good care to lock us in, and I need not be afraid, he could not get at us. We were *very* hungry, having had nothing to eat since about twelve o'clock. Anything eatable would be welcome, and we were also thirsty. We were given a small lading-can three parts full of hot gruel and a thick crust of bread. The latter we were *quite* hungry enough to eat, but when we tasted the gruel it was *perfectly saltless*. A salt-box on the table, into which many fingers had been dipped was brought us; the old woman said we were "lucky to get that." But we had no *spoons*; it was impossible to mix the salt properly into the ocean of nauseous food. I am fond of gruel, and in my hunger and thirst could easily have taken it if fairly palatable. But I could only cast in a few grains of salt and drink a little to moisten the dry bread; my companion could not stomach it at all, and the old woman, being accustomed to workhouse ways, had a little tea in her pocket, and got the kind attendant to pour the gruel down the w.c. and infuse her tea with hot water from the bath tap. We were then left locked in alone, at eight o'clock, when no more tramps would be admitted. The bath-room, containing our clothes, was locked; the closet was left unlocked; a pail was also given us for sanitary purposes. We had no means of assuaging the thirst which grew upon us as the night went on; for dry bread, even if washed down with thin gruel, is very provocative of thirst. I no longer wonder that tramps beg twopence for a drink and make for the nearest public-house. Left alone, we could hear outside the voice of the porter. I wondered if he expected us to open a window. However, we stayed quiet, but had one "scare." Suddenly a door at the end of the room was unlocked, and a *man* put his head in! He only asked, "how many?" and when we answered "Three," he locked us in speedily. I could not, however, get to sleep for a long time after finding that a *man* had the key of our room, especially as our elderly friend had told us of another workhouse where the portress left the care of the female tramps to a man almost entirely, and she added that "he did what he liked with them." I expressed horror at such a state of things, but she assured me it was so, and warned us not on any account to go into that workhouse. She said, however, that it was some time since she had been there, and "things might be different."

At last my companions slept the sleep of weariness. Sounds outside had ceased; within, my friend coughed and the old woman groaned and shifted. The trees waved without the windows, and two bugs slowly crawled on the ceiling. I measured distances with my eye. They would not drop on *my* bed! I pity the tramp who has only two blankets on a wire mattress. I could not get thoroughly warm with four; some part of me seemed constantly to feel the cold wire meshes through the thin covering. The floor would be preferable. I have been told since at one workhouse, with considerable surprise on the part of the portress, that the male tramps prefer the floor to their plank bed! I do not wonder. The pillow was too dirty to put one's face on, so I covered it with a blanket.

In this workhouse the management was lax—too lax to ensure cleanliness; clothes and towels appeared to have been used, and blankets were probably unstoved. As our own clothes are taken away and locked up, it would be impossible for a tramp to wash any article of personal clothing. Consequently she must tramp on, growing day by day more dirty, in spite of baths, especially as *really dirty* work is required of her in return for "board and lodging!" There was no comb for the hair; fortunately we had one in our pocket.

In the morning we were roused about seven o'clock and told to dress. Our clothes were in the bath-room. We had the luxury of a morning wash. Our garments had been left on the floor just as we took them off, and so were our companion's, which looked decidedly unclean by daylight. The kind attendant said she had to go, but waited till I had told the portress (who arrived to set us our task) the conduct of the man at the gate, and I claimed her protection, as I should have to pass him when going out. Both exclaimed when I told his words, and one said, "Plenty of cups of tea I expect he's given, the villain!" The portress assured me she would watch me out, and that I need not fear him, as he daren't touch me when she was there, and she said that after I had gone she should report him.

Before this happened, however, we had our breakfast given us, which was exactly a repetition of supper—saltless gruel and dry bread. We ate as much as we could and were very thirsty. I had drunk some water with my hand from the bath-room tap as soon as I got up. We put what bread we could not eat into our pocket as a supply for the day, and were told to empty the rest of our gruel down the w.c. It thus disappeared; but what waste! A mug of coffee or tea would at least have washed down the dry bread; or a quarter of the quantity of gruel, properly made, would have been acceptable, with a mug of cold water for a proper drink.

The following list shows how we had spent our money:—

Lodging, first night	6*d.*
Lodging, second night	8*d.*
Loaf	2½*d.*
Two cobs	3*d.*

1 brown cob	1½*d*.
1 tea-cake	1*d*.
¼-lb. butter	4*d*.
¼-lb. cheese	2*d*.
In hand	2*d*.

We ate the cheese for dinner for two days. I do not think we could have kept our strength up for five days' tramping if it had not been for the plasmon mixed with our sugar, which we ate on our bread and butter or drank in our tea. My companion was very exhausted before evening this day, and her cough troubled her a great deal. Another week of this life would have made us both thoroughly ill. It is not only exposure and poor food, but *anxiety* as to the next night's experience, that tells on the mind. Yet we knew that in two nights we should be no longer friendless. Pity the poor woman who has *no home*. Is it not almost inevitable that she should sink?

As we had now no food, we were glad to appropriate the remainder of our workhouse bread, putting it in our pocket. We should have nothing else that day, for the portress told us when we had done our work we might go out at eleven o'clock. We thanked her—we had expected to stay another night, and perhaps pick oakum, but we should have almost starved on the food, as our sugar was in our bundle, so we were relieved to find we had only to clean the tramp ward and go. We were told to "*sweep* the ward and make all clean." We did not think of *scrubbing* the room, which, as it was large, would have been a big task, but the portress afterwards scolded us for not doing so. It was not dirty, so we swept it, cleaned the taps, bath, and wash-basins, washed up the pots, dusted, and, having made all tidy (except that we could find nowhere to empty our dust-pan, unless it was the w.c.), we waited for release. We sat on the form, and when the portress came in and saw us sitting down she spoke to us very sharply. I suppose she did not like to see us idle. We told her we would have scrubbed the floor if we had known we ought; but we did not know, as we had never been in a workhouse before. She was somewhat mollified, and let us off with a mild scolding some time before eleven o'clock. She stood at the door and watched us receive our things from the male pauper and leave the gates. He hastened to give us them without a word, and also restored our two pennies. We said farewell at the end of the lane to our companion, who was going the opposite way, and commenced our tramp. We expected the next workhouse to be about four miles away, in a town which we knew lay between us and our final destination. But it turned out that the Union we were leaving and the Union on the outskirts of the town to which we were ultimately bound absorbed all the paupers from the intervening places, though of considerable size. So we had really a very long walk before us; but, not knowing this, as it was very gloomy and inclined to rain heavily, we thought we had better seek shelter. We bought some butter with a penny, and walked on to find a quiet place to eat something, as it was some hours since we had had breakfast. We could not find anywhere but a damp stone wall in some fields. There we *feasted* on bread and butter and plasmon sugar; but we were *very* thirsty, so we took courage to beg, as we had a screw of tea left. I went to a cottage and asked for a drink. There was a boiling kettle on the fire, so I said we had a little tea of our own, and the kind young woman, who had a blind old father, made us tea and sweetened and milked it for us. I knew the town to which we were going well, so we talked about the changes in it of recent years, as I was "returning to friends there." She did not know the distance of the next workhouse, but told us about the intervening towns. We left refreshed, but it was beginning to rain, so we walked on, looking for shelter. We saw a church surrounded by trees standing all by itself, with a large graveyard. This looked a hopeful spot, so we made for it, though it was rather out of our route. There we stayed an hour or two, sheltering under trees or in the porch, and eating the last of our workhouse bread about one o'clock. Part of the time it rained very heavily, and though it was summer time we felt cold. At last the rain moderated, and we set off for a steady tramp.

IV. A Second Night in the Workhouse Tramp Ward.

The miles between us and our destination seemed to *grow* as walked. The replies we got varied from four miles to eight; we discovered that some were directing us *back* to the union we had come from. I do not know what the distance really was, but if we added up the distances we were told it must have been nearly eleven miles. I believe we went considerably out of our direct route. We had come about two miles, and after we began to tramp in earnest we only rested a short time once or twice to dodge heavy showers. We were walking from about two o'clock till nearly eight before we reached the workhouse, but my companion grew so weary she could only crawl, and I pushed her up the long, long hills. We seemed to go up and up, and always a long hill in front. We *had* to give up trying to dodge the rain, and walk steadily on through the wet, which grew worse and worse. We were very wet indeed before we reached the shelter of the Union, and only just in time to be admitted. I feared we should have been left shelterless. The workhouse was in such an out-of-the-way place that it was hard to find; we thought we should never find it, and grew very discouraged, but could not walk faster. To ease our minds we told each other the story of our lives from childhood, taking turns as we got tired and out of breath. We had now had no food for nearly seven hours. At last we came to a dirty lane, by the side of a high stone embankment, leading to big gates. We plunged down it; our feet by this time were soaked and our shawls nearly wet through. With some difficulty we found the lodge, a large, substantial stone building, with an office occupied by a single man. He looked more respectable than the other one, and asked us the questions in a straightforward matter-of-fact way that was a pleasant contrast. He told us to sit on a seat and wait for the portress. We sat for quite a quarter of an hour in our wet things. Two young men, who seemed to be related to officials and familiar with

the place, passed through; otherwise we were quite alone with this man, and he began to talk in a familiar and most disagreeable manner. He asked me where my husband was, and insinuated that I had been leading an immoral life. He said a married woman needed to "sleep warm." He told us he was a pauper and lived there, asked how we liked his house, said if there was one woman "he often shared his breakfast with her." He produced a screw of salt and gave it us as a favour. Being *two* we were protection to each other, and passed off the conversation as well as we could, telling him that we were not of *that* sort, that we had only taken shelter, and were going to friends. He said he hoped he should see us in the morning. *We* hoped not. He told us the portress often kept a single woman more than two days to do her cleaning, giving her rather better food. We dared not offend him. What might happen to a single woman alone with such men? [Pg 121]

At last, to our great relief, the portress came. She was comparatively young, dressed somewhat like a nurse, very quick and sharp, and evidently she had many other duties, and this part of her work was distasteful to her. She was very cross at being summoned so late, and said at first we ought not to have been admitted, as it was past eight; but the man told her we had been waiting. We should have been glad of a little of "the milk of human kindness" in our wet, weary condition, but we were "only tramps," and were ordered about sharply. She told us to follow her to the bath-room. It was a stone-floored room at the end of a stone passage, from which led out four stone cells. Each contained a bed, and was imperfectly lighted by a square aperture, high up, leading into the passage. The walls were stone, spotlessly whitewashed. She asked what we had got in our pockets, but did not search us. She took our bundles and asked how much money we had, but did not take our solitary penny. She insisted on a bath, and watched us undress, telling us to leave our clothes, and giving us nightdresses doubtfully clean. (The necks were *dirty*.) We hurried for fear of offending her. She asked if we would sleep together or alone, as the beds were double. We were glad to be together. My friend said she should have cried all night if shut up alone in one of these prison-like cells. I was ready first, and was given four blankets. To walk on a stone floor straight from a warm bath in a thin cotton night-dress and make your bed is not very nice. But I have since seen nightdresses made of rough bathing flannel, and as broad as they are short! I suppose "anything is good enough for tramps." It is hardly realised that respectable destitute women might have no other shelter. The conditions are such that probably few do apply. The accommodation at this workhouse, which appeared to be a large one—four cells, with beds for a possible eight—showed that few probably applied at that Union, while the porter said that often there was only one. Yet there are many destitute women, as Homes and Shelters show. Are they forced into the common lodging-houses—or worse? The bed was a most peculiar affair. In addition to the wire mattress it had a *wire* pillow, and *no other*. This was a flat, woven wire *shelf* raised a few inches above the mattress. Its discomforts were still to be experienced. [Pg 122]

I made this curious bed as well as I could, spreading one blanket over it and the pillow, doubling another for our backs, and reserving two to cover us. We got into bed and were given the regulation mugs of porridge and thick slices of dry bread. We were then locked in and left. We had one spoon between us. There was no light except from the aperture, but it was not yet dark. We were prisoners indeed, and a plank bed would have been more comfortable. The pillow was a cruel invention—it was impossible to place one's head upon it; the edge cut the back of your neck, even through a blanket, and the rough meshes hurt your face. We could not spare a blanket to double up for a pillow, we were cold as it was; the blankets underneath barely kept off the rough wires, and two were little enough to cover in a cold stone cell. The pillow was a torture; we finally put our heads *under* it and lay flat, screwed up into any position that gave ease. Over our heads was a framed motto and verses about "Jesus only." I wondered whether *He* would think this the proper lodging for a "stranger!" We were thirsty and hungry—but alas! when we tasted our gruel, our *only* drink, it was sweetened to nauseousness with treacle! It was, indeed, to all intents and purposes "treacle posset." Anyone with a grain of common sense can realise the effect on the system of taking this sort of stuff immediately after a warm bath, following a wetting. In fact, the diet produced a peculiarly loosened feeling in the skin, as if all the pores were open, which made it very hard to work. I usually perspire little, but next morning, while working, I was again and again in a profuse perspiration, and this produced a feeling of weakness, and culminated in a sharp attack of diarrhœa—fortunately after I had reached my friends. Anyone who thinks will see that this would only be a natural result of the diet with many people. We were terribly hungry, and ate our bread; this made us still more thirsty, but there was nothing to quench our thirst but the thick, sweet gruel—very good in quality, but most nauseous. The thirst we suffered from that night can be imagined better than described. "I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink," kept running through my mind whenever I turned my eyes up to spell out the words of "Jesus only." This was our worst night; we were very weary, but could get no ease; we fell into restless slumber, to wake again and again from thirst or cold or some pain caused by our uneasy couch. Long before we were called we were wide awake, longing to get up. About six o'clock, probably, our cell door was unlocked, and we were told to dress. We hastened to the bath-room and drank eagerly at the tap. Our wet clothes were lying just where we left them. They were still quite damp and our boots wet through. Had we known, we might have left them in a rather different position, on some hot pipes; but we thought they were sure to be stoved, as the portress knew we had taken shelter from pouring rain. We had told her we could not reach our friends in the neighbouring town because of it. There was nothing to do but to put our wet things on and set to work. A woman brought us a pair of men's boots, very damp, with blacking and brushes, and told us to polish them for her before we had our breakfast. We did this, which doubtless was extra, and were rewarded with a mug of her coffee, with one mug of the same sort of gruel, and two thick slices of bread. The coffee was such a treat. I have made some enquiries since, and have found at least one workhouse where the gruel is replaced by coffee, though this [Pg 123] [Pg 124] [Pg 125]

is contrary to regulations. The reason given is that the tramps never eat the gruel, and frequently *throw* it about, and even at one another, making a great mess! Also, being made in summer overnight, it turns sour, and "is not fit for pigs!" Is any comment needed? How many tons of good oatmeal must be wasted every year! It is *absolute* waste, as we were again told to empty our mugs of the night before down the w.c., and put them away clean. So not even the pigs have the benefit of it!

There was no room to sit in, or seat, except a short form, just big enough for two, in the bath-room. No table—and mugs and bread were put on a window-sill. We sat on the form by a window, a few inches open, that looked on some shrubs, and as we sat there a man—a pauper—passed and stared in. We moved away. He went, and we again took our seats, but presently he returned [Pg 126] and stood staring in. We had fled to either side when we saw him coming, but presently my friend *peeped*, and there he was, standing staring in. She gave him some sharp words and ordered him off; he disappeared, but evidently this was a means of communication between men and women. The window, however, would not open wide, but conversation would be easy. Presently the portress came, very brisk and sharp. I was told to clean and stone a larder some distance off. We had already done a little work while waiting. Knowing we should have to do it, we folded our blankets, washed our pots, and cleaned the bath-room taps. All was made clean and tidy when the portress came, but we were not to get off so easily! My friend was told to stone the place completely through, including the three cells not used (which looked clean), to black-lead the hot-water pipes all down the passage, dust everywhere thoroughly, and clean the step. Meanwhile I had first to do some shelves and then stone a spiral stair and the floor of a small larder, and then go on to other work. I think, probably, the work we did would have taken the ordinary tramp a full day, and earned another bed and breakfast. But we did not dawdle, but worked steadily on, and pleased the portress so much that eventually she said we might go that day. We could not finish our task by eleven, so she kindly gave us our dinner and let us go after it, saying we should have time to reach our friends. Evidently she saw we were above the usual tramp, and our work [Pg 127] pleased her. She asked us a few questions, but our answers, that we were tramping from L—— to B——, having come short of money before we reached our friends, satisfied her, being true. This portress came backwards and forwards pretty frequently, and so did our acquaintance of the previous night, who seemed to have numerous errands by the larder where I was cleaning, but I neither looked at him nor spoke, so he did not make any advances. It would have been easy to "carry on" with him in the intervals between the times when the portress came. The woman pauper who brought in the boots was, however, to be seen within call, in a room near by, the door of which was open, so I felt protected. She was a decent woman and kind to us. She said she "didn't do it for everyone," when she afterwards brought us part of her dinner. After finishing the larder, the portress set me to turn out bundles, which were stacked in compartments on either side of a long, high room, right up to the ceiling. I had a high pair of steps, and was to take each bundle out and dust it with a brush, sweep out the compartment, and replace it. Each parcel, as a rule, was wrapped in rough linen wrappings, but a considerable number of things were unparcelled, and some dirty and foul-smelling—probably they had been only stoved and put away. All the bundles which were not tightly tied were more or less moth-eaten. It made my heart ache to see these clothes in such a state, remembering that they were all that some poor people [Pg 128] possessed. I had often noticed the lack of care with regard to destitute women's clothing, having fetched girls out of the workhouse whose clothes were so crumpled, even when decent, that everyone stared at them—and had received from poor people many complaints that their clothes were lost or spoiled. After seeing the state of this store-room I can well believe it. Behind the bundles were cobwebs simply festooned with moths. They had attacked the bundles at every opening. The coverings kept them off, but some bundles were rotten, and one sad thing was that if a bundle was rather more respectable, and contained more clothes, it was not so tightly tied, and was, therefore, more open to attack. Besides, not a few things were quite unprotected and swarming. The place was heated with pipes. A better breeding ground for moths could hardly be imagined. Yet a simple expedient would have prevented *most* of the mischief. If each bundle had been provided with *two* wrappers, and the second one tied over the openings of the first, the moths could not get in. Besides this, however, the whole should be examined more frequently. I turned out more than a hundred bundles, and was then told to simply *dust down the front* of the remainder. Doubtless this had been done often, and all *looked* right. I showed the portress, however, so many moth-eaten bundles that she said she must have them all stoved. She came and [Pg 129] said I might stone the floor and finish, my companion having finished about the same time. We had rough aprons given us to work in; but I should like to mention, as a subject for thought, that all this rough, hard work naturally made our clothes dirty, and would soon wear them out. We were, after only two nights in workhouse tramp wards, far more dirty and disreputable in our clothing than when we left home. The sleeves of my blouse were very dirty by this time. Yet in the workhouse, as bundles are confiscated, there is no chance to change, and no opportunity to wash a garment. One is "between Scylla and Charybdis!" In the common lodging-house you can wash your clothes, but not yourself; in the workhouse tramp ward you can wash yourself, but not your clothes!

We had bread and cheese given us for dinner; we had our bundles given us, and mashed our last tea with water from the bath tap. The kind woman brought us part of her dinner, telling us to return the plate and not let the portress see it. We then got leave to go. The portress was in the lodge, and we passed out without remark.

Once more we were free!—but very exhausted. We felt completely tired out, and struggling up the dirty lane we found a reservoir and some public seats. We took turns to rest, lying on a seat, for some men were about, and kept walking backwards and forwards and laughing at us. The [Pg 130]

ground was damp, so it was no use seeking a more sheltered place. We rested an hour or two, till we began to grow cold.

V. A Night in a Woman's Shelter.

We knew that three good miles lay between us and our friends, but we were also a day beforehand, as we had expected to be detained two nights. What to do for this last night considerably exercised us! Should we give in, and go to our friends a day earlier? This would be to lose an opportunity for research which might be long in recurring. Should we go to another workhouse? This would be to risk detention over Sunday. Should we try a night in the open? I knew the neighbourhood fairly well, and it might be possible to find shelter; but the weather was gloomy and damp, and it would hardly do to risk making an appearance in a police court when I had been announced to speak publicly on Sunday evening. So we determined to walk on, and, if we could not find any other alternative, to pawn our spare shawl for a night's lodging. Only we neither of us cared to face a common lodging-house; it would be hardly fair to our friends to arrive at civilisation straight from such surroundings. At any rate, we had the rest of the day for experiment, some workhouse bread, some plasmon sugar, and *one penny*! We went to a park, and spent part of the afternoon sheltering from rain, and then pushed on for the town. I passed the [Pg 131] houses of friends who would have stared indeed to see me, but probably no one would have recognised us. It got near tea-time, and we tried again and again to spend our last penny on *butter*. No one would sell us a pennyworth, so finally we went to the third-class waiting-room of the station and ate our bread with plasmon sugar. Here our problem was solved! We saw by a notice that there was a "Woman's Shelter": beds 3*d*., 4*d*. and 5*d*. Just the thing! Here was a new and final experiment: we should not have to give in! So we went out to search for the shelter and a pawnbroker's, and easily found both; we changed our best shawl for the poor one that covered our bundle, but would do as a substitute, and pawned the shawl—which had cost 8*s*. 11*d*.—for 2*s*. 6*d*. We were then "passing rich"! We enquired at the shelter, which had only just been re-opened after the small-pox epidemic, and after engaging two fourpenny beds we went to a coffee-house near by, and indulged in the luxury of two half-pints of tea; my friend had some sausage and I a tea-cake *buttered*. After this welcome meal we returned to the shelter. It was a great relief to find ourselves once more in a decent place, and with women only. I cannot too highly commend this shelter as being *just the thing needed for the class it provides for*.[83] It was not a *charity*, though doubtless not wholly self-supporting. We paid for what we received, and were free to [Pg 132] come and go unquestioned. Particulars were entered similar to those in the workhouse (in [Pg 133] addition, we were asked the address to which we were going). Women could enter up to eleven at night. The place was a converted mill. The basement consisted of a large, comfortable kitchen, with a large stove, benches and tables and shelves. There was also a well-appointed lavatory, deep basins, plenty of hot and cold water, a wringing machine for clothes, and baths could be had *free*. We easily begged a bucket to wash our tired feet. There was *everything necessary for personal cleanliness*, and in the presence of women only (especially as only one or two were in the lavatory), changes of clothing could be made. The women were friendly and cheerful, and appeared to appreciate their privileges. There was no *restraint*, but a pleasant, elderly woman in charge sat in the kitchen and prevented foul talk and brawls. Upstairs was a large, pleasant hall, with a piano. Some women of a better class apparently preferred this, and sat working. This also was easily supervised, without its being noticeable, by the presence of someone in the adjoining office. We could go to bed at nine, ten, or eleven, but not between, so that the bedrooms were only disturbed at these hours. Three stories above contained bedrooms—large, airy rooms, with beds at graded prices. The w.c.'s were in a yard out of an upper story, and were clean and well flushed.

Altogether I was most thankful for this opportunity of seeing just the sort of provision for migrating women which should exist in *every* town. Even if some of the inmates were immoral, they were in no temptation at least while there. One woman told another she knew she had given way to drink, but was glad to get back to "the old place," and there appeared to be some who lived there who tried as much as they could to exercise a good influence. There was a "Sankey" on the piano, and I played a few tunes as well as I could without spectacles; this was warmly appreciated, and several joined in singing, my stumbling playing suiting my condition of "having seen better days!" Some young ladies passed through and said, "Who is she?" but made no further remark.

We went to bed at nine. My bed was clean, but my companion's was dirty, and a very dirty woman slept next, who had had drink, and got out frequently in the night, and *sat* on my friend's bed. She saw some vermin, but I saw none, and slept very fairly well. People came in at ten, and at eleven a woman and some children came in, and settled down rather noisily. Room-mates got out of bed at intervals, and early trams ran outside, and some got up early, but on the whole we had a good night compared with other experiences. The cleanliness of the floor left something to be desired, and we were told to make our beds before we went downstairs; so they would be left for the next comer, clean or unclean. We heard several expressions of thankfulness for the place, [Pg 134] only one woman said, "They only did what they were paid for, and she didn't see that it was much charity." We found our way downstairs for a wash, and after sitting a little while in the kitchen we went to the neighbouring coffee tavern for breakfast. After this we had still 1*s*. 1½*d*. left out of our 2*s*. 6*d*., and some spare provision, including some workhouse bread. The remainder we decided to spend on making ourselves *respectable*. It may be thought that this would be difficult, but by a little contrivance we managed to make ourselves sufficiently presentable to elude scrutiny, and to pass for shabby tourists on a "walking expedition." Our luggage had been sent

on, and supplies of money awaited us. Therefore the only problem was that of changing from "tramps" to "tourists." Bad weather would account for boots and untidiness. We found a cheap shop, and bought a hat and trimmings, tie, and belt for a shilling. My friend put on a more respectable underskirt of mine over her linsey petticoat. Her hat and shawl would pass muster. My new hat, tie, and belt "converted" me into a lady! We went to a park to trim the hat with pins, which we bought for a halfpenny. There we remained till afternoon, dining on our remaining bread, except what we gave to the swans. Immediately overlooking this park friends lived who little guessed that one who was to visit them shortly was dining under their windows as a "destitute woman!" Our destitution was, however, at an end, and with hearts full of thankfulness at the successful issue of our research expedition we found our way at the appointed time to the house where we were expected by a friend, who thought she quite understood our desire for a speedy change of apparel after our "walking tour!" [Pg 135]

These latter experiences of eluding questions caused us some amusement. But *supposing* we had had no friends, no cheerful welcome, no waiting supplies. What could we have done? Before us would have stretched, in grey monotony, the life of poverty, a possible search for uncertain work, a gradual pawning of every available article for food, more workhouses, more common lodging-houses. The last article gone, cleanliness lost, clothing dilapidated or dirty—what then?

To wander helpless and homeless, driven to tramp, or to descend still farther into vice. From such a life "*facilis descensus Averni*."[84]

[Pg 136]

CHAPTER III.

A NORTHERN TRAMP WARD.[85]

Having, with a friend, spent five days and nights of the summer of 1903 as a "Tramp among Tramps,"[86] I was led to pursue social investigation a little further. The reasons were many. It was suggested in several quarters that our experiences might be exceptional, that they were the result of specimening isolated workhouses, that mismanagement in detail was possible. Abnormal conditions might prevail by accident. It might also be that in the larger centres of population cleanliness and food were both better managed. Also the time of year at which we went was one when the tramp ward was empty; we did not come in contact with others and learn their character. It was possible that conditions which pressed hardly on us were easy to them. It seemed very desirable to ascertain exactly the winter circumstances in some large centre of population. There were reasons which made the one we chose exceptionally interesting as an experiment. The story of our Tramp was a matter of public knowledge; the personal assurance of Guardians had been given that the evils mentioned did not exist. They had examined and convinced themselves that, as regards the destitute poor, their workhouses were free from blame. Not only so, but the workhouse tramp ward chosen had been frequently mentioned in the public Press. A large "sleeping-out" problem existed in the town. It was suggested that it might be desirable to relax regulations so as to make it easier for destitute persons staying there to go out in the morning to look for work. "It was thought that in this way men who shunned the casual ward might be induced to enter it in preference to sleeping out." So said the public Press. The experiment of slightly relaxing the rules was tried. Very few availed themselves of it.[87] The Guardians also opened the wards early, but very few men came. The applicants were mostly men "tramping in search of work," but all who applied had slept in the neighbourhood the night previously. [Pg 137]

The Clerk added that "the experiment made it clear to the public that there was no necessity for the men to sleep in the brickfields."

Here evidently was an exceptional Board of Guardians, bent on meeting a public need. With such a desire on their part, probably ideal conditions would prevail. An ungrateful vagrant class, "men in search of work, but who don't want to find it," nevertheless refused to flock to the provision made for them. They obstinately preferred brickfields after six weeks of relaxed conditions! Was it ignorance or prejudice on their part? Or was it possible that the Guardians were mistaken in thinking provision had been made? One thing only could test the matter: another descent from respectability, and identification with the claimants for relief. One night as a tramp might give insight into real conditions. It is so surprisingly easy to become a tramp that it is strange it has not occurred to Guardians personally to test conditions by sampling each other's workhouses, or at any rate by sending into them some trustworthy witness. [Pg 138]

So my friend and I started on a well-planned tour of investigation. We dropped out of civilisation in a town far enough away to tramp from, and set our faces towards a place where friends were ready to receive us. We told no lies. We were at 5.30 P.M. so penniless that through a partial miscalculation we had only 3½*d.* between us (besides two pennies husbanded for after needs) wherewith to procure the substantial tea with which we wished to fortify ourselves! Consequently we could not afford 2*d.* for a cup of tea, and our first surprise was to find that a 1*d.* cup was hard to procure. It was only by searching in a poor neighbourhood that our evident poverty procured us, as a favour, a cup of tea each and four slices of bread and butter for our 3½*d.* The usual price was 2*d.* for a "pot of tea" in a small, poor, but clean, shop, and bread and butter was ½*d.* a slice. When I asked the woman to give us 1½*d.* worth instead of a twopenny plateful, she gave us two [Pg 139]

extra slices "free gratis for nothing." Evidently we were objects of charity, poor and respectable, and we appreciated her kindness. But, considering the real price of food, we paid for what we had. Cheap cups of tea are a preventative of evils. Thirsty men and women must drink. Surely a penny cup of tea easy to be obtained might keep many out of the public-house. Of course, we were ignorant of where to go to obtain cheap food, but so, maybe, are other wanderers who are not habitués.

Refreshed, but not satisfied, we began to search for S—— Street. No one knew where it was, so we had to resort to the usual refuge and "asked a bobby." He knew, and knew why we asked! After a moderate walk through a very poor neighbourhood we easily identified the place by a row of six men propped up against a wall waiting, and one woman hovering near. We found, somewhat to our surprise, that the hour of admission was one hour later than that which prevailed in the towns we knew. Seven o'clock is late on a winter's night, and it may be you will suffer from cold, snow, or sleet if you arrive as a stranger at six o'clock. Besides, what about early admission? However, no one was being let in, so we took a short walk and returned. All the loiterers had disappeared inside, so we followed. We were, however, only admitted to further [Pg 140] waiting under cover in a curious ruinous shed. It was a very cold place, the roof would let water in through holes in the skylight. It was, however, a fine night, and only moderately cold. So we joined two women, and saw the men, about fifteen by that time, arranged in a row against the opposite wall. Two women were sitting on a step and one on the handle of a wheelbarrow. We sat on the edge of a plank with our backs against a hole that gave a view of a place we found afterwards was under the tramp ward, apparently used for bricks. A married woman, somewhat respectably dressed, came in with her husband. One by one men dropped in. The women spoke little, but a buzz of conversation went on among the men, whose numbers grew to over thirty. Two facts struck me. Hardly any one was old, most were in the prime of life, and, with a few exceptions, if you had met them in the street, you would say they were ordinary working men. Some few, however, were evidently of the "moucher" type. We waited, growing cold, for a full half-hour in this draughty place, and then, as the hands of the office clock pointed to seven, we women were told to crowd into a corner near the office window, "married people first," and an official in uniform proceeded to take particulars. Husband and wife, in the case of three couples, had to give name, age, where they came from, and destination and occupation. Then began, as each candidate came forward, a process which I can only describe as "bully-ragging." If the [Pg 141] unfortunate applicant stated the facts in a meek and ordinary voice, this official asked, "Have you been here before?" If the reply was "No," "See that you don't come here again," "Sponging upon the rates!" and various other expressions not to be repeated were used in a hectoring tone of voice. If the reply was "Yes," he became threatening and violent in language. One married woman ventured the reply, "Not since before Christmas." He flew out upon her and used insulting language. This preyed on her mind so that in the course of the next two days she frequently said to us, "I only said 'not since before Christmas,' and he said I sauced him." One poor woman with a bandaged head was summarily dismissed. "Get out with you, you ——!" "Off with you —— sharp!" Threats of five days' detainment or of "gaol" for "impudence" were used, and he announced as a clincher, "All you women will have to stay in two nights and pick three pounds of oakum."

My heart sank low. These must be desperate, well-known characters with whom I was to associate, the very scum of the earth, to be treated so. Even this habitual imposture hardly could justify the official's language. He was evidently a "lion in the path," and not muzzled! But *I* was a decent, married woman rejoining my husband who was working in a neighbouring town, too far from him to reach him that night, without means to procure a bed, and seeking shelter simply in [Pg 142] order not to be on the streets at night, and to proceed as soon as permitted. I gave particulars which were true, and in answer to the question, "Have you been here before?" could truthfully say "No." But this was not enough. "And what are you doing here?" "I am going on to my husband." "You've no business to be here imposing on the rates. Do you know I could give you three months for it? I've a good mind to send you off and make you tramp to him to-night." I was so dumbfoundered, my friend says, I replied, "I wish you would!" Then he proceeded to insinuate I was a woman of bad character; my eyes fell and my face flushed, and I suppose gave colour to his statement. Reply or justification was worse than useless. I grew so confused I could not state correctly the number of my children, but said I had "one or two." Evidently a bad character, leaving children up and down the country. "See you don't come here again. I shall know your face, and it will be worse for you if you do." I earnestly replied, "I won't," and was allowed to pass on. I waited at the top of a flight of stairs while he "bully-ragged" my friend for going about the country with such a bad character. He made her cheeks flush by insinuating she was no better. She said when she joined me, piteously, "Do I look like a prostitute?"

[Pg 143] We entered together the tramp ward, a barn-like room, furnished with a wooden table and three forms. We found afterwards that the whole ward was the top storey of a converted mill. It was skylighted and divided into several rooms—a very large dormitory, a bath room with w.c.'s, an attendant's private sitting-room and store-room, and the day-room we entered, which was approached by a flight of stairs from outside. The room was very little heated, apparently by a steam pipe overhead. There was no fire, and a very cold draught from outside, when, as frequently, the door was left ajar. The table was so placed that the draught came to those who sat there. We were told to hang up our shawls and sit down. A very stately officer in spotless uniform received us and marshalled us like soldiers, peremptorily, but not unkindly. We sat at table and were given brilliantly polished tin mugs and spoons. Then each of us was helped to gruel, very good in quality, almost thick enough to be called porridge, and sufficiently salted not to be tasteless. A salt-box was on the table. We each received also a thick slice of good bread. We fell to with appetite after our slender tea and long waiting. Gruel was not so bad—for the first time!

The table and floor were spotlessly clean. So far good. I did not at the time reflect that it is usually supposed to be bad to have a bath immediately after a meal.[88] As soon as we had finished eating it was, "Now, women, come to the bath, two of you." My friend and I eagerly embraced the first turn, and were soon marshalled each to a corner of the bath-room, searched (for pipe and tobacco!), and told to get into the six inches of warm water, which a notice told us we were entitled to, and carefully asked if it was too hot or cold. We had, however, only soft soap to wash ourselves with, and were told to wash our hair. This we had previously escaped. My friend had very long hair, needing careful drying, and the prospect of wet heads was not cheering. If you wish to frequent tramp wards it is desirable to have short hair. However, there was no help for it, so with the officer standing by to hand a clean towel and enforce haste —"Come, hurry up, women"—I hastily bathed, dried my hair as well as I could, and got into the garments provided—a modern substitute for a hair shirt—a coarse garment of dark blue bathing flannel of most peculiar shape. It just covered the elbows and barely came to the knees! The neck, of white calico, was dirty. I had to perform an act of self-sacrifice in leaving my friend the cleanest. Blankets and nightgowns are stoved every night, rendering insect pests impossible, but, unless I am greatly mistaken, they are not washed often. My friend, who afterwards folded the blankets, found they made her hands filthy. It is not very nice to think of sleeping thus, but it would, of course, be impossible to wash the blankets every time. But it might be possible to give a person a clean nightgown, and the same one for two consecutive nights. As it was, we knew the second night we must be wearing some one else's. They were lumped and sent to be stoved. With regard to the blankets, every night the regulations have to be relaxed for one or two women unfit to be bathed. These sleep in their own clothes. They cannot be clean. But in the morning all the blankets were also lumped and stoved. Consequently, the next night you might be sleeping in your neighbour's blankets. Two women on one night slept without changing or bath. It would seem to be a simple precaution to wash the blankets from these beds, and thus in rotation wash all. However, these delights were yet to come. We folded our clothes and were marched through the sitting-room in our scanty costume to fetch from the store-room pillows and blankets. An American leather pillow, very low, and a straw pillow with a white cover were allowed us, but the second night only the American leather one was allowed. This was much too low for comfort. One woman begged a white one, but we were stopped from asking. It was only for women who had just washed their heads! It was a special favour to her.

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We were then marched into the large dormitory and told to let down a wide board propped against the wall, one for each. A row of sleeping women occupied similar "plank beds." There were a few straw beds on bedsteads, but only for sick folks, and also some children's cribs. A gas jet or two burned all night and revealed the gaunt rafters and skylights. Now to test the delights of a plank bed! We were told to make it "one blanket below and two above." So we meekly did so, and the officer retired.

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Now began, about 7.30, a night which I can only describe as one of long-drawn-out misery.

The human body is not made to accommodate itself easily to a plank bed even with "three good blankets." If you lie on your back your hips are in an unnatural position unless the knees are raised; then the air comes under the narrow doubled blankets. Try first one side and then another. Your weight rests on hip and shoulder squeezed into flatness and speedily sore. Add wet hair, a low pillow very hard, a garment that left arms and legs uncovered and pricked you all over, and conditions are not easy for sleep. Double a blanket under you four-fold, get another round you, and place the third on top double. This is more tolerable, but still cold. My back was sore after three nights in a soft bed. Do not imagine either that we slept more uneasily than others. Everyone complained of their hard couches, though some said even they were preferable to wire mattresses, on which you "couldn't get warm." A simple expedient would provide an efficient remedy. If a strong hammock material was fastened in a frame bedstead by eyelets on pegs, this could be removed and stoved, washed, if necessary, would give to the body, and allow of easy sleep. But even on this uneasy couch sleep might have been obtained but for a number of disturbances which made the night prolonged torture. The end of the room was occupied by a large cistern. At intervals, day and night, a flush of water was sent along a pipe for sanitary reasons. A very good arrangement, but we happened to be at the cistern end of the room. Anyone who knows how a cistern behaves can imagine the peculiar noises that issued. It seemed possessed by a demon bent on preventing sleep. It would s-s-siss for a few moments, then gurgle, then hiss, then a rush would come, followed by a steady tap, tap, tap that speedily became maddening. Water on the brain with a vengeance! Wet hair and running water in combination! This proximity to the cistern was, however, an accident carefully avoided the second night, but several poor unfortunates would always have to suffer it. It was, however, a minor evil compared with others. The beds were so close they almost touched, quite unnecessarily, as the room was large, but so we were ordered. Your neighbour breathed right in your face, and you had all the twisting and turning of a sufferer on each side to add to your own. Most of the women had bad colds, and you succumbed yourself under the double influence of contagion and chilliness. Then your coughing and sneezing added to the common misery. Only the women there for the second night lay still—apparently, but not really, asleep. Later, I knew why: sheer fatigue and exhaustion prevented restlessness. But all of us newcomers turned and squirmed, some sighed and groaned; others gave vent to exclamations of misery. "My God, what a hell hole of a place," said a woman, roused from uneasy slumber for about the sixth time. Far the worst thing of all, which made it a punishment fit for Tantalus, was the interruption to slumber. Nominally, women could be admitted till 10 o'clock, but really, for one reason or another they were admitted till past midnight, under protest. An officer was in charge, and in each case her manner of procedure was as follows: She turned the handle of the door with a loud noise, marched in the newcomer (after

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previous cistern gurglings connected with bathing operations), ordered her in a loud tone of voice to let down the plank bed. Down it came with a bang, startling all sleepers. Then she administered some rebuke, mixed with orders, left the new unfortunate, and shut the door sharply. One newcomer was a poor old granny, very bad with rheumatism, whom she loudly accused of drink, probably with truth. This old woman sighed, groaned, and moaned, "Oh! deary me!" "Lord help us!" most of the night, and was in real pain. She got out of bed twice with numerous sighs and groans, taking a quarter of an hour at least each time. Bed after bed was let down and dragged across the floor. A woman came in very late, could not settle, was moved to a [Pg 149] straw bed, was too frightened to sleep (perhaps *d.t.*), finally was allowed to go out in the middle of the night. No doubt the post of this night watching officer was tiresome and onerous, but a little thought might have brought about considerable improvement. If a number of spare beds were placed ready overnight, and scoldings administered in the day room, if doors were opened quietly, and orders given softly, with some consideration for a room full of weary sisters, one would have been thankful. As it was, people grew more and more restless; some one was constantly wandering to the adjoining lavatory, or sitting up and coughing or moving uneasily. It was nearly impossible to snatch more than a few brief moments of restless slumber before, with early morning, sheer weariness reduced us to quietude. Then at 5.30 we were roused by the mandate, "Now then, women, all of you get up; be sharp now." A hasty obedience, swift and unwavering, is enforced by several stern sanctions. In the first place, before you lies a day of service, the conditions of which can be made hard at will. Behind that is the possibility of being detained four, or, if Sunday intervenes, five days, for "cheek" or "impudence." No one could face such a prospect with equanimity. Yet for very slight cause it was possible. We had an object lesson before us of the tender mercies of officials. A poor woman, a silk weaver by trade, who had been reduced to live by casual labour at charing or by selling bootlaces, had entered the previous [Pg 150] night. She was ignorant of the two nights' detention, and had a cleaning place to go to. When she found she was to be detained she begged and prayed to go, and the officer was moved by her tears to take her to the matron and give her her liberty. But this took time, and she reached her charing place too late. Work was denied her, and she wandered about all day, and came back rather late to claim her second night, having difficulty in re-finding the place, and having nowhere to go. I have every reason to believe her story was true, for she repeated it to us again and again, it fitted in with her character and history, and she had no motive for deceiving us. But for this offence of returning, after having asked off, she was condemned to remain five days. Her story was not believed, though she begged with tears to go out and seek work. One officer, indeed, spoke to almost all in a most peremptory, and one might also add, insulting manner, casting doubt on the truthfulness of what was told her. Reply was useless, as it would only provoke penalty. She hurried people up and ordered them about. One woman, an old hand, the second morning said, "Come, come, you needn't be so knotty with us," but no one else ventured anything that could be interpreted as disobedience or "impudence." She turned a deaf ear to one poor, tired woman whose feet were swollen, and who wished to remain another night, and tried her best to order poor old Granny out. "You won't stay here," "You can walk right enough," "You [Pg 151] won't come over me with your tales." Fortunately for us, her régime was limited. We had altogether dealings with three officers. One was careful and stately, strict but kind, only not considerate in the matter of protecting our sleep. This one was "knotty," and the third far more kind. Fortunately her share of us fell at dinner time, but of that more anon.

I should remark that I felt considerable sympathy for these our task mistresses. Even with a cosy sitting room, and stove, and sofa, it must be an irksome and disagreeable task, and our "knotty" friend looked weary. By the end of the time she had sufficiently differentiated us to tell us before leaving "not to believe" the others. But I think she was to a great extent harsh and wrong in her judgments; at any rate, the assumption that all were liars was wrong. My friend and I are accustomed to judge characters of this class, being engaged in Rescue work, and having destitute women constantly in hand. You cannot live a whole two nights and a day with women, under pressure of hard circumstances, in fellowship, without eliciting confidence. The women who went out after one night with us we did not know. They ate, or did not eat, a hasty breakfast, and departed very early—about 6.30 probably—some of them to join husbands. But the following may be taken as a truthful description of our sisters who remained. The main impression on my mind [Pg 152] is a double wonder at their patience in affliction, and at the qualities revealed in them, and a wonder whether, if I had selected a similar number of better class friends and placed them in like circumstances, they would have borne the test as well.

Our morning ablution had to be performed with cold water and soft soap. Our clothes were restored to us mostly stoved (in which process some are said to be ruined, becoming limp and creased). Breakfast, the same as supper, was meted out to us. Gruel a second time, and dry bread is not appetising. Oh for a drink! The room was cold, and only cold water from the bath tap available; it tasted of metal polish or soft soap.

We sopped our bread in our porridge, and, knowing we had the day to face, ate all we could. No one ate all their porridge and bread. We were not exceptional, hardly anyone ate much. Some kept their bread and munched it at intervals through the day. The porridge, including some nearly full mugs, and what remained in the can, was simply thrown away. Naturally enough, when the officer left us and we waited for the task mistress, the conversation turned on food and treatment. Those who knew other workhouses declared that this was "the worst they knew." In the course of the day we heard the merits of most of the workhouses near, and of some far away. It may be well to summarise as follows: The comparative merits of a tramp ward depend first on [Pg 153] drink; the women feel dreadfully the need of drink, especially after hard work. Coffee or tea makes all the difference to dry bread. Gruel is not drink. Some can bring in a bit of tea and sugar,

and as a favour beg hot water, but it is often denied them. We procured it once, and it was once denied in our hearing. We had but a screw of tea and sugar, and some had none.

The second requisite would seem to be food, but it seems as if only a few can eat the gruel more than once a day. It is played with and left by most. Hence dry bread and a morsel of cheese at dinner is the real fare. As the quantity of food allowed is not even that which will sustain life in an adult, semi-starvation is the result.[89] The tramp men who brought back the stoved blankets, eagerly and hungrily hid under their jackets the pieces of bread the women had left.

Now to commence, after a night of misery, with a freshly-caught cold, to sit in a cold and draughty room with no fire, and feast on gruel and dry bread, with a possible drink of water, is *punishment*, not charity, or alleviation of misery.

The third merit or demerit of a tramp ward is the bed. Straw beds are a luxury, wire mattresses disliked for cold, plank beds for hardness; the floor is preferable, as there is more room.

The fourth and perhaps the most important item is the character of the officers. Any who have even a drop of the milk of human kindness are remembered with appreciation. But they seem rare. Not, I believe, that there are many intentionally unkind. "They know not what they do." The constant habit of dealing for so brief a period with individuals prevents the formation of the customary links of human kindliness; the worst characters return, the best stay so short a time and are lost to sight; any act of kindness meets apparently no reward. Kindness for kindness' sake is difficult, a peremptory official habit easily acquired. There may be texts in an officer's sitting room, and yet the Christian qualities fortitude and patience and self-sacrifice may be better exhibited to one another by the tramps outside her door than by the inmate in authority. Some workhouses are to be avoided like poison. There positive cruelty and insult reign, but the slightest resentment might be interpreted as "insubordination" and earn prison. A cast-iron system administered in a cast-iron way may, without intentional unkindness, be responsible for a vast sum of human misery. [Pg 154]

The task mistress came and asked us if we could wash or clean. Three of us were set to pick oakum. I could not volunteer to stand over the wash-tub, and, besides, I wished to unravel the mysteries of oakum picking, and learn the histories of my comrades in misfortune. So we three sat on a wood bench in a cold room, and three pounds of oakum each was solemnly weighed out to us. Do you know what oakum is? A number of old ropes, some of them tarred, some knotted, are cut into lengths; you have to untwist and unravel them inch by inch. We were all "'prentice hands." One woman had once done a little; we had never done any! After two hours I perhaps had done a quarter of a pound, and my fingers were getting sore, while the pile before me seemed to diminish little. Then I was asked if I could clean, and gladly escaped to a more congenial task. One woman only picked oakum all day; she was the one who was penalised. She had never done it before, and did not nearly finish her quota, though I helped her a little later on. Fortunately it was not demanded, but it might be at the will of an officer. [Pg 155]

It will easily be perceived that long before this any dream I had of ideal tramp ward conditions had vanished. I was instead filled with amazement that any enlightened and Christian men and women could consider this a refuge for destitution, and wonder at a preference for brickfields and liberty. Prison treatment would be preferable, but my wonder was still to grow.

For the prevailing idea in my class of society, which I to some extent shared, was that tramps as a class were so incorrigible, and so determined to lead a nomad existence, that the life had somehow a mysterious charm for them, and the only thing was to severely penalise vagrancy in order to deter men and women from it. Viewed in this light, it might be desirable that the treatment in a tramp ward should be equalised to that of a prison as a deterrent. A suspicion had been gradually growing in my mind that there was a destitution that was not voluntary vagrancy, and an actual forcing of lives into nomad existence. But I had not realised the pressure our system exerts in the direction of a wandering life. [Pg 156]

Let me introduce you to my companions and assure you I shall ever regard them with affection and respect.

There is first of all "Granny," a poor old body of seventy sorrowful years. Once she had a little home of her own, and brought up a family of five sons and daughters. But her "old man" died; still her son supported her, and she led a precarious existence, much plagued by "rheumatics." But one day, not long ago, the place where her son worked was burned down, and she lost her stay and was turned adrift. She had mother-wit enough to beg her way; people gave her tea and pence. She "paid her way" in tramp wards, taking in a little tea and sugar and "tipping" officials with a penny for hot water. She offered me a halfpenny for a screw of sugar. She had begged unsuccessfully of a child at a door before coming in; the mother stood behind and refused. "As if a spoonful of sugar would have hurt her," Granny scornfully said. One thing remained to her—liberty—but to keep this she was forced to walk from town to town, sampling tramp wards. She had not done it long, but it was too much for her. One arm was too painful to be touched; it was hard to put on her tattered garments; she provoked the wrath of officials by dilatoriness. Her legs were a study. Each leg was swathed in bandages, her feet wrapped in old stocking legs and bandaged, and men's boots put over all, a long—long process. Poor old soul! she wanted to end her wanderings, and told us, I believe truthfully, that she had tried to get into two workhouses, but had not succeeded. Knowing the reluctance of officials to admit paupers out of their own parish, I can well believe it. She was really ill when she came, besides possible complications of having been "treated" to a drink of whisky. She could hardly stand, had a cough and looked feverish, and only fit to lie down; we had to help her on her feet several times. Perhaps her [Pg 157]

ailments bulked large—most old people's do—but she did not after all groan so very much considering. She was ordered out, but she said with truth that she might "fall down in the street." It did seem likely she might just go wandering on "till she dropped," so we all advised her to stay and see the doctor, who might order her into the House. She seemed to have only a mazy idea of how to go to work to get in, but she took our advice, saw the doctor, and was allowed to stay another night, but not ordered in, as she could stand. However, she might the next day, after being turned out, herself apply for admission, and this we all united to advise her to do. The one effect her wanderings had produced in her was a deadly hatred of workhouse officials. In the [Pg 158] afternoon, after singing a hymn, I comforted her by telling that her wanderings might soon end in a better place. She was not sure of going to "heaven," but she felt sure she should meet many of these her tormentors in hell, and "then," she said, "I'll heave bricks at 'em!" I couldn't help suggesting "hot bricks" as appropriate, and then talked to her about "loving her enemies." "I can't help it," she said, "if it keeps me out of heaven, I hate 'em—I hate 'em all!" Poor old soul, she lay on a form most of the day, obviously ill, worried out of the bed on which, in the absence of an officer, she laid her poor old bones. The officer next morning truly said that the workhouse, and not the tramp ward, was the place for her; but she scoffed unbelievingly at her story of having tried to get admission. Yet Granny continually told us she longed to get in and have "a good bed," and one can imagine a poor old body like that, with no one to speak for her, might have difficulties with a relieving officer. But we had to leave her behind us, though one longed to take her by the hand, and see her safely in. I was not in a physical condition to stand the long hours of waiting from 6.30 A.M. till the office at which she would be admitted was opened. We advised her to stay as long as she could, and then go there. Next in order was a married woman, whom I would gladly own for my own relation. Her husband was on the men's side. "That's my old [Pg 159] man," she said, on going out; "I know him by his cough." She had been well brought up and had sisters in good circumstances comparatively. She was the "black sheep of the family," and had drifted, probably through marriage, into destitute circumstances. She and her "old man" were comfortably ensconced in a workhouse where, as a good steady worker, she was probably not unwelcome. But she heard her sister in a distant town was dying, and they took their discharge and walked there and back, close on seventy miles, arriving in time and staying for the funeral. She was very, very weary with the long tramp, accomplished within a week. I believe they were re-entering the workhouse. This woman had a pleasant face and manner, and took several opportunities of doing small kindnesses; she did not grumble, she only mildly complained of the task set her. I think she had cause—she was set to scrub a very long and wide corridor. She steadily scrubbed away for hours; she had no kneeling pad, and it was "hard lines" on poor food and in a tired state. How many of us would have walked seventy miles to see a dying sister, and, weary and sorrowful, work without complaining, and with a cheerful face, and an eye for others' sorrows?

A woman who interested me much was also a married woman. Once she had been waitress in an hotel frequented by the gentry, a place I knew well, and travelled with her wages in her pocket to [Pg 160] buy clothes. She was still better dressed, a shapely woman, with a face almost handsome, graceful in her movements and a capital worker. Her husband did not look a bad specimen of a working man. Her story was that they had had a comfortable home; he was once a singer in a church choir. But his particular branch of trade failed, and he had to seek a growingly obsolete kind of work where it was to be found. They had tramped north in vain to find it, and were now tramping back to their old neighbourhood in the hope that things would be better. This woman also did not complain, and behaved in a self-respecting manner, not a foul word or reproach; she worked steadily, but was very weary and restless at night. She had a heavy cold on her and grew worse instead of better. I seem to see her sitting wearily up in bed, unable to get the needed repose. They had walked long distances recently.

A more doubtful character was "Pollie," who apparently was well known to the officials. She was left stranded, as her husband, one fine day, being let out of a tramp ward before her, left her behind. She complained bitterly that the men were let out so long before the women, they had time to get "miles out of the road." If she caught him he would "get three months." Meanwhile she intended to visit a sister who would give her a few shillings, and then make tracks for another sister. Her face was not unhandsome, but her nose betrayed the real reason of her [Pg 161] misfortunes, and her tongue was ready, and not too clean. She knew the workhouses far and wide, and had had her tussles with the authorities. She had thrown her bread and cheese at a matron who gave her it after hard work, giving another woman a workhouse diet. She had been in prison for "lip." She was, in fact, a tramp proper, and with a little drink and boon companions probably foul-mouthed and violent. But she and Granny were the only ones who used expressions not polite to give point to their opinions, and that only occasionally. They were under no restraint, unless our interior character insensibly sweetened the atmosphere, for no one, not the most travelled, suspected us. We had been "on the road," could refer to workhouse reminiscences, and "knew the country" far and wide. We freely rewarded confidences by real bits of history. As we sang in concert, probably that was thought to be our "line of business." We were complimented on our voices—I, like the husband above mentioned, had once "been in a choir." I felt sure we should have got a good living "on the road." A tramp man who passed us told us he thought we should have been "miles further by now." He watched us, and made in the same direction. I twitted my companion on the loss of a chance for life.

It might be thought our speech would betray us, but I do not know that it was more educated [Pg 162] than that of one at least of our companions. We were with "all sorts and conditions of women" but not the worst.

There remains to be described a little Scotch woman, also married. She had been a servant, and

was a "neat-handed Phyllis." Born near Glasgow she married south. Work failing, she and her husband had tramped the weary miles to her friends in the hope of work. They had returned, *viâ* Barrow, and were bound further south, so far seeking work and finding none. They had become habituated to tramp wards on the long march, and could tell the character of most, and the stages of the journey.

These were the only ones we got to know intimately; a sorrowful woman with a sickly-looking child, who came overnight, were seeking admission to the workhouse that morning.

If these were tramps, with one exception they were made so by circumstances.

Shall I picture my brave little friend and companion, who worked on hour after hour with a splitting headache caused by a sleepless night? She had to clean the officer's room thoroughly, and to scrub tables, forms, floor—everything in short, in the large day room and down the stairs, a big piece of work. Meanwhile the two married women scrubbed the big dormitory and the bath room. The Scotch woman was told off to wash, by her own request, and related gleefully how she managed to wash and dry some of her own clothing before the officer came and told her to "mind and wash nothing of her own." We were meanwhile growing dirtier, and in more need of a bath than the first night. One woman washed a pocket handkerchief and dried it on the steam-pipe. Nothing else was possible.

I was taken away after two hours' oakum picking and set to clean. While waiting for a bucket I saw a fire. Welcome sight. I dried my boots and warmed my feet, wet from the previous days' tramp. I was provided with materials, shown where to get water and set to clean, "Scrub, mind you," two lavatories, two w.c.'s, and a staircase with three landings and three flights of stairs. I was also to clean the paint in the lavatories, etc., and do the taps and the stair-rods. Of the latter task, however, I was relieved by a pauper woman, who said her work, of which she was thoroughly sick, was constantly to clean brasses. I like cleaning, and set to work with a will, only one soon comes to the end of one's strength after a restless night and an insufficient breakfast. I found I must moderate my speed or I should not last the day out. Men were doing a cistern in the downstairs lavatory, and kept passing and re-passing with dirty boots as fast as I cleaned. My taskmistress, after one inspection, left me alone to it. I fetched bucket after bucketful and completed my task to my own satisfaction, and hers apparently, by twelve o'clock. She was not unreasonable, but a little sharp. She sent me back to dinner in the tramp ward, and "hunger sauce" enabled me to finish the bread and cheese allotted, washed down by tea. We all brought out our husbanded treasures, and the kinder official let us have boiling water. The man in the office sneered at her and remonstrated, "You *are* soft!" "*I can't help it*," she replied. May God bless her, for it can hardly be imagined what a warm drink was to a thirsty soul, even without milk and with little sugar. We gave Grannie some, and all ate our frugal meal without repining and with thankful hearts. We were allowed an hour, and resting my head on the table I snatched a few moments of most badly-needed rest. Then it was time to work. I was taken to the House and given a new task, to wash out an office, the little Scotch woman dusted the board room and my room. All had to be ready before three. I finished to satisfaction in good time, being once rebuked for sitting to do the last piece of floor (I had been on my knees without a pad for hours), and once for not saying there was no coal in the coal-box. But these were gentle rebukes. I was now very tired and could hardly carry my bucket. I slopped the water a little; perhaps my taskmistress saw I was tired, at any rate, she laid on me nothing further, but sent me back to the ward.

There my friend's task was by no means ended, she was on her knees scrubbing painfully, a quarter of the floor yet to do. I tried my hand, but was not quite "in the know," so I sang to her to cheer her and the others. Even old Grannie cheered up to the sound of "When ye gang awa', Jamie," an old favourite of her youth. It was easy without offence or suspicion to pass to hymns that might leave some ray of comfort in sorrowful hearts, and to get in a few words about the bourne "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." I could not help considering that probably nowhere in the wide world were there souls more dear to our suffering Saviour than such as these, who were sharing the life He chose on earth. Grannie used to sing, "Oh, let us be joyful, when we meet to part no more," and all were ready for the "Kindly light" to lead them home. I have discovered that this and "Abide with me," with "Jesus, Lover of my soul" are tramps' favourites. Could the deep-seated religious sentiments of the human soul choose better expression?

The little Scotch woman loved some of the "songs of bonnie Scotland." In spite of scrubbing, my friend chimed in, and the hours passed. I grew rested in thought and body. Then our taskmistress appeared just as the floor was finished; she had forgotten the store room, it was locked up and not cleaned. She chose my poor weary friend, but I could not stand it, and volunteered instead. I had watched till I knew how, so I set to work with a will and acquired a new accomplishment, how to scrub a floor with sand and soft soap! My performance "gave satisfaction." At last all was finished, and we awaited the next meal, not with eagerness, for the third time of gruel and dry bread "pays for all," but at any rate with hunger. It was a long, long wait from twelve dinner to somewhere about six. A slender breakfast at six, dinner at twelve, and hard work left something lacking; the morning gruel was slightly sour also, and I began to have uncomfortable feelings. Nevertheless, after a seemingly long wait, during which we all grew quite "chummy," and I extracted much information and confirmation of personal histories and social condition, at last supper arrived, and I finished the gruel with appetite, but could not, without a drink, eat dry bread.

Then another wait. We all grew tired to utter weariness. I longed even for a plank bed. We sat in various listless attitudes, half starved, cold, too weary to talk. There was nothing to see,

skylighted as the room was, nothing to do but to pick oakum, which still lay in measured heaps on the floor, no literature save the "regulations for tramps" on the walls.

This, then, was the kind of thing which left "no necessity for men to sleep in the brickfields!" I questioned the married women, none of them knew anything of any relaxation of rules. Evidently in their world it was not a matter of public knowledge that a man might enter earlier and go out after one night.[90]

At last it was bed time once more, we were "officered" to our uneasy couches. We were allowed to remove our shawls to the room where we slept—a great boon, as I smuggled mine into bed, covering my bare arms, and securing a little more comfort. But I was sore from the night before, and no position gave ease. Being near the week-end few came in, as it meant an extra day's detention, but the same ordering and bumping went on. I shall never forget my next door neighbour who came in rather late and was near enough to touch. She was a respectable woman of the barmaid class, slightly grey, and therefore rather old for employment. She was well dressed. She was out of a place, and had applied at a Shelter too late to be admitted, and was sent here. She had never been in such a place before, and her astonishment at the conditions amounted almost to horror. We told her how to make the most of her bed—none of us near her were asleep. She twisted and turned her wet, grey head on the hard pillow, sneezing with a commencing cold. She sat up and lay down. "My God!" I heard her say, "one can't sleep in this place." And with reason, for though the interruptions were not so numerous, they were sufficient to effectually break sleep. Grannie did not groan so much, but she got out of bed, was scolded, and had to be helped in. "Don't be so soft," I heard the hard official say, as she gave an involuntary small scream when one of her aching limbs was touched. It was true she had given trouble, but she was old, feeble, and ailing. It would not have been hard to be kind. I was myself by this time ill. The last meal of gruel coming as a distasteful meal on a tired body had not been digested. Sickness came upon me, and I had to be a disturber of the peace by three times getting up, and parting with my hardly-earned supper. Each time, paddling over great bare spaces in scanty attire, I grew colder, but I was in terror of attracting the attention of the officer, being considered ill and detained. Anything rather than another day in such a place of torture. As on the night before, some slept the sleep of utter weariness, most groaned and twisted, some lay awake. I never understood so well the joy of the first dim daylight, the longing of those who "wait for the morning." A woman sat up. "I'm dying of hunger," she said. It was the poor woman condemned to stay five days. What would she be at the end? I felt a mere wreck. Only two days ago I was in full health and vigour. It was no absolute cruelty, only the cruel system, the meagre and uneatable diet, the lack of sufficient moisture to make up for loss by perspiration, two almost sleepless nights, "hard labour" under the circumstances. Before me lay home and friends, a loving welcome, good food, sympathy, and rest. What about my poor sisters? "I have nobody, nobody in the wide world; I wish I had," said the poor soul next me, new to such treatment. A good-looking woman beyond had never been in before. I shuddered for those I should leave behind, new to such conditions.

Is this the treatment England gives in Christ's name to His destitute poor? What if some are "sinners." He chose such, and "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, yet did it not to me." My heart burned within me. Thank God for every bit of suffering that I may bring home the truth. A public newspaper states, "The guardians only hear *ex-parte* statements, those of the men themselves." Supposing they speak *true*!

During the afternoon one poor woman had said, "If only the rich guardians, and the heavy ratepayers, knew how their money was spent, and how us poor things had to live, they wouldn't allow it." They felt bitterly the irony of so many officials being paid to order them about, and get the maximum of work out of them while they were practically starved. The conclusion of the whole matter is, the more rigidly the system is enforced in its entirety, the more hardly it presses on the destitute poor, while it makes no provision for their need. It is not even preventive, and it is costly.[91] Morning dawned slowly as I pondered, and the welcome call came. My neighbour slept, her face drawn in sleep as if with suffering, her profile and grey, tossed hair as she lay on her back, as the easiest position, an appeal of sorrow to the eye of the Watcher of men. She woke with a start and moan.

No help for it. "You women all get up, be quick now; be quick and hurry up, Grannie." Short, sharp, decisive marching orders. Sick and shivering, with aching head and body sore from head to foot, I did my best to hide any sign of illness that might come between me and liberty. My companion suffered also from violent headache, neuralgic pains, and an aggravated cold.[92] Pollie's face was drawn and tired. No one complained much. I heard only one grumble at having to wash an already smarting face with soft soap. One produced a precious bit of white soap and lent it—a kindly deed. Grannie got under weigh with many a groan, very slowly. "Hurry up, women; three of you have not put your boards up. Now then, Granny, don't be all day." We will pardon her, for she has been on duty all night, and is also tired; but surely the woman who said, "Come, now, you needn't be so knotty with us," spoke true. We had little chance or time to speak much. It was only the early cold grey dawn of a winter morning, but already the message had come up that husbands were waiting. Gruel and bread for the fourth time. No one going out did more than pretend to eat it, some pocketed the bread. Neither my friend nor I could have touched it if you had offered us a sovereign—my soul loathed it so I could hardly bear to look at it.

The poor woman condemned vainly hoped for release; she wept, but this only hardened the officer. She was not to be "come over" this way. "Don't you believe her." Grannie must swathe her

poor old legs and go; she had better get into the workhouse. We had to leave them to their fate. I shall never forget the last few moments of waiting. A raging passion for freedom took possession of me. I dare not ask to go a moment before I was ordered to for fear lest it should be construed as "impudence." May be I wrong the officer, but she interpreted so easily any appeal as interference. Oh, to be free! Oh, to lie down anywhere under God's free sky, to suffer cold and hunger at His hand. "It is better to fall into the hand of God than the hand of man." We both agreed we would face a common lodging-house and its pests, or even the danger of prison for "sleeping out," rather than pass again through such an experience.[93]

Do I exaggerate? It must be *felt* to be realised.

At length we escaped with "Pollie," leaving Grannie and the victim with the newcomers. It was very early, and about two hours lay between us and succour; my friend was almost too tired to walk. But God's free air was round us. Thank God for a fine morning! We are "on the road," and nothing in front can be so bad as what lies behind. We are tramps and "mouchers"; we can beg, for we need pity; sing for our living, sell bootlaces, and turn over the money; even if we steal, prison only waits us, and it cannot be worse—our companions, who have tried it, prefer it.[94] One thing we could not do—we could not at this moment work for an honest living. It is physically impossible. By hook or by crook one or two restful nights must be put between us and the past. Strength to work has gone. One might perhaps tramp, for the air is reviving, and people are kind to a wayfarer. Do you wonder at our *national tramp manufactories*?

For this is what it amounts to. An obsolete system adapted to the times when population was stationary, is supposed to meet the needs of a population necessarily increasingly fluid.

Labour shifts from place to place where it is needed. Individuals drop out or are thrust out. There is never, on any one night, in our great centres of population, sufficient provision for this ebb and flow. The houseless and the homeless are a great multitude, as sheep without a shepherd. Day by day they make a moving procession.[95] The decent man or woman who is stranded joins them, at first with the honest intention of gaining a livelihood. If it cannot be obtained, what is he to do? The common lodging-house can never be a sufficient provision for this need. It would never pay the private owner to provide the maximum number of beds required.[96] Our friend "Pollie" grumbled that in many lodging-houses the price of a decent bed was 6*d.*, and "then you could not be sure it was clean."

What is needed may take away the breath of a conservative public. It is nothing less than the entire sweeping away of the tramp ward, and the substitution of municipal lodging-houses, coupled with strict supervision of all private ones. The maximum need with regard to sleeping accommodation on any one night in a great city must be met. Shelters, sanitary and humane, not charitable institutions, but simply well-managed "working people's hotels," must be run privately and supplemented publicly, providing accommodation for everyone.[97] To meet destitution, these should be supplemented by "relief stations" on the German plan, where supper, bed, and breakfast can be earned. Freedom need not be interfered with beyond demanding work sufficient to pay.[98] Payment should be on the graduated ticket system. The tramp proper hates work. If once a national system sufficient for destitution was inaugurated, the man who will not work could be penalised. A labour colony is his natural destination. The classification of workhouses and their adaptation to various necessarily destitute classes, such as epileptics, feeble minded and aged, might remove much destitution, placing it under humane conditions. But the immediate and crying need is for the abolition of an old, inhumane and insufficient provision for suppression of vagrancy, in favour of adequate provision for the modern fluidity of labour, coupled with honourable relief of destitution, neither degrading nor charitable.[99]

CHAPTER IV.

A NIGHT IN A SALVATION ARMY SHELTER.

Having occasion to spend a week in a southern city, I determined to do what I could to ascertain the condition of its common lodging-houses, in order to find out whether the same problems existed as in the northern towns.

I was willing to go into a women's lodging-house, but, not having my fellow tramp, it was desirable to make enquiries. These enquiries revealed a state of things so bad that I did not feel it was safe to sample any of the common lodging-houses alone. Briefly, what had happened in this old town was this: A certain quarter possessed houses, which, having once been occupied by the better classes, would be fairly roomy, but would, of course, only have the sanitary arrangements intended for one family. These houses had courts at the back, which perhaps had been long ago gardens, but were now built over, access being through the house. A number of these houses had gradually become common lodging-houses. So profitable is this trade, that the successful owner of one, even if only of the same low class as frequent the houses, could go on annexing others, till, as I was told, a whole street had fallen into the possession of one person, who was quite unconcerned about anything but private gain. The most speedy way of gaining wealth was to let rooms, in connection with the lodging-house, "for married couples." The buildings in the back courts could easily be so let, and the police had no access. Therefore the whole of this district

was honeycombed with immorality, while even in the more respectable houses the conditions must be filthy and insanitary.

But my surprise was greatest at finding that in H—— *there did not exist a lodging-house for women only* apart from the charitable institutions. The only refuge for a destitute woman, therefore, was the common lodging-house with men and women (ostensibly married). I felt that to go alone into one of these would be like putting my head into a lion's den, for I was told that one of the men had put his arm round the waist of a lady visitor with the easy freedom born of sex relations there prevailing. What must have been the conditions for women in a town of this size before the erection of the Army Shelter some four years ago? The common lodging-houses, poor as they were, afforded shelter, I was assured, only for about seventy women, including those really married. But *between* service, or respectable occupation of any kind, and the common lodging-house, existed in all its ramifications, like a spider's web, "the life," as a way out of destitution. Only those who fell out of this life through illness or from other causes, as a rule descended to the "lowest depths," the common lodging-houses, which therefore contained only the most abandoned women. Some efforts to reach these were being made, but the helpers despaired of really raising them, and with good cause. It is evident that though hope must not be abandoned for anyone, a woman who has sunk into poverty even out of a life of vice, and who still retains all her desire for it (which she indulges in if it is obtainable) must be a woman out of whom womanhood is perishing, love of drink taking hold in most instances. Yet God forbid that we should judge these poor creatures, often capable of love to one another, and of kindnesses which might make us blush. We do not know what circumstances, for which we may be responsible in God's sight, gave them the push downward.[100]

But, evidently, unless in this town there were charitable institutions dealing with the problem of destitution among women, a life of vice would be their only alternative, simply from the fact that a certain degree of poverty would force them to lodge with those to whom it was familiar, and they would naturally succumb.[101]

I had no means of ascertaining what other homes or remedial agencies existed, except that I was told there did exist one other semi-charitable refuge to which the police took girls found on the streets. I gathered, however, that this was more of the nature of a home than of a lodging-house. The municipality was building a large men's lodging-house, but not one for women.

It appeared, therefore, that the only real attempt to tackle the problem was that of the Salvation Army, and, thinking that I should probably hear something from the women themselves about the lodging-houses, I resolved to "try the Army," as so many poor destitute women have done—not in vain.

I obtained the requisite clothing to be one of the poor, and set out, about nine o'clock, to find the street where the Army Shelter was. One thing was agitating my mind, which doubtless, though for a different reason, weighs in the mind of many poor women against entering any kind of charitable Shelter. What questions would they ask? I had determined, if absolutely necessary, to reveal my real identity. But how much should I be forced to tell? Would it be possible to escape personal interrogation? The "bullying" in the Workhouse was fresh in my mind, and in contrast with this the perfect freedom of the common lodging-house has its attractions. You may come and go, and "mind your own business." No one has any right to interfere with you as long as you "pay your way." I did not, of course, expect anything but kindness, but I thought I might be interrogated "personally," questioned as to my antecedents, and possibly about my soul. It would then, of course, be impossible for me to preserve my "incognito."

In thus thinking I was probably sharing the feelings of my poor sisters (your feelings undergo a curious assimilation to those of the class you represent). Many a woman may be deterred from entering a suitable Home by fear of cross-questioning. Poor thing! The only thing that belongs to her is her past.

However, my fears were needless. I only relate them to illustrate the reasons why a woman may hold back from places where she might find friends.

I asked several women the way to the Shelter, whom I met in the street. One said it was "right enough," another said, "I should think it was better than going into the common lodging-house among a lot of 'riff-raff;' you can put up with it for a night anyhow." A third, with a child in her arms, said she had lived there some time, and "was very comfortable." So encouraged, I found the place. It was a large, clean-looking building, fronting the street, with apparently two doors.

While I was hesitating as to which was the right one, and as to whether I must ring or enter, a man on the other side of the street came and offered me a drink. I, of course, refused. But at the very door of salvation a poor tempted woman might be lost.

There was a large notice, "Clean, comfortable beds," but not an open door as in most common lodging-houses. I feel diffident in recommending anything to the Army, their methods are so tried and proved, even to minute particulars, but it struck me that it would be well to have an inside and an outer door—the latter standing open, as a clear indication of the place of entry. You can walk into a common lodging-house as far as the deputy's room or office without ringing. It is a small matter, but a timid woman might not have the courage to knock or ring.

The door was opened by a pleasant-faced young woman in uniform, who asked me in. One word went to my heart. She called me "my dear!" She said in reply to my request for a bed, "Yes, my dear, we have twopenny bunks, but I should recommend you to try the fourpenny beds with nice, clean sheets."

I was glad to consent, for though I should have liked for some reasons to "try the bunks," I had already seen them in London, and I wished to ascertain what the Army was able to offer at the current price of fourpence, and also whether the beds would bear inspection. But what a contrast such a reception was to the workhouse! Nothing but my name was asked, not even as in the Bradford Shelter, my destination, and where I came from. There was no "heckling," no inquisition, nothing but kindness. God bless the officer who said, "My dear" to a poor stranger in Christ's name.

I was asked if I would like to go to bed, as it was already late. I wanted, however, to see something of other inmates, so said, "No." The officer took me into the fourpenny sitting room, which was pleasant and beautifully clean, but had no fire lit. As it was lonely, the officer asked me if I would like to sit with the "twopenny women" for company. I gladly assented, and was shewn into another day-room in which was a cheerful fire, by the side of which were shelves for pots and pans. It was furnished with wooden tables and benches, and all was clean, except for recent use. Two or three women were in possession. I asked them if I could get anything on the premises to eat. They said I could get coffee and bread and butter for a penny! It was the cheapest meal I ever had. I asked the officer for them, and she fetched them herself—a good mug full of thick brown coffee, with rather a peculiar taste, but similar to some I got in Manchester at a cheap breakfast shop, only about half as much again in quantity. It had sugar and milk in it, and was palatable. With it were two thick slices of bread and butter, quite sufficient for a meal, the butter tasted good.[102]

I sat and ate my supper and watched the other women. They had lived there some time, and were evidently accustomed to "the ways of the place." They said they were very comfortable, and that the beds were good. One of them explained the scarcity of utensils. (So far as I could see, one kettle, one saucepan, and one frying-pan seemed to be the stock-in-trade.) She said people stole so, even taking cups and saucers, and the sheets off the beds. The officers in consequence had to reduce the supply and to keep a sharp look-out!

I sat and listened. A woman came in with a baby; the same woman I had seen in the street. She exclaimed about the difficulty she had had in getting money for the night. Apparently she had been begging, going round to one and another whom she knew, and getting a penny or halfpenny from each. She said the man who accosted me had given her a penny. Her boy was a fine little fellow, very well nourished and contented. She was very proud of his little fat legs! She undressed him to his shirt. One bit of pride remained even in poverty. She said she "wouldn't let her child sleep in a bunk!" She seemed to prefer being out all night, which had, I believe, been her case recently, when she could not make her bed-money.[103] She was a widow.

One of the other women had had a day's charing, and was congratulating herself that she was "set up for a bit." It had been hard work, but well paid. She was generous to those worse off.

An unsolicited testimonial to one of the officers was given. "Captain is back to-day." "Is she, bless her; I do love that woman, *though she never gave me anything*!"

It is much to the credit of the Army, and of the individual officers, that in the free conversation I heard no real complaint. One of the officers was alluded to as "a sharp 'un." No doubt a necessary quality in dealing with some cases. One woman grumbled at the coffee, and another "carried on" because she was stopped from talking in the bedroom, where she was disturbing others, but the general feeling seemed to be one of thankfulness. "Thank God I have got in to-night," came involuntarily from several lips.

I resolved to go to bed, as it was ten o'clock. The officer who had admitted me, when I went to her to ask, showed me upstairs into a large light room. Apparently the building had once been a mill or warehouse.

The floor was beautifully clean, the beds not inconveniently crowded, and the promise of "good, clean beds" was amply redeemed.[104] I can hardly understand how they could be so clean, for when the women were undressed (and, of course, like all their class they slept in their day-garments, partially undressing), their under-garments were dirty and ragged in almost all cases, even when their outside appearance was respectable. Hardly one had a whole or clean garment, and among this class a nightgown is unknown, or unused. One woman kept on a black knitted jersey, though it was summer-time!

My bed was beautifully clean, and the others looked so. The most careful arrangements were made to insure cleanliness. The wire mattress had a piece of clean brown wrappering tied over it, which could be removed and washed. The mattress, which was very comfortable, was covered, and under the covering was a mackintosh. There were two thick dark blankets, not divided. I suppose this would make it difficult to steal them. The sheets were white, and so was the pillowslip. There was a good soft flock pillow.

I noticed several wise precautions. The gases were too high to be reached, and no taps were visible. The gas was turned on or off outside the room. No one could light a pipe.

The crevices close to the wall were filled in with wood, so that insects could not harbour. Each person had a well-scrubbed wooden box by the bedside, on or in which to place their clothes. There was, in a lavatory adjoining, a spacious sink, to which hot and cold water was laid on. There was one roller-towel, but no soap. It is usual in lodging-houses to find your own. There was a well-flushed w.c. Beyond were some cubicles at sixpence a night.

Several women were in bed. One had had some drink, and was disturbing others by talking. It was found out afterwards that she was in the wrong room, having only paid twopence. She was a

married woman, and her husband had apparently deposited her in safety, but only paid twopence! She was, or pretended to be, very wroth, and she was also foul-mouthed. When it was discovered, the little Lieutenant really could not eject her, and had to be satisfied with telling her she must pay the other twopence next day!

It was a very interesting occupation to try for about an hour and a half to gather from conversation some hints as to the character of the "waifs and strays" who were temporarily my room-mates.

A young woman next me was a servant temporarily out of place. An amusing scene took place. Another young woman came in and spoke to her before going to her cubicle. Evidently there was some animosity between them, for the only greeting she got was, "Shut up." Finding she could make no impression, the newcomer began to insinuate.

"I wouldn't stand with the Army and then go into public-houses!"

The other girl at first made no reply, except, "Get out with you!"

But as the insinuation was repeated, she began to get wroth.

"Why don't you speak to me, Mary?"

She half sat up in bed.

"Get out with you, you——"

Then they began to slang one another in earnest:— [Pg 186]

"It's all very well to go to an Army meeting and then take two men into a pub!"

"Well, I never! What will she say next, I wonder!"

And so the conversation waxed louder and louder. At length the girl in bed half sprang out.

"I shall go and tell the Lieutenant how you're talking. She'll put you out!"

With that the offender moved off to her cubicle.

The other girl kept muttering, "Well, I never! Did ever you hear! Me that has never been inside a pub! I'll tell the Lieutenant in the morning."

It was fortunate that the offender had paid for a sixpenny bed, as at one time they seemed almost coming to blows.

The noisy woman in a bed on the opposite side kept up a conversation with herself, or with anyone who would speak to her. Finally, the Lieutenant, who seemed to keep a sort of patrol, but was not round frequently enough to preserve peace, caught her talking, though not at her loudest. She was engaged in relating portions of her past life to a woman who said it was the anniversary of her wedding-day. The story of the courtship and marriage took some time to tell, but the crowning incident was that, having been ill for some days, her friends encouraged her to take "a small whisky," which apparently led to more, and she became so "blind drunk" that she remembered nothing further. [Pg 187]

Several women with children came in. Some on meeting congratulated each other on having money enough to get in.

"Thank God I'm in to-night," said one.

It made me realise how many are living on the very edge of starvation, for several had only lodging-money, not a halfpenny for food.[105]

The interruptions were a bar to sleep. I think the Bradford plan of letting the women go up to the dormitory at the hour, and not between, was a good one, and would make superintendence easier.

At length, past eleven, all grew sleepy, the little Lieutenant had, I think, given place to a night watcher, who stole quietly in to turn the gas down, and again to admit a late girl to the cubicles, and once or twice during the night, when all were sleeping, to look at her safely-folded sheep, going lovingly round the beds, apparently to notice who was safe "under her wing."

I did not stir, or show I was awake, but I said mentally, "God bless you, sister, and God bless the Army!"

For here, safely folded in peace and comfort were just those whose presence on our streets is a disgrace to our civilisation, and a social danger. It was abundantly evident that they were those who needed a helping hand. Few realise how terribly hard the present conditions of our social system press upon women. If a girl, a woman, or worse—a mother and child—are forced to remain out all night, God pity them.[106] Yet it is terribly hard for a woman, once down in the friendless state, with no one to speak for her, with clothing getting daily more dirty and ragged, to obtain any employment. What can the widow do? What about the deserted wife? The cry of the widow and orphan, the suffering of the friendless is daily before the eyes of the God England professes to serve. [Pg 188]

Only one who is daily receiving the stories of the manifold ways in which women drop out or are forced out of homes, can understand the silent disintegration of womanhood that is forced upon many. Sometimes they are carefully reared, with a parent's love as protection, shielded from any real knowledge of life's hardships. But the protector dies and the struggle begins, a hard struggle for daily bread. No one is forced to keep them, save the workhouse. This they shun, or in some

cases have extreme difficulty in gaining admission, the relieving officers having to be "begged and prayed," sometimes unsuccessfully, to admit even a starving woman, putting them off on one excuse or another.

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Meanwhile, by degrees everything that can be turned into money goes for food. What wonder that the poor soul, desperate at losing all that makes life worth having, easily yields to the man ever ready to "treat" her? Such men are everywhere.

"Come and get a drink," is the usual way of accosting a woman. Yet if a solitary woman once acquires the drink habit, it is nearly impossible to lift her up, the craving is too strong. In the temporary "elevation" of drink she regains her past, forgets the poor bedraggled "low woman" she has become, and dreams of "better days." Suppose she resists drink, at any rate keeping apparently steady, and lives as a "charwoman," it is a most precarious existence, varying with the "times." Such women are taken "on" and sent "off" without compunction. It needs a "good connection" to make a livelihood, at any rate it requires a capacity for continuous hard work, which all do not possess. There are some few trades for destitute women hardly worth calling "trades," yet in some hand-to-mouth fashion thousands of solitary women exist, who are not idle, but try hard to "keep out of the house," so retaining their last possession—liberty! Is it not desirable that these our struggling sisters should live under the conditions that will preserve for them some sort of a "home" feeling?

The "pit" lies just beneath them, that terrible pit, where honour, love, and womanhood are swallowed up. They cling to those who love them, and many of them struggle, oh, so hard! just to [Pg 190] keep afloat. God pity them! Every night in this England of ours our sisters are driven by poverty to sin.

"I *must* get my lodging money and a bit of food," they say. Money, even twopence, is not within the reach of every widow and orphan, and our poor-law conditions are almost prohibitive. Save as a temporary expedient, the casual ward, with its continual "move on," is no refuge. To descend to the common lodging-house is the last stage, just above utter homelessness. There the drink temptations are such that few women can withstand them. In many towns there do not exist lodging-houses for women only.

Yet above all, these women need to be protected, to live under good sanitary conditions, if in poverty. Such a shelter, therefore, as I was sleeping in, is a real social need. It would prevent countless women from drifting into vice if there was somewhere for them to live out of temptation during the night hours. As they grow old especially, their state grows more and more pitiable. They end their days in the workhouse usually, but stave off the evil day as long as they can. I do not believe that even women from the higher ranks can well help drifting to destitution if from any cause friends and foothold are lost. Most people distrust a friendless woman. Yet in many cases it is a matter of clothes!

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There is a theory that "a good worker is always worth her salt!" So she may be, but if she looks down-trodden no one will give her the chance to earn it! In spite of the constant dearth of servants it is not likely that a woman will get employment unless she has character and clothes. There are, besides, quantities of semi-"unemployable" women, women who would—after a fashion—succeed in looking after their own home and rearing children; but who, divorced from home, are not "worth their salt." Besides these, preyed upon, alas! by human sharks, are the defenceless "feeble-minded," and half-imbecile.

Meditating on the woes of womanhood I fell asleep. All my sisters apparently slept soundly and well. Very early the officer in charge stole in to call a sleeper. Every now and then someone, self-roused, got up for toil. It was a contrast to the heavy sleep and utter absence of any provision for going forth to toil which I had seen in a *private* women's lodging-house, inhabited by girls and women evidently living by sin.[107] There they were called at 9.30!

By 6.30 a considerable number had got up, and promptly the lieutenant appeared with a whistle, which she playfully blew, not only for the room, but also near each sleeper, calling them by name. "Now, Mary, get up!" "Now, Jane, don't go to sleep again!"

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So I also arose and found my way to the sitting-room, where a woman was frying a chop (using a lot of unnecessary sticks). It was the woman who was "in luck." She made a great can of tea, and shared with others, especially with some of the mothers with children. Poor little things! They looked sleepy, for most had not gone to bed much before eleven.

One by one women came in, hawkers, cleaners, widows, about whom one wondered how they kept afloat. Some were evidently very dirty, insect pests were in evidence on the person, and it was surprising that the place was so clean. I learnt that you might remain till ten, and re-enter at twelve. Probably the necessary cleansing of the day-rooms was done in the interval. The kitchen filled. All seemed very poor; some had no breakfast save a borrowed drink. I had some dry bread and sugar, but no tea, so I asked if I could get a penny breakfast.

Yes! Early as it was, the officers were already in the kitchen, and at seven o'clock breakfast could be obtained. I sat and waited. Three mothers had children; one brought down in a shift was badly bitten. One woman was to wash for "the Army" that day, and so was "in luck." There was, I heard, a good laundry, and under certain regulations, inmates could wash their clothes.

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It would not have been a bad bit of investigation to stay a week and learn the life of the inmates. But my time was brief. I made one of a string of women standing at the kitchen door, waiting for the penny breakfast, and received in my turn a good cup of tea (not a mug, but a cup and saucer) and two thick slices of bread and butter. The eating habits of my friends in the twopenny room

were not very appetising, so I sought the fourpenny room, a plain, clean, sitting-room with spotless table and forms, by this time nearly filled.

The inmates of this room were, as might be expected, superior in dress and manners; the personal appearance of most was clean, and they were fairly well clothed, at least outwardly, but the night view had shewn me that "appearances were deceitful."

One poor woman had a baby in arms, five months old. Her husband had cruelly ill-used her; she had a black eye. He had been sent to prison for a month, and she, with feeble health, and a babe in her arms, had come to this refuge. How would she fare in a common lodging house?

Another mother, with a good face, but very poor, had a little boy, very nicely mannered. She made him say grace before he took his food, and reproved him for taking a bite first out of a piece of bread and butter, given him by a kindly girl who had gone in for a whole pennyworth. This woman looked as if the Army had claimed her life for God. She was going to a day's cleaning, and said thankfully that she had a good place, and more than she could eat, so she always brought something "home" for her boy, "as she couldn't bear to think she was eating and he had none." I suppose she would make some arrangement for him to be looked after. How would he fare in a common lodging house?

As a contrast to her there was a rather loud-spoken girl, whom the officer evidently knew. To judge by her face she knew sin and shame. She was, however, very good-natured. She nursed the baby with evident pleasure, and she shared her breakfast with others.

Several of the girls were quite young, and might be servants out of place. One by one they went out to some occupation or other. It was still early, but time for me to go. I returned my cup, saucer, and plate, and passed out with no interrogation.

The streets were full of young women just going to business. In the free life of to-day, when so many women earn their own living, often away from their homes, how slight an accident may shipwreck a life! Is it not evident that we should make provision for such a certain need? We make charts of our coasts, we know each shoal, we bell-buoy our sand-banks, we build warning lighthouses, and we make safe harbours. But probably the lives lost on our coasts are not a tithe of the lives—the souls—lost on our streets. A floating shipwrecked woman immersed in the waves, in peril of death, would call for a host of rescuers. But in many towns in England there is no Rescue home. Even where there are such homes, they are usually *for those who have gone under*. We need some provision for those who manage to keep themselves just above water, but are in daily peril. Nothing is so effective as such *preventive* work. If we were about to build a harbour, we should entrust the work to a firm that understood harbour-building.[108]

In the Salvation Army we have a branch of the Christian Army and Navy of Salvation accustomed to harbour-building. Let us employ them. If Army methods succeed, it is only common-sense to finance the firm that can do the work!

Many of our refuges are but ill adapted for the needs of the class that most needs help, the struggling, self-supporting woman, who may be kept from falling further.

We must approximate, as the Army does, to the needs of the class we cater for. We must have "Women's Hostels" for the needs of various classes, under regulations that attract them. We need not bribe them into what seems to be a species of imprisonment, and keep them expensively for long terms. This may be *necessary* for the fallen, but not for *preventive* work.

The Army succeeds better than most in making its shelters almost self-supporting, when once initial expenses have been met. It has an immense advantage in its system of training officers specially for such work, which requires daily self-sacrifice.

It may also be that military discipline has its advantages where a certain precision of detail, an invariable routine, similar to workhouse regulations, but more free, is a *sine qua non*. In our workhouses large bodies of people live under discipline, who, without it, would most of them be a danger or a drag on the community. Could we induce the "floating population" of men and women to live a less restricted life, yet a sanitary and wholesome one, much would be accomplished in a generation.[109] The policy of allowing the catering for the needs of this class to drift in a "happy-go-lucky" way into the hands of anybody, has resulted in many accumulated evils. To redress evil we must live the self-sacrificing life, and we may think ourselves happy that there are still men and women who will in a very real sense "lay down their lives" to minister in Christ's name to His poor, who count nothing too trivial to be well done for the Master, and who strive to unlock hearts by the magic key of love.

Surely upon them rests the blessing, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these, my sisters, ye have done it unto Me."

Can we not have an Army Women's Shelter or its equivalent in every large town?[110]

CHAPTER V.

THREE NIGHTS IN WOMEN'S LODGING-HOUSES.

I. The First Night.

On a bright evening in May, when the trees were fresh with Nature's tracery, and the sky glowed with colour, my friend and I found our way by train and tram to a house, which was professedly a lodging-house for all sorts and conditions of women. The building, a large, tall, better-class dwelling-house, set back in a front garden, looked almost too respectable for us, as we had donned our tramp's attire. Some children were playing in the passage, and called "the missus," who made no objection to our engaging two beds at sixpence each, warning us we should have to share a room with strangers. She then showed us into a small kitchen, clean and comfortable, but with little accommodation—two short forms and a dresser were the furniture, with shelves in the wall and a sink. A door gave access to a yard with sanitary convenience, and there was a good fire and plenty of boiling water. We sat a little while to rest, and to listen to one or two inmates—a woman who smelt of liquor, an elderly woman who appeared to help the person in charge, and a rather handsome dark girl, nicely dressed and clean, who told us she had been married a few months, and was deserted by her husband. We learnt afterwards that she had been in hotel and restaurant service. We soon decided to go out and buy some provisions, and to have a walk round. We had only expected the beds to be fourpence a night, so were rather short of money. We laid out our scanty resources as follows: Tea 1*d*., sugar 1*d*., bread 3*d*., butter 2*d*. (and 1*d*. we paid for the loan of a knife to be afterwards returned). With these we went back, but not being hungry yet we decided to go to the common sitting-room. This we found in possession of several women, mostly young. It was now nearing 10 P.M., and they were all busy tidying themselves, rouging their faces, blacking their eyelids, and preparing to go on the streets. All this was done perfectly openly, and their hair was curled by the fireside. It was wonderful how speedily they emerged from slatterns into good-looking young women. Each then sallied forth, and, being left alone, we returned to the kitchen and prepared to make tea and cut ourselves some bread and butter. Meanwhile various women passed and re-passed. Three cats were on the hearth—one, a tabby, was called "Spot." A Scotch woman was rather genteel in appearance, about forty, but who openly boasted she had been drunk every day for more than a week; she came in and went out more than once. She sat on the form and related *apropos* of "Spot," that she got a situation as housekeeper, "though she could not say she had not a spot on her character." A widower with several grown-up sons wished to engage her as housekeeper. He asked about her character, she said: "Without thinking, I replied, 'I am afraid it will not bear too strict an investigation,' and, by Jove! if he didn't engage me at once!" She said it was a good place, and she might have been in it all the time but for "a bit of temper." "Yes, and married the master!" added another. A considerable flurry was caused by the advent in the corner of two or three huge black beetles, or "blackjacks" as they were called, which made everybody draw up their skirts. The form was removed to the middle of the room. The dark young lady told us a good deal about her past; how she had an old mistress who died in her chair and "looked heavenly," and how her daughter wished to take her to London, and even sent her fare, but she would not go. She sighed over it, and said, when we asked her if she was not sorry, that she had wished many times she had gone; "but," she added, "I was young and foolish, and had no one to advise me." A nice, bright-looking young girl, who had come in looking very weary, and who had a bad cough, interested us much. She had been out since eight, but obtained no money. She said she had been out all one night, and so got her cough. Later we learned her story. She had been out late one night when in service on a gala day, and, having a strict mistress, she was afraid of returning to her place. A companion persuaded her to take train to N——. The girls had just enough money, and were landed as strangers in a strange town. They walked about and found this lodging-house. They entered, and, being destitute, fell at once into prostitution.[111]

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By this time we thoroughly understood the character of the house. It may be there were exceptions, but they would be but few. The inmates, probably about sixty, young and old, were living a life of sin, and we were told that the proprietor of this lodging-house owned fifteen others. We learnt that a house could be taken for £2 11*s*. a week, and 8*s*. for a servant. We learnt that most of the girls came home very late—many as late as two o'clock—and in such a state that they kept the others awake, singing and talking, drunk or maudlin. The house was open till two at any rate every night.

We stayed up till twelve o'clock to learn as much as we could; then, as the proprietress seemed rather anxious for us to go to bed, we went upstairs and were shown into a fair-sized room with seven beds, low iron bedsteads with wire mattresses, and fairly clean mattress, sheets, and pillows. A woman who had a terrible cold and cough and our Scotch friend came to bed, the latter being comparatively sober, though she had had many drinks that day. Later on the other beds were filled. One had had over eleven shillings in the morning, but seemed to have "got without it." The woman with a cold insisted on having the window closed, and the room was very stifling, otherwise clean and comfortable (compared with some of our experiences); but our companions, some of them, had on filthy underclothing when seen by daylight.

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The woman of the house called us about nine o'clock,[112] and we had to get up "willy-nilly." There was a bath-room, with wash-basins and hot and cold water, and we learnt there were some 1*s*. beds with separate washing accommodation.

A woman whose hair was going grey ascribed it to constant dyeing. A young girl had to go to see the doctor.

We found our way to the kitchen and prepared breakfast, securing our knife once more which we had returned. We took our breakfast to the dining-room, where a number of dissolute girls—some handsome, almost all slatternly—were already collected. We saw our young acquaintance of the night before, apparently breakfastless, and invited her to join us, which she gladly did. We learnt that she had had no food the day before, except a drink of tea and a little bread and butter,

having had "no luck." Evidently she was starved into prostitution, about which she was still very shamefaced. She had been in several lodging-houses. The town ones were "ten times worse." A private one she had been in one night had had no lavatory accommodation; she had to go and wash at the station, paying twopence. She was afraid to solicit in town; the "bobbies" kept a sharp look-out, and sometimes were in plain clothes. One had stopped her when she was only walking, told her she was on the streets, asked her where she came from, and advised her to go home to her mother. He asked why she was "on the town," and when she told him she had got no work, he said, "You all say that." As she was afraid in the town, she was in the habit of going out to the suburbs. Her friend had quarrelled with her, and even struck her in the street. She was in another lodging-house, and "doing well" on the town. [Pg 202]

This forlorn girl had tried in vain to find a true friend among the others. One had borrowed and not repaid, one had been friendly and cast her off. We promised to try and help her.

Breakfast over, we sat and watched the scene, being three times moved to make room at the tables. Round the fire was a group of girls far gone in dissipation; good-looking girls most of them, but shameless; smoking cigarettes, boasting of drinks, or drinking, using foul language, singing music-hall songs, or talking vileness. The room grew full, and breakfasts were about, onions, bacon, beefsteak, tea, etc., filling the air with mingled odours. A girl called "Dot" and another danced "the cake-walk" in the middle of the floor. [Pg 203]

On this scene entered the girl who had to go to the doctor. She was condemned to the Lock Hospital, and cried bitterly. An animated conversation took place about the whereabouts and merits of various lock wards or hospitals, and everyone tried to cheer her up. "Never mind, Ivy, you'll soon be through with it!"

Later entered a distressed mother. Her girl was wrongly accused of stealing. She had traced her to another lodging-house, but it was closed. She spoke to say that "she was her child whatever she had done, and she would see her through and take her home if she could find her, as she was her best friend." "Tell her if you come across her that the back door is always open, and she will be welcome." Several girls cried, thinking of their mothers, and a woman offered to take her and search for her daughter later on. This scene brought tears to the eyes of our young friend, and I said, "That's what your mother will say." We had now to leave her, under promise not to go out until we returned. We left our tea and bread and solitary penny, and gladly escaped to the fresh air.

During the time these scenes had gone on several girls received notes. One was packing up to go somewhere; one was told "the landlord wanted her." A further visit gave further light.

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II. The Second Night.

Returning at 10 o'clock, we purchased, at the little shop which caters for this lodging-house, a loaf of bread for 2¼*d.*, two ounces of boiled ham, a penny tin of condensed milk, and a pennyworth of sugar; tea and butter we had with us. Armed with these, in the kitchen we speedily obtained hot water and made our tea-supper. We took it into the dining-room for coolness' sake, and established ourselves at a table. This room had three long wooden tables and forms. It was an oblong room with one fireplace, and out of it was another kitchen with fireplace and gas stove.

There were hardly any girls in when we entered, and, to our great disappointment, our acquaintance of the day before was out. She had gone out at nine o'clock. She was not out long, but returned drunk; she had been "in luck." She had had "two small whiskies and a soda," and they had bowled her over. She had plenty of money now, and was talkative, and staggering. We felt we could not do anything with her that night. She came and talked to us a little, asking us our "luck," to which we replied "that we had done very well," and were going on to another town next day. I had improved my appearance, wearing hat, tie, and belt, so this bore out my story.

The proprietress as we entered had told us not to mind a woman who was "gone dotty" with drink. She also was in this room, properly maudlin. She had a chemise, which she kept tucking into her breast, pulling up her under-garments, and examining her stockings. She was taking more drink still, brought in in a bottle, and though warned, I believe she insisted presently on sallying forth, and would probably fall into the hands of the police. The other women present humoured her to avoid a quarrel. [Pg 205]

By this time we felt quite "at home," knowing the faces of a good many of the inmates. Most were out, but one and another we recollected came dropping in, in some cases to go out again. Our dark friend came and questioned us as to how we had got on. We told her we had done very well. She said, "I suppose you have been round the town?" Evidently she was fishing for our occupation, and I fear she would gather the wrong impression from our affirmative reply; but we really had been about and could not "give ourselves away." This little person seemed to keep from drink, though she told us she had lost her last place through buying, with her own money, bottles of stout, and so horrifying her mistress, who, she said, was "a religious woman, but a regular pig." This mistress took drink herself, but "would not own it," and "suffered from indigestion." She had the doctor, and he recommended change, society, etc., but she lazed about most of the day and drank. Little Dark Hair said she could have stood it if the woman had been straight, if she had told her she took drink and it wasn't good for her; but to call it "indigestion," and dismiss her servant for buying in a few bottles of stout out of her own money, it was too disgusting! She left, and didn't feel like asking for a character, as what she said was regarded as cheek! She was evidently very low-spirited, for she said she wished she was "in a bandbox," and [Pg 206]

then explained she meant her coffin. She said she would get out of this if she had a home; but she had no home, no friends. She was soon to become a mother—she would soon have to go to the workhouse. We gave her the address of a friend who would help her, but could not ourselves do so because of our *incognito*.

There was a great difference in the characters and appearance of the various women. One old woman apparently got her living by running errands and doing odd jobs for the girls. I think one woman was a pedlar. The former woman showed by her conversation that she had lived an immoral life. There were several women about thirty or forty, who behaved quietly and were dressed comparatively modestly and cleanly. Some looked quite superior to their position, but I believe they had only acquired the wisdom of reticence, as they dressed themselves up and went out like the others, and one I thought particularly quiet, who seemed to watch us a good deal, smoked like the others, after she had been out. Some explanation of the probable life of these elder women was afforded next morning by a woman, rather stout, and more talkative. She had gone out overnight, setting off for her regular place, which was apparently some way off in a suburb. A "toff" took her to have a drink, and promised her money to go with him to an hotel. He afterwards gave her the slip, leaving her penniless. Another girl, young and pretty, said she was given in the dark two pennies silvered over! A dark girl told her she "wasn't so soft; she always felt the edges of her money in the dark and knew by that."

There were no old women, except the one or two who seemed to live on the others, by cleaning or by sewing or running errands. One girl was said to get her living by doing this, and "drank all she got." Most of the younger ones seemed to get more or less drunk every day. They had to drown thought, but drink and dissipation were fast playing havoc with their good looks, and several had very severe coughs, due to exposure to night air. A girl who did not gather lodging money might be out all night, as our friend the runaway had been, and none were very warmly clad. They had to take off underclothing and replace it after it was washed, apparently being almost all improvident. One or two, notably "Dot," a small dark girl, who kept herself clean, and was pretty, with a kind of perky prettiness that hid vulgarity, seemed to be better fitted up. She had a basket of clothes, and seemed to be going somewhere by appointment. We heard it several times mentioned that Mr. S—— wanted one and another, and that they must have "a note" from him, or "a paper." He was "the landlord."

But I am anticipating the morning. We sat watching until we were weary, between eleven and twelve, and then went to our bedroom. The same beds were reserved, and one woman who was said to work for her living, and had a very bad cough, was already in bed. We were speedily in bed also, and for a while were quiet. The room was very stuffy, in spite of two ventilators; the sheets not very clean, but still fairly so. The beds were filled by degrees, all but one, that previously occupied by the Scotch woman. One girl who came in late said she was not on the streets; that she had begged money for her lodging, as she was out too late to return to her place. It was holiday time, being Whit week.[113] One girl who came in late, and had had drink, which made her talkative, said she was a servant, and had just left a place where she had been ten months. She said she had been to a pleasure resort all the night before with her young man; that her mistress begged her not to come to this lodging-house; she was very good to her, but she said she had had some drink, and it got late, and she couldn't go anywhere else. She had no money to buy breakfast, and had an appointment with her young man at eight o'clock next morning. He promised to give her some money. She meant to "enjoy herself" over the holiday and then go to service again.[114] She did get up early, complaining she felt poorly, and she went to her appointment, but I think he did not meet her. We offered her some breakfast before she went, and she joyfully recognised us when she returned without it, and we gave her the rest of our provisions.

One girl who had been in before grumbled that her bed had been slept in, and was dirty; but her own underlinen was far from clean. No one seemed to possess a nightgown; all slept in their underlinen.

We had the door a little ajar, and far into the night the door bell kept ringing, and girls were admitted and laughter and conversation drifted up the stairs. Our room settled down some time past midnight, but the girl who was drunk several times tried to begin a conversation. At last we all slept; two, however, had bad coughs. I woke at intervals through the night, and finally, at 6.30, I woke longing for fresh air. I put on a skirt and went down to enquire the time, and decided to get up and go out for a quiet stroll. The bath-room was empty. The bath had old papers in it, and did not look as if it was often used. There was a table with looking-glass, and a good deal of rouge about. The w.c. had a good flush of water. The washing basin was very small, and no soap was provided. There was a roller towel for everybody. We had learned by experience to take our own soap and towel, and we lent the soap several times. Articles of clothing seemed to be frequently lent. We saw girls trying on each other's hats, and there were complaints that they were also stolen. Several locked boxes were in the bath-room, and some empty ones. No convenience existed for keeping things privately except this. Some women had a few things in drawers in the kitchen, but they were not locked. The woman in charge had a sitting-room and a piano, and she kept knives in her room. You paid a penny to have one, and it was returned to you when you gave back the knife. Knives also were lent from one to another. A girl whose head was questionably clean wanted to borrow my friend's shawl to go an errand, but we made an excuse and did not lend it.

My friend got up more slowly, so I slipped out to the bright freshness of a May morning, and walked in the direction of a park. There were plenty astir, trams running, and people going holiday-making. The park was not open, as it was not yet seven, but just outside I found a resting-

place. What a contrast the fresh budding life of the trees was to that perversion and decay of budding womanhood I had left behind me! A tree cut down in its prime to make way for building furnished me with a parallel. What *artificial* conditions of man's making are pressing on those young lives, snapping them off from true use to rottenness and decay? Why do they not grow healthily? A crowded bedroom, an uneasy couch, a bare dining-room, wooden slats and tables, a precarious livelihood—these are not things to draw a girl, and the excitement of "the life" has to be covered by drink and degradation. Is it true, that once *in* it, it is too difficult to get out, and that a girl may be trapped unawares and wound round and round as in a spider's web by a multitude of threads of circumstance which prevent her escape? Is there even at the back an *organised* system, seeking victims and preying on them? This much is certain, that there is room for an alliance of greed and wickedness against defenceless and destitute womanhood. For if a woman "cannot get work," where is she to go? What is she to do? Can all our Homes and Shelters together prevent many from drifting "on the streets"? Do we not need a national provision for migration and temporary destitution among women?[115]

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Musing thus, I returned to my friend, and we went out together and sat about half an hour on some public seats. The open air refreshed us, and once more we returned to get our breakfast. I found a cup and saucer with difficulty, for by this time most were in requisition. Every one had her own provisions, but they all seemed to live from hand to mouth; there was nowhere to keep them, and there were complaints that they were stolen. Bread and butter, tea, bacon, or ham, or an egg, were the staple diet. There were no forks, only a very common blunt knife to be had for the penny, and tin spoons rusty with use. The walls were bare, except for a print of the infant Christ bearing a cross, over the kitchen mantelpiece. "Oh, Christ!" was a favourite exclamation. The language was often foul. The girls chatted together also about their previous night's experiences, but mostly in groups of two or three exchanging confidences. We asked A—— to join us, and she offered me an egg, and went out and fetched herself some tea, butter, and crumpets. We were now going to make a struggle for this girl's salvation, but it was very difficult to do so without exciting suspicion. We tried to persuade her to go to B——. I had written overnight to secure a place for her; but she would not do this, or go home, fearing her father's wrath. She was also wretched after her previous night's indulgence, and ashamed of herself, and in a difficult irresolute state. Reference to her mother made her weep, and this attracted attention. The woman of the house came, without any apparent reason, and borrowed her shawl. We asked her to go out with us, and her shawl was not returned, but a small grey one was *lent* her.

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I spoke to the little dark young woman, and she gratefully received an address to which she might apply for help after her confinement.

We succeeded in getting A—— to give us her mother's address, and promised to write for her. With this, I think, we should have been content, but she offered to go out with us after all a little way, and we hoped to persuade her. We knew of a Shelter near by, and we actually succeeded in getting her there; but she would not remain, and we had to let her return, fearing that she would probably drink again to drown recollection. We spent altogether nearly two hours in trying to get her to some satisfactory resolution. Meanwhile the girls were talking, laughing, singing, or dancing about the room. Two were particularly playful; both handsome girls, but already dissipated in looks. Both had an abundance of fair hair, apparently "all their own." One girl sportively asked one of them to "lend her her hair." I thought she was joking, but presently she crossed the room, and untwisted a lock of hair from the head of one of them and twisted it up and fixed it on her own! It was many shades fairer, and was speedily returned to its owner. These two girls were constantly striking up bits of comic songs, or larking with one another or dancing "the cake walk."

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I fear in our endeavour to secure our young friend we lost other opportunities. But it was a continually-changing scene. Most sat round comparatively quiet; some, very weary, lay on the forms or lolled on one another; some smoked cigarettes, some talked, and one or two were washing their clothes in another room. One girl took off her stockings to wash them. There were one or two strikingly handsome girls—one had a face that reminded me of some painting I had seen—but the majority were only good-looking when rouge and powder had effaced dissipation or accentuated their good points; by morning light they looked flabby, coarse, and unhealthy. One girl, Joy, with a pink-and-white complexion that bore the light, had to go to the Lock Hospital. Apparently most of these girls had outgrown the fear of this or of prison. "Bless you! they don't mind being 'pinched,'" said one woman; "it gives them a rest." Here, then, was womanhood devoid of fear! Social restraints had vanished—as with the tramp, so with the harlot![116]

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The only fear left was that of each other's opinion, and this had sufficient force to draw back to "the life" the one we wished to rescue. On her soul lay the knowledge of the *horror* of respectable society towards what she had become, and the *attraction* of the fellowship of those who would receive her freely. We succeeded in getting her to go out with us in a small borrowed shawl, and we coaxed her to a place where she would have received shelter till her friends were communicated with. But it was no use—she must go to her *friends*. Persuasion was useless. We would have taken her with us, but she would go back. All we could do was to give her the address of a friend and take that of her parents, in the *hope* of a chance to save her.

It is, I believe, hardly possible to rescue a girl deep in harlotry, though it might be possible to steer poor souls who have passed disillusionment to some harbour of refuge where moral purity was to be recovered. They must "get their living." Who would knowingly employ them? The national recognition of the right of the individual to employment and subsistence seems to me to be the remedy for the harlot as for the tramp. The harlot is the *female tramp*, driven by hard

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social conditions to primitive freedom of sex relationship.[117]

III. The Third Night.

During the week that intervened before we could again visit, we succeeded in finding out that there was a "welcome home" for the wanderer. Armed with a letter from her mother, but with some misgivings as to success, we went to the lodging-house, intending to see her quietly; but when we reached the door the woman in charge stood there. We asked for the girl by name. She said she was not there; that a letter had come for her, but they had not been able to give it to her, as she had left. We asked where she had gone. She did not know. Baffled, but uncertain as to whether she was telling the truth, we stood hesitating, when who should come to the door but the girl herself! The woman was so nonplussed that she gave way and invited us in! We gave the girl her mother's letter, and watched her read it. The girl's face changed, softened. She cried, but she only said, "My sister has written it," when an elderly woman came and began talking to us. As the girl was opposite us we could no longer speak privately. After a while, however, she changed her place so as to get near me, and we began talking, but a young woman also came and asked if she were going out with her. We did not wish to attract too much attention, so it was only by degrees we could tell her we were ready to send her away next morning, having had the money to do so given us. [Pg 216]

She made difficulties about being ashamed to go home in dirty clothes. We asked her to wash them. She said if she left them to dry overnight they would be stolen. We told her to exchange them for others. She wanted to go out and get money for some things, and go home well dressed. We were not sure as to what might happen if she did this, and urged her to give up "the life" for her mother's sake and meet us in the morning. Fearing too much pressure would act in the wrong direction, we decided to leave her, trusting to God to bring her to the right decision. This He did, for she went out and had "bad luck," and received only two halfpennies!

We set out once more to search for lodgings, intending to make straight for a street we had heard of by name. We took a penny tram-ride to the heart of the town, and asking directions of a woman, got a very bad impression from her of the street whither we were bound, a mild recommendation to one lodging-house, and a warm one, coupled with an invitation, to the one whither she was going. However, we "preferred the worst," and so with thanks we left her. When, however, after a long walk we found the street, it was narrow and unsavoury, and the lodging-houses were all small cottages. We looked through open doors at a few interiors—and flinched! We knew what they would be like only too well![118] Besides, as we wanted to see as much "life" as possible, we preferred a larger one. We could be *sure* of what these low-class ones were, if a slightly better one was unsatisfactory. So we sought a street near by, which we had also heard mentioned, and which, being a principal thoroughfare, was flanked by houses of a larger type, once inhabited by the well-to-do, but which now had descended to be lodging-houses. [Pg 217]

A female lodging-house (next door to a men's lodging-house) looked clean and respectable, although through the open door we caught a glimpse of a girl who was dressing, and who attracted some attention from passers-by by her condition of half-undress. We paid sixpence each, and secured two beds in the same room. We then were "free of the house," which consisted of a long passage leading to a small kitchen. Leading from the passage was a front parlour occupied by the "deputy" and her husband, a larger dining-room furnished as usual with tables and forms, and a door leading to a yard with sanitary conveniences. A stairway with oak balustrading led above; a door which could be locked had been placed at the bottom, and no one was allowed upstairs till they went to bed—a good precaution for cleanliness and decency. [Pg 218]

In the kitchen there was a fire, and hot water in a boiler by the side. A couple of tables and two forms, accommodating each about four people, were the only furniture besides a rack in the wall and some shelves filled with hats and other clothes. There was no room for more, as a small sink with hot and cold water occupied the corner by the fire. There were a few pots in much request, and two large tins. These formed the only apparatus for washing of all kinds. We saw them used overnight for bathing the feet, etc., one girl washing her feet in them; we knew they were used for washing clothes, and we saw them full of dirty pots in the morning. As we heard the state of one girl alluded to as contagious, "but she won't go to hospital," it is easy to be imagined that we could not bring ourselves to eat and drink there. Nor did we consider it safe to use any sanitary convenience except upstairs, for it was easy to see the character of the house. We sat on the form in the kitchen for nearly an hour, while the girl we had seen made her elaborate toilet. She had a most severe cough, and could hardly speak, yet she sat, often in full view of the front door, in a low chemise and skirt, both of good quality if they had only been *clean*, which they were not. She had finished her washing process, but there were many others. She powdered her face and breast, she rouged herself with great care (being chaffed meanwhile by some of her companions), she burnt a match and blackened her eyebrows, and then by slow degrees she did her hair in numerous rolls, finishing up by curling the little ends and putting a net over all. Then, after some discussion as to which hat suited her (apparently hats, though they had owners, were common property), she put on first a very thin muslin blouse with a hole at the shoulder, then a clean skirt and a costume skirt and jacket (the latter very open at the neck), and finally the selected hat. She looked, when thus disguised, a handsome young woman, but her face was really thin and wan, and it was almost death to her to go out, as she did, into the cold night air with only a thin tie to protect her chest. She returned in the morning, saying she had been at the C—— Hotel all night, and had been drinking all the time, and had not slept at all. She looked very weary, and rolled up some clothes and lay full length on a form to attempt to sleep. She could not long survive such a [Pg 219]

life. One girl had died the previous week there.

While her long toilet was taking place, a succession of girls entered, most of them going out again after a brief rest. The first, who sat by me and told her story, was not, as yet, on the streets.[119] She had been sent when five years old to an orphanage, and from that to a laundry home, where she had received a good education, and from which she got a good situation. She was not strong, however, and, becoming anæmic, was sent to hospital. There she was questioned as to her parents, whom she had not seen for years, and sent, when discharged, to the town where they lived to seek for them. She found her mother living in sin with another man, by whom she had children. Her father was a drunkard, who had been many times convicted; he lived with her sister in lodgings. She clung to him as her own, and all the right feelings cultured in her gave intensity to her affection for her long-lost father. He kicked and ill-used her, but promised amendment. He broke out again, and had that morning been sent down for a month. She had nowhere to go. Her sister was cold to her and to her father; probably she took after her mother, and had reason enough not to love her father, who had, however, in his way looked after her. She was working and could support herself, but this poor girl was stranded. Her one cry was that she *must* meet her father when he came from prison; she was sure he would do better. She had no money, and feared she should have to walk the streets. I paid her lodging, and one or two of the girls gave her a little food. She said she intended next morning to seek work in a laundry. We urged her, if she did not obtain it, to go to a relief agency we knew, and she seemed quite willing to do so, and a woman present also recommended it. She was in the same mind the next morning, so I hoped she would do so, as she did not seem to wish to drift to evil. Her father, bad as he was through drink, was not bad in that way. Her mother was a thoroughly immoral woman. This girl, well intentioned and well brought up, but feeble in health, ought never to have drifted to such a place.

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I have before had occasion to notice the harm done by hospital authorities in sending friendless girls, without sufficient enquiry (or even though knowing they are quite friendless), back to their native town. Girls such as this should be passed on to some agency that would "mother" them. It is easy to see how a little indecision, and the pressure of hunger, might anchor a girl to sin.[120] For most of those who entered were openly leading a life of shame. Girl after girl came in, rested, and went out. We learnt their "by-names," and those of others. "Red Jinny," distinguished from "Scotch Jinny" and other Jinnies, was living with a companion in prostitution.

The pathetic history of a young woman who began her toilet by having a foot-bath (in one of the tins), her legs being swollen with varicose veins, will illustrate this life. She had a good home, a kind and strict father. The way home was always open to her, for her parents had not the slightest idea she was living in sin. They thought she was in service. She had actually been home over the week-end, and thoroughly enjoyed herself, going on Sunday to church and Sunday school. ("I wish I was as good!" sighed one when she heard it.) Yet for two or three years she had really led the life of a prostitute. Her history was a sad one. She kept company five years, and then her young man betrayed her. She managed to conceal this from her parents, and in order to maintain her baby she went on the streets. For two and a half years she lived with a prostitute friend, and worked and struggled for her little one, coming home one day to find her scalded and her companion "blind drunk." However, the child survived, only to perish of bronchitis and pneumonia. Her mother had worked for her and clothed her with her own fingers, making all her clothes herself. She was clever, for as she talked she unpicked a hat and twisted and turned it to new account. After her child died she left her companion—or was deserted by her—and now for some months she had been living here, except for home visits. She found it hard to get out of "the life," because she had kept up the deception that she was entangled in. "Her father would die" if he knew she was in such a place! But he must get to know in the long run unless she got out of "the life." Already she had been twice in the hands of the police—once for drink, and once for accosting. The second time she got off for "first offence." She gave an assumed name and paid the fine, but next time she would have to "go down." We got a good opportunity to press her to go where we knew she would find friends, as she was the only one in bed in our room by twelve o'clock. She did not go out because of a superstitious feeling that "something was going to happen," which, she said, had also preceded her being taken up. She said she wished she was at home in her own good bed, which was always kept for her; that she was getting to drink and swear, and this life would soon kill her. We placed before her as strongly as we could the path to safety, and urged her to struggle free for the sake of father and child. It made one long to go and *live* continuously with these girls, gradually acquiring influence, and being able to speak to them as a Christian woman, and save them from the web in which they were entangled. Such work would be difficult and delicate, for it would be necessary to live quietly, maintaining oneself among them and acting by character, not by profession.

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But surely something more is possible. There should be large, well-ventilated, well-provided women's lodging houses, open even to the prostitute, but under the care of wise, motherly women. Here it was impossible for a girl even to keep her own property; there was not a locker or any place to put anything away. Girls slept with their hats on their beds for security. Everything was "borrowed" or "made off with." A little care would keep a decent girl steady and safe, and bring many a wanderer back to goodness. Here everything tended to demoralisation. The sanitary arrangements were deficient. I cannot defend the shameless toilet in full view of an open door to the street, which we saw repeated, even to half-nudity, several times over. But this kitchen was the only place in which to wash and dress, and the door must needs be open. The constant talk was filthy—not on the part of all, but on that of many—and the life most were leading not in the least disguised. The more successful girls were sometimes out all night. Two or

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three came in very drunk and were piloted to bed by friends. Shameless expressions which cannot be repeated were used with regard to actions which decency conceals. Yet listening were other girls not so far gone in sin.

A young girl in a shawl, hardly more than a child, came in apparently on an errand, and stayed some time. She was asked if she was going to "mash for a quid." An old woman called "Old Mackintosh," from her wearing a long mackintosh cloak, and also affectionately called "Ma," was [Pg 225] apparently the sport of the girls, and yet regarded with a sort of affection. They teased her and stole her things, and even hit her. She had a bad temper, and scolded, which afforded them amusement; but if they went too far they made it up by embracing her. Poor woman! I fear drink was her trouble. They said she had hardly anything under her cloak. She seemed ravenously hungry, and how she got her living I don't know. One or two elderly women were apparently not prostitutes, but earned money by cleaning. It was, however, rather difficult to settle how they lived. One woman was very coarse and fat, with an ugly scar on her shoulder, which she exhibited in the morning when she indulged in the luxury of "a good wash," but was not clean. She put on a ragged bodice, the silk of which was hanging in shreds, and which had a big hole under the arm showing a great patch of bare flesh; yet over all she put a most respectable cloak, and a bonnet that would have done credit to a Quaker. I was astonished to see her emerge as almost a lady! Evidently the "clothes philosophy" is well understood in Slumdom, for whatever purposes it is used. Indeed, it has given me somewhat of a shock to realise that many of these, even if dwellers in actual filth and disease, would not be distinguishable in any way from ordinary individuals.

[Pg 226] Nothing was more noticeable in both lodging-houses than the existence of at least three descriptions of prostitutes. There was the apparently quiet, modest one, whom you would take to be a respectable girl. One of these gave an account of how "her boy" had met her and spent an hour or two trying to persuade her to go away and get work. He even cried! But apparently he did not move her. She promised him as a put-off. This quiet sort of girl is most to be dreaded; she may act as a tempter.

There was, in the second place, the good-natured girl, naturally affectionate. "Everyone likes me wherever I go," said the girl who had a home. This girl should have been a happy wife and mother. Her fate lies at the door of him who wronged her. Once in "the life," the ties of friendship and a vivacious, sociable disposition would draw her to it again and again.

The third kind may be the second gone to ruin, or those who, having had a worse bringing up, are naturally more shamelessly immoral. Drink has fascinations for them. They go "on the town" to get drink. One such, who was drunk over night, gave a long and involved history of her doings in the morning. She had received money and drink from three soldiers, but she declined to descend to the level of "Soldiers' Jinny," whose unmentionable doings were related at length. She left them and got more drink, piloted a couple to a "safe house" and was tipped for it, was treated to [Pg 227] "bottled stout"—much to her disgust, as she preferred other drink—came along certain streets gloriously drunk, daring policemen, and arrived home happy, just sufficiently quarrelsome to get a free berth from everyone. She was a handsome dark girl of a low class. Her language was unspeakably foul, every sentence being interspersed with gory adjectives. She evidently expected admiration from her hearers for a sort of dare-devilry.

It was pitiable, as the evening went on, to see the state of many. Two elderly women in the other room carried on a maudlin conversation, just on the edge of a quarrel, the substance of which was that they "understood one another," and would not blab each other's secrets!

All the time this was going on a man, and sometimes other men, were in the passage frequently. There was in this passage a locked door, constantly unlocked, leading to the next door men's lodging-house. Apparently the husband caretaker in our house was also caretaker in this, hence comings and goings. I have no reason to suppose there was any illicit communication as regards the house itself; but girls were frequently asked for by name, and the presence of a man or men was not desirable. The caretaker himself was familiarly addressed as "Pa."

[Pg 228] The hours slowly wore away. One girl sat patiently for eleven o'clock to strike. She "never went out till eleven," she said. She was a quiet girl, not very good looking. About half-past eleven two girls in shawls came in and had something to eat. From conversation between them (they slept in our room), they seemed to be working girls who had been turned out of home. One worked at a mackintosh warehouse, the other, I think, at tin-plate. One at least intended to go to work in the morning, but was not up when I came away.[121] And this was not wonderful, for with the best intentions youth and sleepiness would make them lie long in the morning; for at twelve, when I went to bed, only a few had gone upstairs, and right on till two o'clock at least the interruptions were far too numerous for rest.

Besides the usual comings and goings, locking and unlocking of doors, drunken stumbling upstairs, and loud good-nights exchanged, a tragedy that turned to a comedy was being enacted. A woman known as the "Mussel Woman," who carried an empty basket on her arm—which those who knew her called a "blind," as she hardly ever had anything to sell—came and claimed a lodging, having nothing to pay. After a good deal of "language," she was made to understand that she could not have it, whereupon she said she should "keep shouting all night" if they did not let her in. She was as good as her word for half an hour at least, shouting at the top of her voice the most abusive personal language, and banging the door at intervals. I do not know whether [Pg 229] seasons of quiet were due to police rounds, but she shouted and banged, and then desisted at intervals, for quite two hours. No sooner was everything quiet than she again appeared. Several angry colloquies took place with the deputy. Once she was let in, saying "Jinny" would pay for

her, and came all round the beds looking for "Jinny" with the deputy. "Jinny" was not found, and she was again ejected, I believe; but finally a policeman intervened, said he could not have her in the street, and forced the lodging-house keeper to accept her, money or no money. I should not like the berth of a "deputy"; she could have had no rest till two at the earliest, yet was up cleaning and sweeping before seven.

Our beds and bedroom could not be called *clean*, yet were not dirty; at any rate in this respect, that we did not see any insects. That is a great deal to be thankful for. I woke after a brief and broken slumber at 6.30. All were young in my room save my companion and myself, and all slept soundly. There was nothing to tell the time, so I dressed without disturbing them, and on arriving downstairs found it was ten minutes past seven. I washed my face at the sink with my own soap and flannel, and sallied out in search of a clean and cheap breakfast. I succeeded beyond my expectation, finding on enquiry a small shop where I got a cup of coffee for ½*d.* and a good substantial ½*d.* bun. Thus fortified I spent a pleasant hour looking at pictures in shop windows and observing passers by, and returned about 8 o'clock to wake my friend. She had gone to bed at 9.30 the previous night with a bad headache, which was no better for a disturbed night, so we escaped as quickly as possible to fresh air and a cup of coffee, and then by tram to keep our appointment with the girl we wished to save. [Pg 230]

We entered the house by the open door and sought the dining-room to look for her, but were met by reproof on the part of the deputy. She said we had no right in when we hadn't slept there. She had allowed it as a favour the day before, but could not again permit it. To solve this difficulty my friend paid for her bed for the night, and was then of course free of the house. I had to leave her to wait to see the girl, and if possible to send her to her mother; and I am glad to say that she succeed in dispatching her safely to the far-distant home, where I trust loving hearts may hold her too closely for return.

I have tried to tell a plain, unvarnished tale—in which nevertheless much is left out that would not bear printing—of the way in which these our young sisters live. The pity of it is that though some may from sheer wickedness seek it, more—perhaps most—are drawn in by frivolity and misfortune. It may be exceedingly difficult to rescue them when contaminated, surrounded as they are by all those invisible ties of friendship which chain a woman's heart. We make elaborate institutions to *rescue* them, which are often surrounded by such restrictions that they defeat their own end. [Pg 231]

Can we not do something to solve the problem by providing suitable and sufficient women's lodging-houses under good management, where freedom is not interfered with unduly, but influence for good is steady?

In Christian England a friendless girl should never want a friend and a home. And to guard our girls is to preserve our nation from the worst of evils—the corruption of a 'trade' based on greed and dishonour. Yet how else can a destitute girl get her living without a friend?

When all else is sold she sells herself to live![122]

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CHAPTER VI.

COMMON LODGING-HOUSE LIFE.

I. In a Northern Town.

There are certain elementary considerations of decency with regard to accommodation for women that we might expect would receive attention in every town of considerable size, especially those along the main thoroughfares by which travel takes place. To leave provision for a certain need entirely in private hands is to ensure in the end great public expense. It is not to private advantage to provide maximum but minimum comfort. The margin of profit is small, and the class provided for will put up with a great deal. Inspection may swoop down on flagrant neglect, but does not avail to prevent a state of things most undesirable from every point of view. [123]

Under the conviction that nothing but investigation into the actual state of things will shed light on the nature of the reforms needed, my friend and I set out once more on pilgrimage, our object being to investigate the state of things in a town not twenty miles from Manchester, on the line of constant travel, with regard to accommodation for women. [Pg 233]

Thinking it desirable to make some preliminary inquiries, we first visited a friend who belonged to "the Army"; we could, however, get little information, so we visited the Captain, hoping to learn something useful. We found that "the Army" visited the men's lodging-houses, and that there were frequent inquiries for a Shelter, but they did not possess one in this town. Finally we learned that there was not in the whole town a lodging-house for women only! Possibly there may be some charitable institutions. But for a woman coming to the town not absolutely destitute, able to beg or earn fourpence for a bed (which means, it must be remembered, two-and-fourpence a week, without food), there were only three places, and in each "married couples" were also taken.[124]

One was described to us as "full of gay girls," a second was small, and the single men had to pass

through the sitting-room to bed; we were assured, however, that the proprietress did her best to prevent "carryings on." The third being described as "the best in the town," we decided to try it. But it is obvious that no town can be considered in a satisfactory condition that makes no provision for homeless women, apart from men. Widows and friendless girls are to be found everywhere, and it is most important that a safe place of refuge should exist to arrest, if possible, a downward career.[125] [Pg 234]

We found a group of men outside the lodging-house, and one of them kindly showed us the way to the office, a lighted room up a sort of court. There was a movable square of glass in the window of this room, and through this we paid our money, sixpence for a double bed. We were told we should have to come through that room to bed and that we must go "up a stair to the right," and with this our communication with our host or hostess begun and ended, for there was no one in the room when we passed through to bed, and when we came away there was only a child in possession, half-dressed.

The room up the short stair, in which we found ourselves, was lofty and airy and might have been pleasant,—if it had been clean. There was a large fireplace with a fine range.[126] On the mantelpiece some wag had drawn, upon a round piece of board, a clock face, with the hands pointing to five-to-twelve, and the legend written underneath,

"No tick hear (*sic*) all stopped to-day."

Also a large frying-pan hanging on the wall bore the humorous inscription, "Out of work."

[Pg 235] The walls were painted light above and dark below, various shawls and hats were hanging up, shelves by the side of the fire contained a non-descript collection of food and other possessions, and there was the usual stock-in-trade of frying-pans and saucepans, but no kettle. Hot water for any purpose (and cold also) had to be fetched from the "single men's" side of the building.

There was a small sink in one corner, but the water was cut off. There was absolutely no convenience for washing of all kinds—personal, family, or for culinary purposes—save this sink.[127] Men and women alike must fetch water from the other room, even to wash the "pots." A card on the wall informed the lodgers that they were expected to wash their own. The "pots" were a few enamelled basins, soup-plates, and tea-pots, some very much worse for wear. The sanitary conveniences were out in the yard, and apparently common to both men and women.

We took our seat at one of the tables, which, with wooden forms, were the only furniture, except what has been already alluded to. We then began to take stock of our fellow-lodgers.

On the other side of our table, a man with dark hair (and plenty of it) was employed in "cobbling" his wife's boots. It took him most of the evening to fasten on pieces of leather with nails, and to knock the nails down. His job was then pronounced "first-rate" by the men, but the wife reserved her opinion till they had been tested by the next day's march! He confided to us that she was "no [Pg 236] walker" and "took an hour to walk a mile" (this is the gist of his speech, which was much garnished). She claimed to have walked five miles. I should not have liked to walk in her shoes.

Meanwhile at another table several men and women were sitting, some eating, some smoking (women as well as men). Also on the short forms by the fire were several people and children, and there were two perambulators, each with a sleeping child, against the wall in the background.

In a little while we were better able to disentangle the relationships of the various groups. A young and rather good-looking woman was the mother of three small children, one a babe at the breast, the next hardly more than a baby, and the third about four, apparently quite able to take care of herself and go to shop for the family! They were all very healthy, and the baby was much admired; the father seemed kind, and helped his wife to nurse. They did not seem destitute, but one wondered how they lived, whether they were "on the road," or crowded out of a home; the perambulator and the healthiness of the children favoured the former hypothesis. Another pretty little child seemed almost "unattached," but next day we identified her father; she was fair, and had long golden curls and a black velvet dress, and thus dirt did not show. It was most amusing to see this child, not more than six, take possession of the only washing bowl, get water, and [Pg 237] proceed in the most business-like fashion to wash out three pocket handkerchiefs (one of which had lace round the edge), they were then placed on the rack over the fire to dry.

A man and woman were very busy making paper mats in a very quiet and steady fashion; they also began again next morning, and had a small tin box in which they kept their stock in trade. It was really curious to see such fancy articles made in such a place, and kept clean. For the dirt must not be left out of my description. The boarded floor was sanded over, the walls were clean, as far as could be seen, but under the tables and forms, and in every corner, there was a miscellaneous collection of sweepings of all sorts. Remains of food, dirty papers, filthy sand, dust and dirt, remained there unswept, and was still there when we came away. No attempt had been made to clear them, and what cleaning of pots and pans was done was expected of the lodgers, probably the room received a clearing up once a week, possibly a sweeping later in the day.

It is impossible for human beings to be or keep clean under such circumstances, and clean they were not. Yet I think most of them were as clean as they could be under these conditions, and, as will be seen later, there were degrees of uncleanliness to which they were very sensitive.

[Pg 238] There were several working men who got into conversation about the doings of the Manchester corporation:

"Taking on two or three hundred at stone-breaking out of thousands!"

"Breaking granite! It's not much as them as aren't accustomed to it will make of that!"

"A man can't claim the Union unless he's resided two years."

"But I will say this, there's nowhere worse than Manchester for men knocking about as doesn't belong to it."

Two of the men settled down into earnest conversation about the state of employment, but, owing to the incessant knocking of the cobbler, I could not catch what they said, even when I moved nearer. A pleasing interlude from serious talk was afforded by the following humorous conversation (I omit the various unsavory adjectives with which it was interlarded, as I cannot do justice to them, and they were probably meaningless):

Enter the mother and baby.

"What's his name?"

"Oh! don't you know? he's Billy Bailey!"

"Bill Bailey? eh! There was a man as had a bicycle accident, fell off and lay in the road. A chap came along. 'What's the matter?' 'Broken a rib,' says he; 'can't move.' 'What's your name?' says the man. 'Bill Bailey,' says he. 'Bill Bailey!' says the man, and goes off and leaves him. He lies there half an hour, then another chap comes along. 'What's up?' says he. 'Run and get me a doctor, for God's sake,' says the man. 'My name is Bill Bailey,' says he. So the chap runs off and tells the nearest doctor that there's a man down the road wants him. 'What's his name?' says the doctor. 'He says he's called Bill Bailey.' 'Bill Bailey!' says the doctor. 'Get along with you!' says he. So he wouldn't go. At last the man got a doctor to go who didn't ask the chap's name; but the poor fellow lay there two hours with a broken rib, all because his name was Bill Bailey." [Pg 239]

"There were a chap that went into a beer-house," struck in another man; "there was some glasses of beer called for, and a chap ordered one and went in the yard; when he came back his glass were drunk. 'Who's done this?' he says. 'Bill Bailey,' says someone. 'Where is he?' says he. 'Just gone out,' says the man. 'I'll be even with him,' says he; with that he goes back in the yard, and, as luck would have it, there were a chap there called Bill Bailey. 'Where's Bill Bailey?' he sings out, ''cause he's wanted.' 'What for?' says Bill Bailey. 'I'll give you what for,' says the man; and with that he pitches into him, and gives him a right-down good thrashing. And all the while the chap doesn't know what it's all about!"

After these humorous incidents had raised a good laugh, the conversation became general and hard to follow.

[Pg 240] A woman, who was afterwards one of my room-mates, seemed to consider it her duty to supply liquor to the company; she apparently had money given her by the men, and went and fetched beer in a quart bottle. I counted at least six times. But the liquor did not appear to take effect on such "old stagers," except, perhaps, to loosen the tongues still more.

One man, who sent most frequently, had a nose that betrayed his proclivities, and to him this woman paid considerable attention. By this time the evening was growing late. Already there had been two loud thumps at the door, accompanied by the shout, "Bed!"

Apparently this summons came at the hours, and then those who wished to go cleared off. One or two went as early as eight o'clock, a few more at nine—mostly, as it seemed, working men with their wives—politely wishing us all "good night."

We went out to a little corner shop and got something to eat and a pennyworth of tea and sugar, and made some tea.

None of the children had as yet gone to bed, but towards ten the mothers undressed them, of course in public. One child had its face washed in the soapy water that had been used for the handkerchiefs; this was all the toilet we saw.

When we came away about nine in the morning, three of them were still running about, unwashed and undressed, in the scanty garb of one garment, shift or skirt. These little things, [Pg 241] each pretty if only clean, tried each in their own way to find amusement. One got three sticks and tried to hammer them together as the cobbler was doing to the shoe! One in the morning tied himself to a post with an old scarf, and went round and round. It was almost pathetic to see the childish love of play developing amidst such untoward surroundings. The baby was fed and became sleepy. At last ten o'clock came and another summons. As only about six were staying up, we decided to go ourselves.

We went through the sitting-room of the landlord, which was empty, and stumbling up a narrow stair, found a young woman who was arranging the lodgers and allotting beds.

We were shown into a small room, which we afterwards heard was the only one for single women. It had two large double beds and a single bed. We were given a very small candle-end, which was put to flare down on the mantelpiece.

By the dim light the sheets looked fairly clean. Two women came to bed at the same time, and one of them, a single woman apparently, explained that she did not know who would be her bed-fellow; she hoped it would be some one decent and clean; she had "a terror of a woman" the night before—so bad, in fact, that "Jim" (who apparently was the lodging-house keeper) had to turn her out; she didn't mind if it was a decent body. Fortunately for our night's repose, she did not till [Pg 242] morning make to us any revelations concerning our bed. She said she had been there six weeks.

She was not very communicative about herself. "Times were bad; she had never seen them

worse, but there were some good folks in the town." We gathered that her "trade" was begging.

The candle-end went out before we were fairly in bed. It was not possible to investigate, but we soon knew that the bed was not untenanted! It is long drawn-out torment to lie in the dark and know that you are being investigated by an uncertain number of "insect pests"! The only comfort was that daylight would come some time, and that the worse it proved to be, the more such a state of things needed to be exposed. Is it not a shame that with all our boasted "civilisation," a poor respectable woman cannot be sure of getting a clean bed though she pays at the rate of two-and-fourpence a week?

We got what sleep we could. At eleven another woman came to bed: she said she had been sitting downstairs, but would have come to bed if she had known there was anyone in her room to talk to! We did not particularly welcome her conversation at that hour. Next day I heard two of the other women call her a "cheeky thing," who wanted to know "every one's business," and then went and told the "missus." Various sounds of "revelry by night" came up the stair, and "Move off" from a policeman outside.

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At last, towards half-past eleven or twelve, silence reigned. The long night passed slowly. Both of us were "plagued" and restless. We feared the worst, but hoped the best.

Morning dawned, and welcome daylight. No one called us, and we found our room door was locked outside. It seems, however, that you might be called "by request." At eight no one had stirred. One of our fellow-lodgers said it was "all right if you were down by nine, and on Sunday you could lie till further orders."[128]

This did not seem to us much of a boon, as we longed to escape from torture, so about eight we began to dress, or rather to "slaughter"! I am not enough of an entomologist to be able to name the animals we found, as I had never before made the acquaintance of their species. Big and little, all sorts and sizes! It took us fully half-an-hour to get moderately free. While on this unpleasant subject, I must state deliberately that I do not believe that a woman who slept in that bed could possibly get free again under lodging-house conditions. Her cleanliness would be effectually destroyed by that one night.

Without the advantages of a bath, carbolic soap, and privacy, such as is unobtainable in a lodging-house, she *could not get free*.[129]

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The woman in the next bed said it was a shame, she remarked to another woman on what we had suffered. Evidently she appreciated cleanliness of that sort. She told us that a very dirty woman with a bad leg had slept for six weeks in our bed.

"Lizzie was not a bad sort," she said, "but she wouldn't keep herself clean." She gave her a garment out of pity, as she had "nothing to change into." She got her living by begging, and got lots of things given her, but pawned them for drink. At last the lodging-house keeper sent her away, for "she was not fit to stop."

Nevertheless, knowing the state this woman was in, the lodging-house keeper put us into the bed, perfunctorily changing the sheets. The woman said she was "terrified" to put her things on the bed, or to step on the floor, and as "Lizzie" would sit on her bed, she "found things." She was not very clean, but evidently her standard was miles above "Lizzie's."

But surely in view of the possibility, nay, the probability, of this kind of lodger, there ought to be care exercised. The commonest precautions were not in evidence. The floor was bare board, very dirty, and under the beds was dirty oilcloth very dirty and frayed at the edge, itself sufficient to harbour any amount of vermin. The bed was flock, without a removable cover, and not clean. Surely, if the house was managed in the interests of the lodgers and not solely in the interest of the proprietor, it would seem right to do something to prevent such a state of things. It is the folly of "laisser faire" that has allowed the supply of a public need to be so entirely in private hands, that, even in apparently well-managed lodging-houses, private profit over-rides public convenience.[130] We "pay the piper" in small-pox hospitals, workhouses and hospitals, for where the commonest matters of cleanliness are neglected how can infection be avoided?

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It seems the height of folly on the one hand to erect costly sanitary apparatus,[131] and on the other by insufficient inspection, and by want of enforcement of right conditions (even in "certified" houses) to actually connive at sanitary conditions below that of the class which most needs raising higher.

When one first enters a common lodging-house, one charitably hopes, in the uncertain light, that it may be a particularly good specimen of its class. Evening covers defects, but an experience of such a night reveals, as nothing else can, the essentially uncleanly nature of the arrangements. If men and women herd together in small space, with no opportunity for proper ablution, with no privacy, with all the culinary operations done in the one living room, and if, as a guarantee for care you have only the selfish interest of a proprietor who stands in small fear of the infrequent "inspection," how can things requisite for public welfare be attended to. Practically the house is no cleaner than the dirtiest person in it, and is a most ingeniously contrived hot-bed of infection. [132]

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After such a night, to descend to the unswept "living-room," to see the débris of yesterday, possibly of days, lying in unsavoury dusty heaps under the tables, to watch your fellow-lodgers proceed, without washing, to cook bacon in greasy pans, half washed at the only sink, to see the clothes, worn perhaps day and night, in various stages of uncleanliness, and above all to see little children growing up untutored, save in the reverse of what we recognise as right, is to feel heart-

broken for the "evils to come" that must spring from such neglect of the "stranger within our gates."

Hospitality, which has perished as a personal virtue to a large degree, must now devolve on the community. It is not to its interest that it should be neglected. Especially would I point out with all the strength I possess, the folly of indiscriminate herding together of the sexes, without the commonest precautions for decency and sanitation. If it does not pay to have in every town a lodging-house for single women, under sufficient control to secure decency, such a lodging-house should be provided. To this the married women with children might with advantage be admitted, for if a father cannot provide a decent home for his wife and children, he ought not to drag them [Pg 247] down with him, but to be glad if they are a little better provided for. If women were accommodated apart from men, proper sanitary provision for each sex would be easier to arrange. It would be no hardship to insist on separating the sexes, for a man can always, with a little extra exertion, obtain a furnished apartment for himself and family, and though these also need careful sanitary inspection and are open to many evils, they do, at any rate, preserve a vestige of family life, and there is not that indiscriminate herding together of the sexes, which is a cover for all sorts of immorality, as well as a danger to sanitation.[133] I believe, from personal investigation, extended to towns in different parts of England, that it is exceptional to find a town that has any adequate provision for lodging single women apart from men—except as a matter of charity in more or less restricting institutions. Yet the preponderance of single women, necessitated by the excess of one sex over the other, implies, without widowhood and desertion, a [Pg 248] floating population of women who fall an easy prey to wrong conditions. If a woman is not the carefully-guarded inmate of a sheltering home, on whom devolves the duty of caring for her? Surely on the manhood of the nation. The community that fails to shield its women to the utmost of its power will either be roused to its duty by the trumpet call of flagrant wrong, or will perish by decay of manhood and of the family.

There are not wanting signs that such decay is upon us. If side by side with large aggregations of men, living under insanitary and unnatural conditions, we allow the mixed common lodging-house—unclean in every sense of the word, what can we expect?

I do not mean to imply that it is impossible to live, even as a single woman, a moral life in a common lodging-house, or that many of the proprietors do not do their best to secure morality. But if, in any stratum of society, men and women herded together under such conditions, it would be only exceptional characters that could stand the strain. Young men and women can, and do, go and live together in common lodging-houses. You may go in on Sunday afternoons and find crowds of young people, not all inmates, but all imbibing the fatal atmosphere of unrestrained vile talk. In some of these lodging-houses older women live who make a practice of tempting in [Pg 249] younger girls, who thus are lost. It would be much more easy to control many public evils if lodging-houses were provided, decent and sanitary, and the sexes kept distinct.[134] We exercise control over the inn, but the lodging-house, which is the hostel of the travelling working-man, is not even sanitary in many cases.

We did not feel able to eat breakfast under such conditions. I waited for my friend in the living-room, and an amusing incident occurred. One of my room-mates came down in a skirt—forgetting her top skirt. But she had not forgotten another adornment, namely, a huge pocket suspended round her waist behind, which proclaimed her as a "moucher"! She exclaimed:—

"Look what I've been and done! I've been over to the shop like this! Good job a 'bobby' didn't see me!"

There was room enough in this capacious pocket to "pinch" any number of articles, but we will write her down "beggar" not "thief"!

We left the children, undressed and unwashed, but some of them breakfasting, at nine o'clock, and found our way to a cheap restaurant where we got a good plain breakfast for fourpence each.

Then we returned home to sundry necessary ablutions, as prelude to a civilised existence. Alas! for those who cannot escape, but must needs drift. Whither?

[Pg 250] It must be remembered that to a woman, for respectable existence, cleanliness is an absolute necessity. An unemployed man may obtain work at various occupations to which dirt is no hindrance. In fact, to some occupations, respectability would be a bar. But a woman must "look tidy," or no one will employ her. Therefore conditions destructive to cleanliness are for her equivalent to forcing her down lower and lower into beggary and vice. Once at a certain stage she cannot rise, "no one would have me in their house," say, rightly enough, poor miserable creatures "with scarcely a rag to their back." Those in this lodging-house were not so badly off, but why? Because they had learned to prey on society that rejected them. Each single woman was probably supported by that foolish "charity" that acts as a salve to the conscience of those who pity but do not bless the poor.

II. In a Northern City.

When shall we apply common sense to the daily matters of town life? Not till we recognise that a community is a unit, composed of many parts, but when one suffers, all suffer.

Having occasion to visit a northern city to address important gatherings on social questions, I determined to devote one evening, previous to speaking, to social investigation. I desired to find a woman, if possible a lady, living in the district, willing to dress up and go with me. As, however, my friends failed to find me one, I had to be content to go alone, shadowed by a policeman in [Pg 251]

plain clothes. My object was to find out where I should have to sleep if I arrived at night as a stranger able to pay 6*d*. for my bed. The city is a very old one, and, as usual, in the ancient parts houses are huddled together. I visited some of the worst streets, and have never anywhere before seen such closely packed humanity. Streets of houses back to back were huddled under the shelter of a large flour mill working day and night, and filling the air with dust. Some houses could never have daylight. Most of the workers in the mills and factories came, I was told, from these narrow streets, and some of the firms were very rich. It seemed to me likely to be a hot-bed of consumption, to say nothing of vice and crime. At the hour at which I went, between nine and ten, most of the houses were closely shuttered, and few people were in the streets, except a few lads and lasses who were courting at street corners. The friendly "bobby" told me, however, of turbulent times and sudden brawls, making this the worst quarter of the city. After public-house closing was probably a lively time. He informed me that there were in the city but two lodging-houses where women were taken at all. Both were common lodging-houses, and very low places. It required a guide to find them. One was in a court up an entry out of a narrow main street. I had to go alone, for it would have roused suspicion had my guide accompanied me. After knocking at one or two wrong doors I found it at last. The door opened into a large kitchen packed full of men and women. I enquired timidly if a bed was to be had. "No, we are quite full," shouted some one. "Come in, you can have half my bed," shouted a man. This raised a laugh. The company gazed curiously at me. I asked if there was anywhere else where a woman could get a lodging, declining the proffered honour. I was told a name previously heard from the policeman, and thanking the informant turned away gladly. "You'd better share along of me," sang out the man, and rather hurriedly I beat a retreat to my friendly "shadow." The other house was still harder to find. I could not have retraced my way through the maze of lanes and entries. My companion said he would walk down the street in front of me to indicate the door, and then would return and wait. A narrow dirty lane with houses on one side only, had in it some of the smallest cottages I have ever seen. One of these had a few sweets and eatables in the window, and was indicated as the place where "the landlady" lived. Knocking, I was told to come in, and in the minute room, shop and living room, lying on a wooden couch was a very dirty woman with a still dirtier child. She was "the landlady"! She looked at me and said she would take me in. I was to go two doors lower down the street. I found I had to pay her 6*d*. for a bed. There was only accommodation for five single women. [Pg 252]

Going down the street to the house indicated, I found myself in a moderate-sized kitchen such as you find in a house of the olden times, low but fairly large. A sink was partitioned off in the corner. A man was cutting up wood, and one or two women and children were there. They were talking about a man who had gone away deserting his wife and children. One asked if I had not my man with me. I said "No." They had seen my "bobby" friend pass. They said a man had passed. I said "I thought he was a bobby." They said, "Right you are," and appeared to accept me. I got a tea-pot and made myself some tea, and cut (with a borrowed knife) some bread and butter. Thus making myself at home I could observe the place and company. It was fairly clean for such places; the company, both in appearance and language was low, and I was glad I was not going to stay the night. It would probably have proved much the same as the lodging-house in which I spent the second night when on five days' tramp.[135] Having used my eyes well, after about half an hour, I said I was going out, and left not to return, joining my policeman friend. He told me this was the only other accommodation in all that large city for women. He added that there was, however, a charitable home or shelter, and if they found friendless women on the streets at night they usually sent them there. [Pg 253]

It was the same old story, absence of decent sanitary self-respecting accommodation for women. No "charity" can replace this. Rescue homes pick up those who *have fallen*. [Pg 254]

The policeman told me much about the general condition of the city. He said a municipal lodging-house was much wanted; that there was no accommodation for travellers save common lodgings, often dreadfully crowded and unsanitary. "I will let you have a look round one," he said. "I will introduce you, and you must have a good look to see if your 'man' is there!"

Accordingly he took me into an ordinary dwelling house at the corner of a street. A boarded-off sanded passage led to a small room hardly as large as in an ordinary dwelling house. The wooden seating round the walls was filled with men, most smoking. They stood up and stared at me and I at them. "You can't see your man," said the bobby. "No, he isn't here," I replied. So I followed him elsewhere. He told me all the lodging-houses were of this character, and insufficient in number. A good lodging-house would be a boon, for in the holes and corners and narrow lanes where those common lodging-houses are found, police discipline is very difficult. By this time it was about 9.30 P.M., and I returned to my friends for ablution and a change of raiment, able to give point from personal experience to my remarks on the following day.

CHAPTER VII. [Pg 255]

LONDON INVESTIGATIONS.

I. London Lodgings.

I have been deterred from specimening women's lodgings in London by this difficulty—that one

could not be sure of emerging in a fit condition to be received into the house of respectable friends.

Being anxious, however, to find out something about them, previous to speaking at a public meeting, at about 8 P.M. one evening, I started from near one of the principal stations, with my son to shadow me. He was dressed as a working man, and I as a woman of the vagrant class, fairly decent. I was supposed to have arrived in London and to be seeking a night's shelter. I crossed the street to enquire of an old applewoman where a bed was to be had. Her answer was not very encouraging. "There is a lodging-house for women at —— Street, but it's a bad place. I wouldn't advise you to go there if you are respectable. There is another in —— Street, it's a charity place." We determined to try to find both. We found the bad one with difficulty, and were again warned by a neighbour. So I did not venture there. Some low streets near appeared to be frequented by doubtful characters. We sought the "charity place." It was respectable, but, for one who was an investigator, not desirable. I might have tried it, but found on enquiry the price was above my purse, 8*d.* a night! Hardly a "charity," therefore, though doubtless a boon to more wealthy women.

We determined next to find out (as after repeated enquiry we could hear of no other lodging-house) whether if I had happened to be really stranded in London, I could at that hour get into the tramp ward. I passed down through a crowded street with booths and a market. "Poor thing," said one woman, whom I asked for the "Spital." "Have you got to go *there*." I escaped questioning, and further on asked again.

"Yes, you can get in,"—but again the look of pity. I thought it argued badly for my treatment if I went in. I found the place, but did not apply. I found I should have to walk a considerable distance to the tramp ward. I could not on that day enter, not having time to spare for two nights detention, but it was this tramp ward which I afterwards specimened, and my experiences in it justified the pity.[136]

I rejoined my son; we had satisfied ourselves that respectable lodgings for women at my price were at any rate not easily found. Time was passing; we heard there were lodgings in the city. We had already spent over an hour in search, so to save time, we did what a tramp would not, took 'bus to the heart of London. There by the simple expedient of "asking a bobby," I at once found what I wanted. Up a narrow entry from one of London's well-known thoroughfares was a lodging-house for men, side by side with a lodging-house for "women only." So far good. I need not have my son with me. So about 10 P.M. I sent him for a walk to return before 11 P.M., and entered the court alone. I found that to secure a bed I must go into the *men's* lodging-house and pay my money—6*d.*—to a man who was playing cards with several others. No rude language was used, the men eyed me, that was all. I paid and passed in next door. Upstairs was a small room in which a number of women, all with their hats on save one—the "deputy"—were sitting. Some passed in and out, but being a stranger I was not welcome, and was told to "go forward." This was downstairs; and I found myself, after some turns I cannot remember, in a long low cellar room, with concrete floor, very dirty looking. A window at one end was half underground. A fireplace on the right had bars and hobs, but no oven or range or proper kitchen convenience. This was, however, the living and cooking room. Plenty of garments were hanging up to dry on strings. Under the tables were heaps of dirt and *débris*. A number of women were present sitting on forms, who seemed to be hawkers, or women gaining some scanty livelihood. The general conditions were much the same as in northern lodging-houses, where 4*d.* is charged for a bed, only the cooking facilities were poorer and the price was higher. I learned that in London a bed was not easily got under 6*d.* "It took a good bit of getting," one woman said. The sanitary state was no better than in the north, and I was thankful I had not to stay the night. Towards eleven the deputy came with a bunch of keys, calling out "Anyone for bed." I thought it best to escape, and making an excuse rejoined my son.

My remarks on this adventure at a subsequent meeting led to enquiry into the state of this lodging-house. It was reported to be "regularly inspected twice a week and nothing wrong with it." All I can say is that either the visits of the inspector must be expected and prepared for, *or*, as I have frequently remarked, inspection leads to purblindness. "Anything is good enough for such inmates" comes to be the official view.[137]

Wishing to satisfy myself that I had not been mistaken, and as I had that time no fellow-workers, I got my son subsequently to enter the male side of the same lodging-house. His account not only confirmed mine, but he found things worse than I had stated. The men's side had the same low half cellar, not properly lighted or ventilated, deficient cooking accommodation, dirty floor and *débris*. In addition, the habit of smoking and spitting rendered the place abominable. The deputy appeared to have no control, indeed, he laughed at extra filthy jests as if they were to be enjoyed. My son said he should have been afraid to specimen the sleeping accommodation. He has visited other lodging-houses—one where a notice is up "Gents are requested not to sleep in their boots"! —a notice often disobeyed. He is acquainted with Rowton Houses. He says this is a particularly bad specimen. So after all my judgment does not appear to have been at fault. A low standard of inspection prevails in many places besides London; but the place itself was unfit for the purpose for which it was used.[138]

II. In a London Tramp Ward.[139]

Towards six o'clock on a pleasant evening in March, my companion and I found our way to the casual ward of a London workhouse, selected because, on the testimony of Guardians, it was

supposed to be well-regulated and ideal. *Real* beds and *porcelain* baths, perfect cleanliness and good management would surely afford comfortable conditions. We did not go together, as I was announced to speak publicly and known to take a companion, and it might therefore be difficult to escape detection. But we were, as it happened, the only inmates, save a woman going out in the morning.

The ward was spotlessly clean. The brown bread and gruel, at first glance, not unappetising. Alas! the bread was sour. Food first, and hot bath to follow, wet hair, though more time than usual to dry. Clean nightgown, and actually a bed. So far good. [Pg 260]

Locked in at about seven o'clock to solitary meditation, I rejoiced to have found better conditions. Alas! I had not reckoned on the physical effects of the unwholesome combination of the sour bread, followed by hot bath, and backed up by imperfectly dried hair. Before long I was violently sick, and every portion of my first meal returned. In the darkness it was impossible to see if there was any means of communication to beg a welcome drink of water. Presently my friend began coughing and groaning. It seems the effect of the bath and wet head on her was to produce a violent cold, headache, and sore throat. Then in another cell a woman began retching and coughing badly. In the morning we learned she also had been upset by the bath when she entered, but no complaints were noticed. Her cough sounded like asthma or bronchitis, and very bad. We asked her why she did not see a doctor. "No tramps were allowed a doctor," she said. [140] She intended when out to try to get into an infirmary. She had been in three days, and could not eat.

This information, received after we had got up at 5.30, was somewhat disheartening, for we were both ill. Breakfast none of us touched. Our fellow tramp played with hers, pointing at the thick scum on the unappetising gruel (very salt), served in a worn enamel mug, with no spoon. "God alone knows," she said. "They will have to answer for it." She told us she was detained a third night because she had been in another casual ward during the month, and the officer "spotted" her.[141] She was evidently a regular casual. "They all have to do it" (*i.e.*, to go from ward to ward), she said, describing how other wards were better and how harsh this one was—and no one came in who could help it. We asked how it was she came in herself. She said she had had "business" in that part of the town, and could not reach another ward. She said she was quite clean, as she had "been down" the previous week-end. She said the treatment had made her ill; at the time we hardly believed her. Later we knew. Seven o'clock, and a summons to work. We began cheerfully under charge of an old woman. But already some conception that we were under a hard taskmistress was dawning upon us. "Be sure you only do what you are told," said the woman. The ward was apparently clean, but the whole must be scrubbed. My portion was to do four cells and a long, long passage leading past eighteen cells (nine on a side), and two bath-rooms, and a lavatory with two w.c.'s. Cloths, bucket, and soda were provided, no aprons till later. I had a kneeling pad, my friend none. She was told off to the bath-rooms. [Pg 261] [Pg 262]

It seems such a simple thing to tell that it is hard to convey the real conditions. Presently our taskmistress came round. She was not unkind, but one of those women to whom, in ordinary health, work is a joy in itself, and the utmost scrupulosity of finicking cleanliness a thing to be exacted as a matter of course. For every single detail a standard was to be attained, at whatever cost to flesh and blood. For instance, all blankets to be re-folded to an exact shape, and laid so—no otherwise. To work hard, all day and every day, would probably be to her no task, and the difference between working hard on a full and on a meagre diet had never dawned upon her. Sickness was to be discredited—probably a "dodge"—in any case, the fault of previous misdoings. Work was to be exacted to the very last farthing. Faithfully she did her duty—as she knew it. Nine hours' solid work (five in the morning, four in the afternoon)—that was what the law exacted—and she got it.

Now, to work as a charwoman on a comfortable breakfast, with a pause for lunch, and prospective dinner, and the opportunity to chat and "take your own time" is one thing. To work for a taskmistress with prison in prospect for the slightest shirking—with no pause and no food—is quite another. The matron knew I had been very sick—her assistant told her—and also that I had had no food. "That old tramp, whom she couldn't bear," as she told my friend, "had been eating stale fish; that was what made her sick. She could tell that sort, she always knew what people were like." This was so humorous that it decidedly relieved the situation! We compared notes as we refilled buckets, but did not dare to loiter or show knowledge of one another. Walls had ears, or, at any rate, keyholes were handy. So we worked steadily, my friend's fate being worse, as she worked under the taskmistress's eye. She won prime favour, but never, never, in all her working days, had she worked so hard.[142] She cleaned the bath-rooms and a whole flight of stairs, and then was put on the private sitting-room, to be done most particularly, not even the old woman attendant could be trusted to do it, it was usually the matron's own work; but she had been ill, and it had "got neglected." How hard my friend laboured she alone can tell. Every inch was gone over many times under the vigilant eyes. Meanwhile, the "old tramp" laboured as diligently as possible—when the eyes were upon her! They detected some signs of "scamping," when her back was turned, so doubtless I was "an old hand!" The fact of the matter was, that without such careful "scamping" I positively could not have sustained the long, long hours of labour. Four bucketsful of water—one for each cell—seven for the long passage, two for lavatory and w.c.'s, brasses to clean, paint to dust. It seemed a Sisyphean task, no sooner ended than a new one was exacted. I wondered if by carefully husbanding strength I could hold out. At dinner-time, twelve o'clock, we stopped for an hour. I could not touch food. My friend, though fresh from the tantalising smell of beef steak and onions, managed to eat a small portion of bread and cheese, washed down by cold water. Our tea and sugar had been confiscated. [Pg 263] [Pg 264]

Tired! That is no word for it! We had already done a charwoman's day's work. My friend could hardly speak, and I had no strength save to lay my head on the table and wonder how I should survive the afternoon.

One o'clock and hard labour. My friend, on finishing two bedrooms, was put to clean the store-room. So weary was she, that towards the close even her taskmistress saw that she had overrated her strength, and gave a sign of grace by saying she would help her to finish. Meanwhile, the "old tramp" must do the day-room—it only served her right for the way she "tickled the boards!"

Five long and very ornamental forms and two long tables, to be scrubbed on every inch of surface to immaculate whiteness with soap and water. The floor to be scrubbed and every place dusted. [Pg 265] Kneeling had become such torture that the straining of the body up to scrub the under-surface of the forms almost produced faintness. It must be remembered that all this work was exacted without a particle of food. The matron had come in at dinner-time and seen my food untasted. I told her I could not touch it. She looked at it as if it was some rejected dainty. "What a pity," she said—not at all as if it was a pity I could not eat, but a pity to leave such good food!

Flesh and blood found it hard to bear the long four hours' labour; over and over again I failed quite to please my taskmistress and tried her patience. She confided to my friend that she should have to keep out of the room or lose her temper. She did not recognise the arm growing weary, the heart sick and faint. But she did recognise the work of my friend, and rewarded it by a cup of tea and two slices of bread and butter. To eat these she was shut up in the store-room, and was by no means to tell "that tramp" how she had been favoured! She did, however, manage to run in and give me a drink of tea, but such was my internal state, that it made me immediately violently sick. This was when work was over, fortunately. For one blessed three-quarters of an hour before I finished the taskmistress was away. She was very suspicious as to how I had done the work in her absence. It passed muster. I did not dare to stop, but certainly "hurried." It was necessary to [Pg 266] survive.

At last—five o'clock and respite. We both were more dead than alive. It must be felt to be realised.

Again we could not touch the food, but my friend had had a little. Again no notice was taken of any symptoms of illness on my part, but a lozenge was given my friend for her throat, as she was "prime favourite."

At last 5.30, and we might seek bed. My friend was allowed to wear some of her underlinen, as she had been very cold the previous night. The "old tramp" must do as best as she could. What happened was another night of long misery, desperate sickness on an empty stomach—no sounds save the London sounds without, and the groaning and sighing of my tortured friend within, close by in another cell.

Long, long hours; would God it were morning! The cross-bars of the window faintly seen against the sky spoke of the cross that is never absent, of the woes of men and of Him Who is crucified in the least of these, His brethren. When will the long torture of the ages end, and men care for the poor? At last the torment ended—6.30. It was possible to rinse the mouth with water. Oh, what it is to know thirst and sickness combined!

Every limb ached; my poor friend was no better; her knees were too sore to touch. But soon there would be freedom. We ate no food, of course,—but welcome liberty! To me the worst agony was [Pg 267] the last half-hour of patient waiting. No words can tell the passionate longing that seized me to breathe free breaths. No such inward struggle may come to those inured to hard conditions. Yet for them, also, the summer life is free, and for freedom they sacrifice much. Who knows how a tramp feels, save God? At last we are free; our money, tea, and sugar are returned. Shelter and friends are near.

But for them? At this hour a procession of women issues from our casual wards—hundreds, perhaps thousands, all over our land. Their faces are set in the grey dawn—whither? Not to the tramp ward again—not at once—it cannot be borne immediately; later it may be again a necessity. Now anything is preferable. Prison? It has lost its terrors—it cannot be harder.[143] It is only an incident in life to "go down." Sin? What's the odds? It may pay for a decent bed and food. The river? That is best of all, if one could manage to face it. Silence, oblivion, and the mercy of the God above Who knows. Yet life is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing to behold the sun. To be a beggar is best—spring stirs already—God opens hearts. Food and shelter may be begged as "charity." It is best to fall into the hands of God, not into the hands of man. The vagrant life is sweetest. This is how tramps are made.[144]

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Note.

The severity of the treatment experienced in this tramp ward was such that it brought on hæmorrhage, from which the author had not suffered for years. She was obliged to remain in London ill, and to have medical attendance. Dr. Jane Walker and Mrs. Percy Bunting can vouch for the facts. Her fellow tramp was also ill and did not recover until she had had a complete rest. It was a month before the author regained her strength. If the effects of the treatment were such on those going in with full health and strength (from a life in which food and rest had continued till the last moment) able to return to good food and every comfort, how must the destitute suffer

under such treatment? They drift and die, as the awful mortality from common lodging-houses proves.[145]

CHAPTER VIII.

[Pg 269]

A SYMPOSIUM IN A COMMON LODGING-HOUSE.

I.

My friend and I have the rights of friendship in a lodging-house which we frequently visit. The inmates of lodging-houses are often very dull on Sundays. They cannot walk the streets, full of well-dressed people. No one can have any idea who has not tried, how they welcome a friendly visit, appreciate the gift of some magazines, and how often one or another is in want of food, or even a few pence short of a bed. Few beg on Sunday except from sheer necessity. This particular lodging-house therefore, we tried to visit every Sunday, to sing for or with them, and talk—not preach—to them. It was the "married and single quarters," which consisted of two long low rooms in an old building in very bad repair. I do not know whether it has anything to do with our frequent visits, but the place is a great deal cleaner and tidier than when first we went. It has been painted and whitewashed, and the floor seems to be kept cleaner. But this leaves much to be desired! The women's sitting-room upstairs (which always contains as many men as women) is [Pg 270] a room with a coke fire, the fumes from which are often almost overpowering. A bench round the room, and tables covered with metal for protection constitute the only furniture. The claim to be a "sitting-room" consists in the fact that no cooking is done there, but plenty of eating. There is but one gas-jet, and you can hardly see in the farthest corners. A stair out of the room leads upstairs, where, I am assured there are "good clean beds," a room for single women, and cubicles for married folk, who pay 6*d.*, and 1*d.* for each child who sleeps with them, the unmarried paying 4*d.*

Poor as it is, this room contains "the aristocracy," for though both rooms appear to be free to all, you find above the regular residents who are residing some time, though some of these even have a preference for the democracy. Yet one can hardly understand why, for the room below must be uncomfortable in the extreme. It is, to begin with, a half cellar room approached by a stair, but leading out into the yard which contains the sanitary arrangements. The roof is in such bad repair that the laths of the ceiling are giving way, and water often drips from an imperfect pipe. The position of the doors ensures a through draught when they are opened, which is constantly happening. A dark entry with no door gives access to a room containing the lavatory accommodation—a set of wash-basins, above each of which is inscribed the motto, "Be just." This room, which is quite open to everyone, is the sole lavatory accommodation for both men and [Pg 271] women. In the centre of the room is a huge stove, the heat from which is terrific, and makes this part of the room near the solitary gas-jet almost unbearable. Yet these two rooms accommodate about sixty inmates, and I am assured that the cooking arrangements are so deficient that they cannot get their food except in turns, and dinner is often delayed till very late in the afternoon for this reason. The place is, however, always full, for it is the cheapest place in town, and the beds, I am told, are far better than many others where the sitting room and lavatory accommodation is superior. There are clean sheets once a week! A woman can keep herself respectable, as the deputy and his wife endeavour to exclude prostitutes.

In these rooms are gathered every Sunday a motley assembly of men, women, and usually a few children. The inmates change, but there are always enough of the old to carry on the tradition of friendship, and some few are permanent. There is a living to be had in a lodging-house for a woman who can repair clothes, or earn a little by cleaning the rooms, or do a little washing.

To this lodging-house I took one Sunday night a letter "On Tramps, by a Tramp," which appeared in *The Daily News*, and reads as follows:—

> "Sir,—I am a tramp, a man without a habitat. No outcry uprose in winter while the East End sheltered the tramp. When he trudges west after waste food and a grassy couch, [Pg 272] the press rises up in arms. Each one of these 'bundles of rags' on the grass has a history, some an interesting one. I have been despoiled of the fruitage of my labours; have acted the role of errand lad, shop assistant, clerk, traveller, market-man, barber, canvasser, entertainer, mummer, song-writer, and playwright. I have dwelt within workhouse, asylum, and prison-walls; have scrubbed the filthy, tonsured the imbecile, tended the aged, soothed the dying. A pedlar of toys, many a time I have enjoyed a night on a turfy bed, the stars my coverlet, the hedge fruit my morning meal, my bath the shallow stream. Nature suns the nomad as well as the traveller. Derelicts, wastrels, paupers, pests, vagrants, bundles of rags! dub us what men will, we are human. There are tramps and loafing tramps; ill-clad and well-tailored loafers. Make all work, west and east. Loafing is infectious.
>
> "Rowton House.
>
> "O. Quiz."

We visited downstairs first, and, sitting on the table, as the cleanest place, giving a view of the

company, I read it in a tone of voice calculated to reach the further corners of the room. It elicited great admiration. "That chap knows what he's writing about"; "He's put it well together." I joined in the praise, and told them I had come to get their opinion on tramp wards. I wanted them to help me for a speech I was going to give on vagrancy, and I had in my mind a good many things to say, and wanted to know if they were all right. One man burst out about detention. He wanted to know what chaps were to do if they were kept in till eleven if they went for a night's shelter. He said a man couldn't get work, and all he could do was to walk ten or fifteen miles to another workhouse, and then he was no better off. I mentioned a neighbouring workhouse where they were detained two nights, and let out at an early hour. But they appeared to dislike two nights' detention upon such poor diet, and said they had "no right" to keep a man more than one night. One said that by favour he had got out at 5.30, and that was much better; it gave a man a chance.

I next proposed discussion on the diet. One and all waxed eloquent on this topic. They declared it was "starvation," bread and water, scalded meal in some workhouses. "It wouldn't hurt them to give us a drink of tea." Most of the gruel went to the pigs and there wasn't bread enough to keep a man from being hungry. Prison fare was better. "What about the tasks set?" I said. "Three sleepers to saw," said one man; "15 cwt. of stone to break," said another. "It isn't good enough." One man reckoned you could *earn* 3*s*. 6*d*. for sawing that amount of wood (two saw together). "How much do you reckon the bed and food is worth?" I said. "Bed!" broke out one, "you gets two blankets and bare boards; sometimes three in a cell. Twopence is all it's worth, and 3*d*. the food." "Then you think they make something out of you?" "Yes," replied another, "you could get 2*s*. 6*d*. in the roads for less stone-breaking. A chap goes in tired and hungry, because he's nowhere to go, and they set him hard work, and he comes out worse." "What about the bath?" "The bath's all right, but they stove your clothes, and they come out all soft and creased." "Then they can tell you've been in the workhouse?" I said. "Yes, or in jail." "And that doesn't help a man to get work." "I should think not!" was the response. One man waxed eloquent with indignation. "I was passing a workhouse when the chaps was coming out," he said. "I hadn't been in myself, but I seed one or two I knew and they had on good clothes the day before, they were all crumpled" (here he took hold of his trouser leg and creased it up), "and burnt in places. One man showed me his shoes; they had even put *them* in the oven, and the toes was turned up with the heat; he couldn't get them on his feet and had to walk barefoot." There was a chorus of indignation. The verdict was that tramp wards were to be avoided. The open was better, but a "cold shop" any night of the year, but a man could go on his way any time he liked.[146]

I then explained to them the German system of Relief Stations and Workmen's Homes. They were much interested and thought it excellent. They gave appreciative particulars of experiments in this direction in Manchester, and of an "ex-convict" who "knowed what a chap's feelings were," who had during the last winter opened a large room every night and let in as many men as it would hold, and let them stay till morning. I had not heard of this before. They said hundreds were turned away from the Church Army Shelter, where they could chop wood for bed and board.

I then introduced the subject of Colonies to set a man on his feet. Opinion seemed in favour, but not enthusiastic. Thanking them for their frankness, we left them after singing "Abide with me," the tramp's favourite hymn, and went upstairs.

II.

We spent an hour over a lively discussion which would have done credit to any debating society. I read the letter as before, and it was received with admiration. "That chap's a champion writer." They told me about one part of London that was "sleeping-out" quarters; one park went by the significant name of "The Lousy Park." I wondered if its frequenters by day knew this. I asked them why a man preferred to sleep out to going to the tramp ward. A man got up and stood in the middle of the room and waxed indignant. Food and detention, as below, came in for scorn. "The Local Government Board will give you 2*s*. 6*d*. for breaking 10 cwt. of stone, and *they* gives you 15 cwt. and prison if you don't do your task." "A man comes in who has walked fifteen miles, and they give him bare boards to sleep on," broke in another. "How is a fellow to get work when he's let out at eleven, I should like to know; he can only tramp to another workhouse." "There was a councillor once," broke in another, "he met a chap in the road, and he says, 'Young man, change clothes with me. I've got plenty of good clothes at home,' then he changes clothes and goes in the tramp ward; he's quite upset by what he sees, and when he's coming out he says, 'You can have my share, I'm going to have a good breakfast.'" "Yes," said another, "that was Councillor S—— of S——, and he did *give* it to the guardians." "What about prison fare?" I said. "Prison is better; you get good soup, better food all round."[147] "And what about the work?" I said. "They don't make you work harder than you're able. Hard work may be oakum picking." "The worst of prison is the being kept in," broke in another. "You can do with a week, but a fortnight is too much of it." Then it suddenly seemed to occur to them that they had been "giving themselves away." "We're a nice lot," he said, "prison and workhouse, but I've been in prison more than once; I'm not ashamed to own it." Wishing to "save their face," as the Chinese say, I suggested that it was not hard for a man who was down to get into prison. "That's true for you," he replied. "I got a month once for sleeping out.[148] I was going to N——, where they keep a week at May day" [He is a cripple who gets his living by singing] "and I went the night before. The workhouse was full and the lodging-houses were full, so we had to sleep out. We goes to a heath that was common ground, but there was a bit of private ground near it, and we gets among the bushes. A bobby comes round. 'You might let us stop,' I says; 'we can't get in.' 'Keep where you are and don't let any other police see

you,' he says. In about five minutes he comes back; 'Come along of me,' he says, and locks us up. I gets a month for that, 'trespassing and sleeping out.'" I remarked that in court the prisoner's side was often not properly heard. "Yes," he said, waxing indignant. "When they says, 'Any questions to ask the officer?' I says, 'Didn't you tell me to stay where I was and not let the officers see me?' 'No, I did not,' he says. 'Very well,' I said, but I knowed what he had been after—he had been down to the police-station and told on us, and the superintendent had told him to lock us up." We all agreed it was a mean trick. "They'll kiss the book and swear themselves red in the face," said another. "I've seen 'em, they know they're not telling truth, but it's 'We must believe an officer,' and if you say a word it's 'Wow, wow, wow'"—and with a significant gesture he showed how the magistrates put down a man who attempted self-defence, and all the room laughed in sympathy. "Perhaps you've had a drop of drink," he said, "but you're walking steady; an officer puts his hand on your shoulder and gives you a shove, if you say anything he has you, 'Drunk and disorderly!' A magistrate once saw an officer take a man who was quite quiet, and he followed him. The man got let off." [Pg 278]

I was able to cap their story by a true incident that had come under my own observation. A quiet little man, devoted to his wife and children, and decidedly henpecked and without vices, was taking a country walk one Sunday and saw a knot of men in a quarry. Interested in their proceedings he got on a hill and watched them. He and they were raided in by the police; they were gambling and he was charged with "aiding and abetting." The police swore he was signalling! As a matter of fact when suddenly arrested he lifted his arms and said, "My God!" This was interpreted as a "warning." It was only through the good character given him by his parson that he got off. The room appreciated the story. "What about relieving officers?" I said, feeling the way was open. A look of unutterable disgust crept into their faces. A woman came forward and began to relate how they treated an old man, but she was not allowed to speak, for everyone had something at the tip of his tongue. "If the public knew their carryings on and how they blackguards you," one summed up, "there'd be a stop put to it, it's shameful." Evidently if a policeman's reputation was bad, that of a poor law officer was worse. "They've no right to do it," was the general verdict. Prison again came in for preference. "You've nothing to do but walk up to an officer and hit him in the ear-hole, and you'll get sent down for free lodgings. Breaking plate-glass windows is the way they do it in London."[149] [Pg 279]

I asked some questions about preference with regard to plank, chain, or straw beds to change the subject, but all agreed that "they weren't worth calling *beds*." "You do get a *shelter*," said one, raising his hand and arching it to imply there was something over your head, "but *beds*! You get the floor and two blankets, perhaps three in a cell if they are full.[150] I think they ought to give you that free; it's not worth 2*d*. The Salvation Army give you what they call a bunk—like a coffin, and oilcloth to put over you—for 2*d*.! That's charity for you and religion!"

I propounded the German Relief Station system as below. It was received with great attention and warm appreciation. "It would be ever so much better," they all agreed. "The Salvation Army has a metropole at Leeds," one volunteered. Another referred appreciatively to Central Hall, Manchester. "You can go in at 3.0 and work and get out in the morning early." I mentioned earning tickets for food and shelter. "That would do for us men," he said, "but not for women—they'd give anything for drink." A chorus of protest and laughter greeted him. "You're very hard on the ladies," I said. "You're wife won't thank you for a character." "But it's true," he said. It was a warm subject, so I changed it by asking about accommodation for women. I learnt in reply some startling facts. It was stated that in some towns, notably Leeds, women could not get sleeping accommodation. Lodging-houses had been pulled down where women used to be taken, and they actually could not get shelter. "It's harder on them than us; we can protect ourselves, but a woman gets run in." Evidently here is a great social lack. Women's lodging-houses—and what can be more needful for the morals of the community? I asked about accommodation in this town. "They take women everywhere," was the reply. "Not everywhere," said another; "there are not so many that take women as there used to be." All agreed that accommodation was short for women in many towns, and might be for men, but of that they were not sure, only they knew numbers were taken up for sleeping out. "Four men were taken up for sleeping in a hole near a coal-pit the other day," they said. I suggested prices of beds might go up, but this did not seem to have happened. 4*d*. a bed was the standard, but 6*d*. for a married couple was not always accepted, and children were charged for. "I have two children in an Industrial Home," said one. [Pg 280] [Pg 281]

I mentioned the Labour Colony, but though I sang its praises, it did not seem to be very acceptable, though tolerable if a step to better things. Regular tramps known by the name of "hedge sparrows" could always get a living. Either "he" or "she" hawked or "did some'at" and got a living for both. *They* never went into the workhouse, they "knew better." It was "us poor folks that was hard up had to go in."[151]

"How about the regular workhouse diet," I said. "No one gets fat on it." "See them come out, they can hardly crawl." "The pigs get most of the porridge." "Porridge and skim till we're sick of it." "They're very hard on us young men." "'Marjery Jane'—that's what we calls it—and bread." "Bread and cheese for your Sunday dinner." A chorus of disapprobation! Evidently to be an inmate was not inviting. One told a legendary story of a guardian who stood by when a man complained of his porridge and argued with another guardian who wished to change his food. "What would become of the pigs?" the guardian was reported to have said as a clinching argument! The humane guardian was reported to have gone off the Board in disgust! One woman began to relate that a workhouse existed where they were allowed rations freely and it didn't cost the guardians half so much, but she was promptly put down by two others, a man and a woman. Such a thing was out of the question. *He* had been in the union she mentioned and it was no such [Pg 282]

thing. Finally she had to admit she had "heard tell of it" but "had not been in herself." I thanked them for their stories and information. I ventured to inquire into a practice I knew existed in the workhouse of selling food.

"A man will do anything for baccy," said one; "if you've been used to it, and are sitting with a roomful of men all smoking you fair crave for it. I'll tell you what. I went into the workhouse for sickness, and all I had was 3*d*. I laid it out 1½*d*. on sugar, 1½*d*. on tea, and I kept selling a bit. I sold my cheese too, eating the dry bread, and when I came out I had half a sovereign! It was cold and wet the day I was going out, and knowing I had been ill the officer said, 'What are you doing, going out such a day; you haven't got nothing to go with.' 'Look here! I've got that!' says I, and shows him the half-sovereign, but he couldn't take it off me!"

Having myself been offered a halfpenny for a screw of sugar in the Tramp Ward I could believe him. I thanked them again for their information, and told them I should try to make a good use of [Pg 283] it, and couldn't "give them away," not knowing any names. We closed our interview by singing "Light in the darkness, sailor," and I spoke a few words about my sincere desire that some change in our country's laws should create a better "life-boat" than the present Tramp Ward.

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CHAPTER IX.

VAGRANCY AND THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION.

If you stand, in the clear fresh dawn of an early summer morning, on a hill-top in the northern country where I live, and look towards the dawn, you see outspread before you a wide stretch of bare green hills, intersected by the dark stone lines of fields. Your eye follows caressingly each dip and fold of the bosom of Mother Earth, beautiful in bareness, the outline clear against the sky. In each nook and hollow lie grey patches, clumps of stone houses, witnesses to human habitation, and blue spires of smoke ascend revealing the hidden lights of homes. From each group arises the tall spire of a mill chimney, not yet belching smoke, and in the valley cluster the giant mills of to-day, each larger than his brother. As the eye takes in each feature, the mind can by a "bird's-eye view" reconstruct history. There far away is the hill top whereon our Celtic forefathers worshipped when all the British were rude dwellers on hills and in dales—*Short shrift to the vagrant of another tribe in those days!* There, over yonder hill, lies a Roman camp, to which leads an old Roman road, civilisation was imposed on barbarism; now roads intersect the [Pg 285] landscape on every side. With communication comes travel, and the vagrant becomes possible. But *vagrancy is not a problem of unsettled and warlike times*.

On yonder hillsides, if the snow lay thinly on them, you could trace even now by disused furrows the patches of arable land, amid fields for pasture, lying round each little clump of houses, speaking of the day of village communities and communal rights. Between the scattered hamlets lay wide stretches of moor. There would then exist survivals of the past savagery, nomads living a wild life like gipsies; or the marks of the new era, pilgrims bound to shrines making use of the roads, roving soldiers, travelling merchants, here and there a vagrant, made so probably by crime, slipping out of his place in society, but *with all the wide stretches of country between villages to choose from if he would*. Such a man, an involuntary vagrant, was looked on with suspicion, his hand against every man. Bands might gather and live in the forests, like Robin Hood and his merry men.

But yet again, you may watch in thought the spread of those grey lines which speak of ownership of the soil. The village sucks in the surrounding country, the very moors become enclosed, *small space is left for the nomad life*.

Watch! The clustering cottages develop into industrial communities, yonder village bears a name [Pg 286] borrowed from Holland, and there still stand the loom cottages empty of looms. Now the landscape is crowded with busy hives of industry, town and country go hand in hand, the farmer and the weaver live side by side or combine the two occupations. Agriculture gives place to pasture for sheep, as wool is needed. The displaced husbandman, after a period of restlessness *in which the vagrant problem first arose*, settles to weaving or kindred industry. None need now wander save by choice, from hereditary nomad taste for liberty, and the bold life of soldier, sailor, or smuggler lies open for such.

But again comes change. The small grey mill rises in the landscape, the clustering village becomes the small town, houses thicken, land grows scarce—what now is to become of the nomad? *He must "take to the road" for nowhere else is left him.* Society no longer wants him, and barely tolerates him. Hospitality, a virtue of scattered communities, dwindles to—the Tramp Ward!! He must needs, if he would travel, turn to prey on the communities who will not recognise him otherwise. He becomes hawker, tinker, pedlar, beggar and thus in his turn acquires a trade. We might let him survive as an interesting relic of the past, and die a natural death, by the catching and cultivation of his children.

But hark! A sudden noise breaks the stillness of morning. A noise like nothing else on earth, a whistle and a boom combined. It is the "buzzer." The landscape has changed again, and there, [Pg 287] the landmark of *the Industrial Revolution*, stands the giant mill; and now comes a rush of human life, clank, clank, clank, the stream of mill-hands in clattering wooden clogs is hastening to work. It is the daily *migration of labour*, the tide morning and night ebbs and flows. Yet no two days will

the stream be alike. Accident, sickness, misfortune, or fault, will each day leave some units stranded, and others take their place, and if you look you see another feature in the landscape, a long line of railway stretches as a link for swift travel between town and town. Here is something *altogether new*. These human units, divorced from native communities, cannot be expected to be readily anchored, and accordingly you see around each ancient community and interspersed with it, crowds of workmen's cottages, *each a tent rather than a home*, taken to-day, and left in a month or two. If you could uncover life and watch it as you do an anthill, you would find that it had attained a new and fresh activity. On every side Humanity is becoming organic. Huge conglomerations which we call cities blacken whole stretches of country, and the feature of the life of most men is *daily migration*. By train, tram, or road, tides of humanity move to toil; every holiday sees crowds covering green fields in pleasure parties, or transported by train. The whole of life has grown *migratory*. Is it not evident that we have here not the ancient problem of the *Tramp*, but the *modern* problem of the *Fluidity of labour*! To expect our Tramp Ward—the *repressive provision of a stationary society* for the sparse survivals of a previous age—to cope with the needs of *Migration of Labour* is about as reasonable as it would be to expect the ancient windmill to grind corn for our modern population! *[Pg 288]*

Let us examine the new state of things in reference to that citadel of national life—*the home*. I shall place before you the problem in a startling light, if I ask you whether the present Vagrancy problem is not to a large extent *the disintegration of the home*; and whether, therefore, we are not face to face with the root problem on which the very existence of our civilisation depends, since *by the preservation or extinction of the home a nation stands or falls*.

Right down through all the changes but the last, you would have found the population mainly stationary. Even now the existence of local names, so widely spread that you may have fourteen or fifteen families in a small district of the same surname, reveals the remains of the stationary life. But for good or for evil it has gone. Examine any family you like and it will be the exception to find it whole. Individuals are scattered far and wide when up-grown, perhaps in England, perhaps over the world. Only the stagnating slum population is stationary. And this is not their virtue. If they had a little more initiative they would not stagnate; they form a *pool* of underfed and ill-paid labour, and constitute by far the largest part of the modern problem of the unemployed. The alert and well-trained workman is *migratory*—at the news of a "better shop" he will be off to another town, with or without wife and family. The young man will desert the country side to try his luck in some great centre—the girl may go to service. We no longer *expect* families to stay whole. Greater freedom has brought greater travel, and a relaxing of the bonds of parental discipline. Our streets are crowded nightly by the young, on whom the restless activity of our age has taken such effect that they cannot and will not seek sleep till evening is far advanced. The very "day of rest" is a day of travel. [Pg 289]

What is the result of all this increase of migration? The old inn has become the modern hotel, the occasional "apartment to let" has multiplied a thousand-fold, the seaside resort has sprung up with apparatus of pier and promenade, since we must move about even on a holiday. The whole world is on wheels or on a walking tour. But what about the destitute pedestrian? Is it fair to dub him a *tramp*? Travel he must if he is to live, but truly he is between Scylla and Charybdis. For, unmoored from home and friends, he has on the one side the tender mercies of the Tramp Ward, which are often cruel, and on the other the horrors of the common lodging-house. Society hustles him hither and thither, throwing him a dole; or offering him a prison, if he ventures to sleep out. He can hardly exist at all, unless he is clever enough to prey on the community; he becomes a bundle of rags, fain to lie all night in a London park, or sleep near a brick-kiln. It is "hard lines." If he would die out quietly it would be all right for Society; he would not be missed, no one wants him, and this he feels bitterly. But, unfortunately, his class, in the absence of any provision of Society for his needs, is constantly being recruited. *It is no longer a question of the suppression of hereditary vagrancy.* The vagrant class is microscopic by the side of the *stranded inefficient labourer*, who recruits the necessarily migratory class of the "unemployed." Unless Society will take into account this new factor, it will be the worse for Society. For *every member of a community who is not living a wholesome life is a danger to it*, and the increase and propagation of an underfed, ill-bred, uneducated offspring is the menace of civilisation. [Pg 290]

Let me sound the alarm note as loud as I can, for already evil has gone far. While we have been elaborating costly tramp wards, erecting baths and stoving apparatus, and frightening the genuine tramp away, common lodging-houses have been increasing on every side. The following is the testimony of the Rev. Arthur Dale, of Manchester, and it is not one whit exaggerated:—"The men who habitually live there are almost universally morally bad. Many are married, but have left their wives and families; nearly all are the victims of drink. A few, but very few, are honest. Some are idle, and profess their inability to get up early enough to go to work. Some will work for a day or two and then 'slack.' There are large numbers out of work simply for this cause. Fornication and gambling are both practised largely."[152] Yet in every large town these men are now counted by hundreds, sometimes by thousands, every night. Has not the disintegration of the home proceeded very far? For, by common experience, prosecutions for child maintenance and separation orders as between husband and wife are granted daily, and with terrible facility the marriage bond is practically annulled, and yet the individual is not freed. What is the consequence? The man removes to another town and lives in nominal celibacy. Vice and idleness may make him a *tramp*. He can no longer have a home; for if he takes a partner and rears children they have all the fatal taint of illegitimacy, they will not respect or obey him. The whole of our lower working class is thus becoming leavened with immorality. And what about the woman? The life and death of our nation depends on an awakening to the gravity of the menace that threatens the true home on every side. An unstable society has brought about fear. People [Pg 291]

fear to fall out of employment and be thrust down into the abyss, and hence the custom of *limitation of family*, with all its consequences, is spreading to the upper stratum of the working classes. I cannot recall any one of the many respectable young couples I have known married during the last sixteen years with a large family of living children. Fear has also *postponed marriage*, except in the improvident. Many spend the flower of their youth in gathering for a home. The improvident alone rush to marriage as boys and girls, and rear an unhealthy offspring, to whom they can never teach self-control. [Pg 292]

Hence to the *male* vagrant problem is added the corresponding half, the *female*. Since the balance of the sexes is in England already against women, *what becomes of those who in our large towns correspond to the hundreds or thousands of men who live in lodging-houses or lodgings, homeless*? The answer has been becoming ever more plain to me, but it has only been demonstrated by personal suffering. I could not have believed had I not seen. Our streets contain an army of prostitutes, and there has arisen over against the male problem a vast female problem with which our increasing Homes and Refuges and Shelters are unable to cope. *The correlative of the male wanderer is the female prostitute.* A woman must "get her living," and she does it "on the streets." The man who should support her honourably as a wife is himself a wanderer, afraid to incur family ties, but bound by no wholesome home influence to self-restraint. In 1904 I spent three nights in so-called respectable female lodging-houses.[153] They contained between them close on a hundred women, and, with few exceptions, they were all living by prostitution. The hour when a decent woman retires found almost all perambulating the streets. No rest was possible till the early morning, as at all hours they were admitted, many of them drunk. Those not admitted spent the night in hotels, or in some of those "furnished rooms for married couples," which are multiplying in districts near common lodging-houses with fatal rapidity. [Pg 293]

Men and women are making fortunes out of this state of things. To my knowledge, a man who was a barman is said now to own sixteen *lodging-houses*, and a cobbler has risen to be proprietor of lodgings for 600 and *two public-houses*. A man can rent a house at 4*s*., and get a little furniture in, and can then let *each room* for more than the house-rent per week. To places like this drift many young men or women who are stranded far away from home. A girl gets out of a situation; she seeks a women's lodging-house, and if she enters one where the management connives or winks at vice, in three weeks, or less, she may be manufactured into a full-blown prostitute. This state of things is such as should shock every right-thinking English man and woman. In one street in a northern town a young man of eighteen, fresh from home, who was with a companion who unfortunately "knew too much," passed in a short walk seventy-five prostitutes. With these problems on our hands in such magnitude, can we stop to tinker at our Tramp Ward and ask if we are to amend it by giving coffee instead of gruel? The wonder is that any one seeks it; that it is used at all shows the stern pressure of destitution more than anything else. For, as I have stated, and must state repeatedly, the Tramp Ward is itself a factor in national degradation, the mockery of a provision for need; meaning often semi-starvation, weary toil and unrest. A man or woman *must* emerge from it more unfit for toil, and learn to avoid such a place if possible in future. The tramp uses it as an occasional disinfectant; the genuine working man or woman who is stranded may be forced into it temporarily and learn to be a *tramp*. Mr. Long recently stated that not more than 25 per cent. of the vagrants of the country were in any way within reach of the Local Government Board. The remainder were not paupers, for somehow or other they got a living for themselves. I believe his percentage is too high, owing to the number who simply *sample* a Tramp Ward and never again enter it. A recent census in Lancashire revealed that out of 936 persons reported only thirty-three were habitual vagrants.[154] Why should they go there? A man who "keeps" (?) a woman can live in idleness on the produce of her industry or sin; a woman can live "on the streets." This has a great deal to do with two features of present-day life—the number of incorrigibly idle, worthless men, who apparently can exist to loaf and drink, side by side with *the deplorable increase of drunkenness among women*. [Pg 294] [Pg 295]

I am convinced that many of the lower public-houses simply play into the hands of the harlot, and that the marked development of the public-house is due to the homelessness of our people. Alderman Thompson has pointed out in "The Housing Handbook" the existence of a universal house famine. He says: "Putting the case in its simplest form, we find, in the first place, that if every room, good and bad, occupied or unoccupied, in all the workmen's dwellings in the country be reckoned as existing accommodation, there are not enough *of any sort* to house the working population without unhealthy overcrowding.... In the second place, we find that, so far from new rooms being built in sufficient quantities to make up the deficiency, there is a distinct lessening in the rate of increase" ("Housing Handbook," W. Thompson, pp. 1-2). This *total* overcrowding accounts for the pressure on Shelters and common lodging-houses and tramp wards. Numbers in London are *refused admission* to tramp wards; numbers sleep out.[155] Inevitably the class that can pay least, or cannot pay at all, will be crowded out, if house accommodation is scanty, and this will especially be the case with the migrating "out-of-work" who has no particular claim on any one. Even if he has money in his pocket, it is difficult to say whether he is not in as grave danger, moral and sanitary, if forced to be a lodger in some already overcrowded home, as if forced into the common lodging-house. Like a sponge, a slum neighbourhood sucks up by overcrowding in winter those who in summer obtain varied occupation far and wide. Is it any wonder that the children of such overcrowded homes, deprived of the joys of nature, succumb to the attractions of the brilliantly lighted street? If the predatory female nightly angles there, in all the attraction of her tawdry finery; if large numbers of men, divorced from home ties, are there to be angled for, and money can freely be obtained, the customary "drink" being proffered; what wonder if the home itself becomes insipid, if the husband seeks the flaring and enticing public-house or not less fatal club, and the wife seeks *him*—or some other man—in the same places, [Pg 296]

while the children, never at home if they can help it (for home means unpleasantness, or inconvenient toil), walk out with one another in the dangerous thoroughfare, and learn in mere boyhood and girlhood the fascination of passion without responsibility?

How must we face such grave national issues? *The home must be made the centre of all our thought, the focus of national consciousness.* We must educate each boy and girl to be primarily father and mother; we must worship at the cradle of the child. The *community* must assume fatherhood and motherhood, and enforce a right conception of their duties on its subsidiary units. To counteract the restlessness of modern life we must make of our Fatherland a Home, where every man, woman and child will be rightly cared for, disciplined if need be, but embraced in the wide brotherhood of Humanity. [Pg 297]

We cannot turn back the hour-glass of time and stay the new-born activity, but we can utilise the new energy of Humanity as we have learned to utilise steam and electricity. The units divorced from true use in our social system may, nay must, become a desolating flood, unless we dig channels and build reservoirs, and so direct the living stream back to the formation of true homes, utilising the resources of the smiling acres of our native land, spreading out our cities, and afforesting our barren moors.

The Fluidity of Labour is a fact that has come to stay. Modern subdivided employment depends on *the ready supply at particular places of necessary workmen*. If a man is destitute through remaining too long where work is not to be had, he must travel, and we need to *facilitate*, not to hinder, his rapid transit to the right place, and to furnish him with all information as to whither he should go. We need to provide him, in fair return for a moderate task of work, with bed and board on the journey. *Except in exchange for work we should give neither State aid nor charity to the traveller*, since, if he cannot work enough to find bed and board, he belongs to the *incapable*, for whom a special provision is required, or the "*won't work*" for whom compulsion is best. The universal provision of a proper remedy for migrating destitution would soon avail to sort men into the three classes of *refractory*, *incapable*, or simply "*unemployed*." The Relief station method of Germany is the key to the situation. *[Pg 298]*

But the Relief station alone will not cope with the evil *unless the common lodging-house is reformed from top to bottom*. It is necessary to recognise the existence not only of *destitute* homelessness, but of *migratory* homelessness. It is necessary to get into safe and sanitary surroundings the whole of the outcasts who sleep out, and to purify our parks and streets. One thousand four hundred and sixty-three men walking London streets in one night constitute a social danger. In addition to this we have on the same night 21,058 single men under the undesirable conditions of the common lodging-house. London common lodging-houses are only required to find 240 cubic feet of air for each lodger, as against 300 cubic feet in the provinces, and 350 cubic feet in an ordinary dwelling house. Alderman Thompson says (p. 22): "Anything less than 350 cubic feet per head ought to result in a conviction before the most reactionary justices." Add the number crowded into London slums, what an army of homelessness!

[Pg 299] The one thing in the finding of the Vagrancy Committee with which the author does not agree is the stricture on Shelters. The Shelter reveals the magnitude of the problem that is upon us. It is the provision that has arisen over against this grave national danger. It is insufficient, it is not always well managed. But *it is seldom less sanitary and well managed than the common lodging-house*. The dangers it replaces are largely out of sight, but they are none the less real. It is true that the lowest class gravitate to the Shelter. Let us be thankful that it is so. "Out of sight is out of mind," but not out of existence. How real and keen the competition for bed and board is, is demonstrated by the pressure on prisons. It has come to something serious in our national history when the last social deterrent to crime has been removed and *men seek prison as their only home*. Even girls "do not mind being pinched," it "gives them a rest."[156]

It is absolutely necessary that good and sufficient Workmen's Homes, municipal or State, should supersede the common lodging-house. Glasgow has been able to make its seven lodging-houses, accommodating 2,166 men and 248 women, pay a reasonable interest on capital. London has only one, and accommodates but 324.[157] The cost per head of 68*l*. per bed, as against 39*l*. per bed in Glasgow, militates against financial success, though the charge is 6*d*. per night as against 3½*d*. and 4½*d*. Nevertheless receipts appear to more than cover expenditure (2,942*l*. against 2,844*l*.), and the benefit to the community must be reckoned an asset. London has 611 common lodging-houses, Manchester 268. In Glasgow the provision of municipal lodging-houses has reduced the total to 81; most of the old insanitary ones have disappeared, and those newly built are superior even to the municipal ones. Thus Glasgow has demonstrated the way out. The Glasgow Women's Lodging-house pays 5 per cent., is orderly, closes at a decent hour, and is well managed and sanitary. The pressure on its accommodation shows that another is required, as women are turned away for want of room. Where do they sleep? [Pg 300]

It is not enough to receive destitute women into the workhouse. In every town there is needed *some safe place for a working woman to sleep*, and some provision of employment that will just earn bed and board to stand between a struggling woman and vice. In every town there should be some co-ordinating charitable institution, like the Citizens' Guild of Help, or the Charity Organisation Society at its best, to link together the benevolence of the district, to pass persons on to employment or to the Poor-law authorities. *It is necessary to sound the depths of our poverty problems, or our charity is unavailing.* It is necessary to have compulsion at the bottom of our social system and apply it to the wastrel. [Pg 301]

For men we need at the back a graded system of colonies, such as is described in Mr. Percy Alden's recent pamphlet on "Labour Colonies" (price 1*d*., 1, Woburn Square, London, W.C.).

But the author is convinced that while such national reservoirs are essential as a background, the real problems of poverty must be worked out in connection with the *municipality*. Charity cannot cope with accumulated national evil, neither can the State redress it. The State can "way-bill" the migrating workman, can sift the mass of vagrancy and apply "compulsion to work," can link labour bureaux, can reform the Poor Law. But we possess, at present hardly tapped, a vast fund of local patriotism. *It is to reconstructed civic life we must look for the solution of civic problems*, the abolition of the slum, the education of the child, the provision of "unemployed" capital to place "unemployed" labour on "unemployed" land, and thereby convert "a trinity of waste into a unity of production." A great step has been taken by the Unemployed Act, however imperfect. The whole subject of unemployment the author has dealt with in a book entitled "How to Deal with the Unemployed" (Brown, Langham & Co.), and she regards the chapter on "The Labour Market" as the key to the solution of the problem.

[Pg 302] We shall have to recognise the maintenance of the home by the recognition of the *droit au travail* —"the right to work"—in some form or another. The streams of labour, which, if let loose in misery and idleness, are destructive, can, if rightly husbanded, fertilise the soil.

Grave as are the problems to be solved, menacing as is the danger if reforms are neglected or delayed, I believe the Spirit of God which created in the mind of our forefathers the ideal of the "*Commonwealth*" will guide our national policy into right channels,

"True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home."

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APPENDIX I.

TRANSFER OF CASUALS TO POLICE SUPERVISION.

The placing of Casual Wards under police authority is a bold step, but one of which the author thoroughly approves. The Report of the Committee on Vagrancy was issued subsequently to the writing of this book. It is in substantial agreement with the author's facts and opinions. The prime necessity for a consistent and uniform national policy will be much better met in the way proposed than by any mere *reform* of the Tramp Ward.

The policeman, by his constant contact with life of all kinds and by his opportunities for observation, is much more fitted than the isolated Poor-law official for wise treatment of "all sorts and conditions of men." If women were still considered vagrants, grave evils might arise from transfer of casual wards to police authorities. But if all destitute women can at once claim the protection of the Workhouse, there is no reason why the police should not deal with vagrancy.

Theoretically a destitute woman can at present enter the Workhouse, but practically there are difficulties. She cannot claim entrance unless she has slept a night in the town and can give her address. If she gives a lodging-house address she would be presumed to be only suitable for the Tramp Ward, if lately come to the town. It is but little considered how much the ancient right of "settlement" continues to hamper the administration of the Poor-law as a provision for [Pg 304] destitution. A case in point is as follows: A woman visiting her husband, from whom she had been parted for years, was given in charge for drunkenness and got a week's imprisonment. She lost her work in a neighbouring town, and returning to her birthplace, being unable to find shelter, took refuge in the Tramp Ward. Next morning she applied for admission to the Workhouse, being quite destitute. The Relieving Officer told her to apply to the Guardians *the following Wednesday*. It was then Friday. What was she to do meanwhile? I have selected this incident because it is not implied that the woman was "deserving," and it is evident that the Relieving Officer was justified in using caution in the present state of the law. Nevertheless, it illustrates the fact that *immediate shelter pending inquiry* is, in the case of women, a prime necessity. Delays in admission, coupled with the fact that re-admission to the Tramp Ward is discouraged, must often, in the case of women, be *fatal*.

Undoubtedly difficulties will arise in the course of transfer, but it is probable that our whole Poor Law system and its relation to the Municipality will be largely modified before long.

The change from an agricultural England to an industrial England and the massing of population in large towns, calls for unification of authority in our great industrial centres for effectual dealing with problems of poverty. The proposed change is therefore to be welcomed as one step in the right direction.

It will also solve the knotty problem as to the incidence of local charges and national charges.

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APPENDIX II.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF VAGRANCY COMMITTEE.

429. The following is a summary of the principal recommendations made by the Vagrancy Committee.

Casual Wards.

1. Wards to be placed under control of police authority (120-147).[158] See Appendix I.

2. Existing buildings, where required, to be rented or purchased by police authority (132-3). P. **74**.

3. Superfluous wards to be discontinued (130, 133). P. **75**.

4. Where practicable, existing officers of wards to be continued in office (135).

5. Where wards adjoin or form part of the workhouse, arrangements to be made with the guardians for supply of stores, heating, etc. (134).

6. Diet to be adequate, and provision to be made for mid-day meal on day of discharge (95, 181, 308-10). Pp. **26**, **75**.

7. Task of work to be enforced, and to be a time task[159] (93, 148-9). P. **76**.

8. Detention to be for a minimum of two nights, except in case of men with way-tickets (151-2, 180). P. **81**.

9. Expenses of wards to be charged to the police fund (129, 136, 142). Appendix I.

Assistance to Work-seekers.

10. Tickets to be issued by the police to persons who are *bonâ fide* in search of work (178). P. **81**.

11. The ticket to be for a definite route, and available only for a month, with power to police to alter route if satisfied that this is necessary (179, 182). P. **80**.

12. The holder of a ticket to be entitled to lodging, supper and breakfast at the casual ward, and to be able to leave as early as he desires after performing a small task (179-80). Pp. **75**, **80**.

13. The holder of a ticket to have a ration of bread and cheese for mid-day meal given him on leaving the casual ward in the morning (181). P. **67**.

14. Information as to work in the district to be kept at casual wards and police stations for assistance of work-seekers (184-5). Pp. **75**, **76**.

Vagrancy Offences.

15. Short sentences to be discouraged. Where the sentence is for less than fourteen days, it should be limited to one day, and the conviction recorded (196, 224). Appendix V.

16. Habitual vagrants to be sent to certified labour colonies for detention for not less than six months or more than three years (221-3, 286). P. **72**.

Labour Colonies for Habitual Vagrants.

17. Labour colonies for habitual vagrants to be certified by Secretary of State and generally to be subject to regulations made by him (284-5, 304). P. **81**.

18. Councils of counties and county boroughs to have power to establish labour colonies, or to contribute to certified colonies established by other councils or by philanthropic agencies (284-5, 287-8). P. **82**.

19. Exchequer contribution to be made towards cost of maintenance of persons sent to labour colonies (287-8). P. **75**.

20. Subsistence dietary to be prescribed. Inmates to have power to earn small sums of money by their work, and, by means of canteen, to supplement their food allowance (290, 312-5). Pp. **59**, **79**.

21. Discharge before the conclusion of sentence to be allowed on certain conditions (286). P. **59**.

22. Industrial as well as agricultural work to be carried on (299-302). See Appendix III.

Economy in Buildings.

23. Buildings for casual wards and in connection with labour colonies to be erected cheaply (291-2, 317-23).

Common Lodging-Houses (outside London).

24. Common lodging-houses to be licensed annually by local authority (326-7). Pp. **46-51**.

25. Stricter supervision and control to be exercised by local authority (326-7). P. **61**.

26. Police to have right of entry (327). P. **61**.

Regulation of Shelters and Free Food Distributions.

27. Shelters to be licensed and regulated by local authority (366-7). P. **76**.

28. Free food distribution to be subject to veto of local authority (360). P. **76**.

Spread of Disease by Vagrants.

29. Necessity of stricter enforcement of existing law (375, 377). Pp. **37**, **42**, **49**.

30. Notice to be given to neighbouring districts of small-pox occurring in common lodging-houses or casual wards (377).

Sleeping Out.

31. Sleeping out to be an offence whenever it takes place in buildings or on enclosed premises, or is a danger or nuisance to the public (384). P. **30**.

Pedlars.

32. Practice as to issue, renewal and endorsement of certificate to be uniform (400).

Women.

33. Female vagrants to be received into the workhouse instead of the casual wards (405-8). Appendix IV.

Children.

34. Children of persons dealt with as habitual vagrants to be sent to industrial schools or other place of safety (428). P. **84**.

35. Child vagrants to be received into the workhouse instead of the casual wards (406, 428). Appendix IV.

36. Section 14 of the Industrial Schools Act, 1866, to apply to vagrant children (418).

APPENDIX III.

LABOUR COLONIES.[160]

The Report as to Labour Colonies may be summarised as follows:—

Holland. Belgium.

1818. Société de Benéficence established *Free Colonies* (*i.e.*, *Fredericksoord*, *Willemsoord*, and *Willewminsoord*). Population decreasing (1902, 1,460). Also *Beggar Colonies*, *Wortel* and *Merxplas*, handed over to Government in 1859.

In 1831 Holland and Belgium separated.

Holland now possesses:	Belgium now possesses:
Veenhuizen for men: 3,000 to 4,000 inmates. Committed by magistrates, six months to three years. *Hoorn* for women: Vagrant class.	*Hoogstraeten*, *Wortel*, *"Maisons de Refuge,"* voluntary colonies. *Merxplas "Depôt de Mendicité":* 5,110 inmates, 1905. Agricultural and industrial. Net annual cost per head, £9. Average detention, 16 months. Earnings per day, 1*d*. to 3*d*. Vagrant class.

Germany.	Switzerland.
Labour Colonies, 34: About 4,000 inmates. Admission voluntary. Example: *Wilhelmsdorf*, founded 1882. Agricultural. Small wage allowed.	*Labour Institutions* in nearly every canton. Vagrants committed for two to six months. Examples: *Witzwyl:* About 200 inmates. Agricultural and industrial. *Appenzell:* Pays its way. *St. Johannsen:* £6 per

Also *Workhouses* (arbeits hauser), 24:

Forced labour. Detention, one year. Accommodate 14,836. Cost small, e.g., *Westphalia*, cost £17 8*s.*, earnings £8 14*s.*; *Moritzburg*, cost £14 9*s.* 2*d.*, earnings £11 10*s.* 8*d.*
Mainly handicrafts.

head.

Lucerne: £14 per head.

Voluntary Colonies:
Example: *Herdern*, more expensive, £50 per head.

HADLEIGH.
Salvation Army.
Inmates: Paupers, men from "Elevators," private cases.
Capital cost, about £300 per head.
Average annual cost, nearly £34 per head.
Agriculture and brick-making.

LINGFIELD.
Christian Social Brotherhood.
Inmates: Workhouse cases and inebriates; private cases.
Capital cost, about £160 per head.
Average annual cost, £33 per head.
Training in farm and dairy work.
Forty per cent. emigrate to Canada.

HOLLESLEY BAY.
London County Council.
Established 1904-5.
Principally "unemployed."
Cost of food per week, 6*s.* 3*d.* to 7*s.* 1*d.* per head.
Agriculture.

LAINDON.
Poplar Guardians.
Established 1904.
Able-bodied paupers.
Cost of food per week, 5*s.* 8*d.* per head.
Spade labour.
Accommodates 150 inmates.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VAGRANCY COMMITTEE.

Labour colonies on the lines of inebriate reformatories.

Compulsory detention for from six months to three years.

Also *State colony*.

Equal contributions from the State and local authority.

Small wage as incentive to work.

Simple subsistence diet, supplemented by canteen.

Estimated cost, 1s. 6d. per week per head (section 315).

Industrial and agricultural.

APPENDIX IV.

WOMEN.

Extract from Report of Vagrancy Committee, pp. 111-112.

403. At present separate accommodation, under the charge of female officers, is provided for women in the casual wards. The rules as to their detention are the same as in the case of men, and their diet is also the same, though less in quantity. The task of work which is prescribed for them by the regulations is picking oakum (half the quantity given to the men) or domestic work, such as washing, scrubbing, cleaning, or needlework. Oakum picking as a task of work for females, however, has been discouraged for some time by the Local Government Board, but it is still in force in many unions.

The number of female vagrants is comparatively small. Out of 9,768 vagrants relieved in casual wards in England and Wales on the night of 1st January, 1905, only 887, or 9 per cent., were women. On the 1st July, 1905, there were 813 female casual paupers out of a total of 8,556.

404. We have proposed that casual wards should be continued for the reception of male wayfarers, but we are strongly of opinion that women should be provided for elsewhere. Mrs. Higgs said:—

"I should propose that single women should be received into the workhouse proper. I would do away with the casual ward for women. The reason of that would be three-fold. First of all, the woman, if she were admitted into the workhouse proper, would receive the workhouse clothes; therefore, she would not work in her own, and her own would not be destroyed. She would go out in as good a state of cleanliness as before. Besides that, I think it is altogether wrong to recognise a class of vagrant women at all. I think it is a great evil to recognise that a woman has the right to go about from place to place in that unattached kind of way. I think she should be received at the workhouse proper.... I think it is a great mistake for our country to educate any women into vagrancy." And as regards women who are tramping with their husbands, she said:—

"I think that women ought not to be allowed to travel about like that. I think it would be better if they were taken into the workhouse, and the husbands were made to pay for them. I think they could go out with their husbands, if there was a reasonable presumption that the husband was a working man travelling about for work, after the ordinary detention."

405. We entirely approve of this suggestion. At present the treatment that female casuals receive is often unsatisfactory, and the complaints that Mrs. Higgs made of her experience in certain wards cannot be disregarded. But apart from this, we think it undesirable to encourage the female tramp. No similar provision is made for this class in other countries; and we feel that great advantage would ensue from the closing of the casual wards to women in this country. We gather from experienced officers that only a small percentage of the female tramps are with their husbands; temporary alliances seem rather to be the rule of the road. No doubt there may be exceptional cases, where a woman may have satisfactory reasons for tramping, but in any such case, if she is a decent person, she could hardly fail to prefer the accommodation of the workhouse to that of the casual ward. To a woman who is an habitual vagrant the workhouse would probably be a deterrent.

406. In many workhouses there are receiving wards where female vagrants could well be lodged for a night or two; but in any case we do not think that there need be any insuperable difficulty in arranging for their reception. If they are able-bodied, their services will be useful in many workhouses for domestic work, as there is often a difficulty in getting sufficient help from the ordinary inmates. From the point of view of the woman the change from the casual wards to the workhouse will be of considerable benefit. In the workhouse she will be given other clothes to work in, and will thus avoid the hardship of which Mrs. Higgs complains. Moreover, she will receive better treatment generally, and, in many cases, may be brought under reformatory influences which in the casual wards she would escape. In the case of children, also, the workhouse is obviously a more suitable place than the casual ward.

407. We suggest that admission should be on an order from a relieving officer or assistant relieving officer,[161] or, in sudden or urgent cases, on the authority of the master of the workhouse, and that discharge should be subject to the notice which is now required in the case of ordinary inmates of the workhouse. The possession of a way ticket would entitle a woman to admission to the workhouses on her route, and if she was tramping with her husband she should be allowed to discharge herself on the morning after admission so as to join her husband. It is not likely that such cases would be numerous.

408. The removal of women from the casual wards will be of material assistance in connection with our proposal for placing the control of the wards in the hands of the police. It will greatly simplify the provision of the necessary casual wards, and there will be no need, as now, for a female staff. We think, however, that in the case of some of the larger casual wards now existing, where ample provision both in accommodation and staff has been made for the reception of female vagrants, it may be desirable, for some time after the transfer of the wards to the police authority, to continue to receive females in them. We do not contemplate that any such arrangement as this should be other than temporary, and we trust that it will be found practicable eventually to establish a uniform system throughout the country.

409. Apart from the reception of women into the workhouse, we do not propose that their treatment should differ materially from that proposed for men. The female habitual vagrant should, we think, be liable to be sent to a labour colony, which, of course, should be one appropriated to women only. We do not anticipate that there will be many cases which will need to be sent to a labour colony, and probably one or two institutions for the whole country would be sufficient. It seems to us that there would be special advantage in these being provided—at any rate, in the first instance—by private enterprise, and it is possible that there are institutions at present in existence which might properly be certified for this purpose. They should be subject, in so far as they are used for the compulsory detention of vagrant women, to the inspection and control of the Home Office.

410. We are inclined to accept the view that the question of female vagrants is comparatively unimportant,[162] and that if the men are removed, the women and children will soon disappear from the roads. Without the men, the women will find it easy to maintain themselves, and their case will present little difficulty.

APPENDIX V.

EVILS OF SHORT SENTENCES.

These evils may be summarised as follows:—

(1) Uneven administration of justice, as sentences frequently vary from three to twenty-eight days for the same offences, *i.e.*, refusing to perform workhouse task or destroying clothing. The sentence of a stipendiary often differs from that of a local magistrate in the same town.

The great majority of sentences (13,831 out of 16,626 for begging, and 5,198 out of 6,219 for sleeping out) are for less than fourteen and probably for only seven days.

(2) Such short sentences are not deterrent, and are very costly. Two vagrants cost in travelling

expenses alone £12 and £16 10*s*. Hardly any work can be exacted during a short sentence.

The committee recommend that a minimum sentence of one day should be *recorded as a conviction* for vagrancy. If again convicted the prisoner could be then committed to a labour colony.

APPENDIX VI.

[Pg 317]

PREFACE, BY CANON HICKS, OF SALFORD, TO "FIVE DAYS AND NIGHTS IN A TRAMP WARD."

The narrative may be relied upon as true in every detail. The facts were burned in upon the minds of the two pilgrims, and were put on paper at once.

Certain names are omitted for obvious reasons; they are known and can be verified.

The lady whose courage and devotion first suggested this descent into the Inferno, who took the lead in it and then recorded its results, was inclined, when it came to printing them, to suppress certain revolting particulars. At my express desire they were retained. They are essential to her case. For, of course, the facts here revealed are a terrible indictment of our present arrangements, and cry aloud for reform. In the interests of morality alone, our Workhouse Tramp-wards and Municipal Lodging-houses need far more careful supervision. It will be found also that efficiency, common-sense, and kindliness would tend to economy and prevent waste. As to the Common Lodging-house, it is a focus of moral and physical mischief.

It is hoped that this pamphlet will stimulate local authorities; will awaken the ratepayers to a livelier interest in the appointment of Poor Law Guardians, and will quicken the conscience of many more women to offer themselves for election.

[Pg 318]

Edward Lee Hicks.

Manchester, January, 1904.

N.B.—This Pamphlet was published by the Women Guardians and Local Government Association, 66, Barton Arcade, Manchester, and may still be had from them, price 1d.

Chapter III., "The Tramp Ward" price 2d., Chapter IV., "A Night in a Salvation Army Shelter," price 1d., Chapter V., "Three Nights in Women's Lodging-houses," price 1d., may be obtained in pamphlet form from the Author, post free.

APPENDIX VII.

[Pg 319]

IMMORALITY AS CAUSED BY DESTITUTION AMONG WOMEN.

The causes of immorality among women are deep-seated in modern life. They are due to—(1) widespread changes in sex relationship, combined with (2) changes in modes of life due to the industrial revolution, and complicated by (3) psychic developments in humanity itself.

(1) Suppose we take the largest and most universal change first. In modern civilisation the psychic relationships of man and woman are changing. Intensity has come into sex relationships. It is reckoned right, or at least pardonable, for men and women to do "for love" what may be against the dictates of common sense. To a large extent this is ephemeral, and belongs to the erotic age alone. But necessarily the effect on the young of both sexes of the "novel" with its coloured picture of life, must be great, and greatest on the most emotional sex. Fictitious views of life influence minds just endeavouring to grasp life as a whole. A woman may be placed in circumstances of destitution in pursuit of the *ideal* life. It matters little to evolution that thousands of lives perish. The evolution of woman involves, like all other evolutions, *sacrifice*.

(2) Let us now look at the second large factor—what is called the Industrial Revolution. It has been pointed out by Mrs. Stetson, that hitherto man has been the economic environment of woman. We are still in a transition period, but largely in the middle and working classes, women before marriage, and even after, are escaping to economic independence. This change is so vast and far-reaching (involving an adjustment of all our social institutions) that we can hardly yet appreciate it. Once begun, it must go forward. But at present, as half begun, it means in all directions the danger and sacrifice of individual lives. Over against the problem of unemployed men, we now have unemployed women also—women not dependent, but on their own economic footing.

[Pg 320]

(3) Changes in sex relationship rapidly follow on changes in economic status. The attainment of economic status as distinct from economic value is imperceptibly modifying marriage and the family. Woman and man are partners. While the child becomes more and more the centre on which public interest focusses, at the same time the ties both of wifehood and of parentage and of brotherhood and sisterhood are relaxed. Community interest and life replaces by degrees parental restraint and responsibility. Freedom has its blessings and also its penalties.

Let us trace a woman through her normal life and see what dangers of destitution beset her.

As at first born, the home is her support and natural habitat. But economic independence being possible at an early age, parental restraint is lighter. I have known cases of girls even of fourteen and sixteen leaving home, and with a companion or two, clubbing together and setting up house. They were then free to invite young men, with what consequences may be imagined. A girl in "lodgings" or "with friends" may easily become destitute through changes in employment.

In addition to these wandering children, parents often cast off girls on very slight grounds. To turn a child into the street, if the girl is out of work or supposed to be idle or disorderly, is by no means uncommon. It is so common that some provision for it should be made in every town. [Pg 321]

Short of actually leaving home, our girls are now exposed to the temptations of the free life of the street, of largely unrestricted intercourse, often under wrong conditions, with the other sex. This intercourse, however, cannot under modern circumstances, be prevented except by exceptional parents. It should be under healthy conditions and wise control. But at present it is a large factor in destitution, for the lad and lass spend their earnings largely on sex attraction and are penniless in emergencies sure to occur. Hasty and ill-considered marriage may follow. A national education for motherhood is much to be desired; it is perilous and unwise to keep up the old conventional ideas as to "innocence" and "purity" being fostered by ignorance. Let us face the question boldly, and encourage the teaching of right and pure and true views of marriage. Forewarned is often forearmed. At any rate, at this period in life, orphanhood, or some change in family relations, stepfatherhood or motherhood being frequent, may throw the girl much on her lover. There is no reserve of maidenly provision as in many countries. The legislation of betrothal might even be a good thing, and the State might require at least a little forethought. More and more the State becomes the universal child-parent. It is time it studied its responsibilities.

Before our typical woman lie two paths. Into the usual one of marriage the vast majority of industrial women are carried. The marriage state still involves support, but also involves a change in economic relationship which more and more galls. Curious partnerships result where both are self-supporting, one or the other being predominant partner. In middle-class life still, conventions largely rule; but in industrial centres the marriage bond itself is much less binding than of old. Separations become more and more common. The amount of support that can be claimed by a wife is so insufficient that often they come together again perhaps only to part. Both are often young. Before the man lies a long celibate life, he is under no vow—self-restraint is normally not attained. The large numbers of imperfectly-mated men leading a life divorced from home ties constitute a grave social peril. In every town a great number of middle-class and many working men live free from social responsibility to support women, yet do partially support some at any rate, either as lovers, as betrothed sweethearts, or in less sacred relationships. Destitute and deserted wives are common, cast-off sweethearts not a few; women derelicts abound; they are the "unemployed," alas not unemployed in sin, but a source of moral contagion in their easy life. [Pg 322]

For the other career of womanhood is hard, and as yet a path not for the many, and therefore all the harder. A woman may attain economic independence; but she is sadly handicapped. Her wage is low, often lowered by dress expense; and her woman nature, especially under modern pressure of sentimental literature, demands satisfaction in husband and child. What wonder if she gives up the hard struggle and strays from this path. Society owes much to the women who toil on, cutting by degrees the stairs of progress. If they succeed in self-support, how often age overtakes them as toilers; women's physical disabilities (created or complicated by a false civilisation) leave them stranded. The middle-aged unemployed female is a most serious national problem at present. It calls loudly for universal sisterhood. Drink too often claims the unloved and unlovable spinster. She can no longer spin; she must work under conditions in which she ages fast. Independence is hardly to be won. Our workhouses are full of derelict womanhood. Nor is the married woman always more fortunate. Industries often kill husbands when still young. Widows abound. It is extremely difficult to make a woman self-supporting with more than one, or at most with two children, in such a way as to secure sufficient food and clothes for these children. Into married destitution, if the husband lives, I need not enter; it is part of the unemployed problem, and a serious one. [Pg 323]

How can we face these problems? They are on every hand. We have no effective State provision. The Tramp Ward is a mockery, a robbery and insult to womanhood. The common lodging-house is a snare and a trap. Surely *it belongs to womanhood to befriend womanhood*. It is little use to multiply Rescue Homes while we leave untouched the causes that are stranding more and more of our sisters.

What is needed is—in every town an industry for destitute women; in every town a Shelter to pick up strays and guide them to self-support; in every town Women's Hostels under kind, wise, but not restrictive supervision; in every town provision for glad, free girl life, and joined to this distinct, clear, national purity teaching. What is needed is a pure, free, enlightened womanhood, ready to stand side by side with man to mother the world.

Mary Higgs.

[*Read at Conference of Reformatory and Refuge Union and National Association of Certified Reformatory and Industrial Schools, Birmingham, June 21st, 1905.*]

APPENDIX VIII.

COMMON LODGING-HOUSES VERSUS SHELTERS.

The laws of evolution apply to social phenomena. Tested by these we see that *the Shelter*, the *Municipal Lodging-house*, and the *Rowton House* are replacing the *common lodging-house*. Is there any reason why they should not, when for the rich the hotel has replaced the inn? It is a question of national moment what provision should be made for the floating population of men and *women*.

In smaller towns the common lodging-house is *disappearing* (see Minutes of Evidence before Vagrancy Committee, section 1752). In London the accommodation is *decreasing* (see *ibid.*, section 5784). Is this to be deplored or hastened? The poor must sleep *somewhere*. Let us first of all distinguish between the *Free* Charitable Shelter and *Free* Meals, and the question of provision of adequate housing accommodation for our floating population.

The provision for *absolute destitution* belongs to the *State*. Only the State, or the State through the Municipality, can exercise sufficient authority to sift the incapable and "won't-works" from the simply "unemployed." The former should be in some State or State-subsidised institution, unless supported by relatives. The "won't-works" require coercion. Any form of charity that impedes right State action is harmful. It has arisen because the State has shirked its duty. The public should be satisfied that every *destitute* man and woman gets bed and board, with even-handed justice, in return for a task, if capable, or with proper care if incapable. Then Free Shelters and Free Meals would disappear.

But *provision* of proper accommodation for those who are struggling to earn their living is another matter. Hitherto it has grown up haphazard, sanitary regulations have slowly been made, still more slowly enforced, and are often a dead letter.

If the question of the common lodging-house were simply that of enforcing on the proprietor of a certain house, by means of adequate inspection, a certain standard of cleanliness and decency, there would still be reasons why a Municipal lodging-house or charitable Shelter would, if under strict supervision, be a better provision for the poor. I will tabulate these.

Common Lodging-house.	Municipal Lodging-house or Shelter.
Interested Management.	*Disinterested Management.*
Not to proprietary *interest* to put down vice and drunkenness, and to call in police. Interest to secure greatest number of lodgers.	Against interest to have disturbances, and therefore desirable to prevent vice and drunkenness from commencement.
Interest to provide *minimum* that will pass muster, *e.g.*, usually no stoving apparatus to prevent vermin, and no lockers to prevent theft.	Interest to provide *maximum* consistent with cleanliness. Usually apparatus for stoving, and lockers for private property.
Imperfect sanitary arrangements, deficient arrangements for cooking and washing.	Sanitary arrangements considered in building. Proper arrangements for cooking and washing.
Deputy (usually chosen from inmates) exercises little control.	Management removes at once any warden suspected of ill conduct.
Regulations if made, hard to enforce, as *interest* is retention of lodgers.	Regulations being made by management can be more easily enforced.
Small number makes better provision not profitable.	Larger number allows of better provision.

But it is not a question *merely* of the state of the common lodging-house. Bound up with this is the fact that around the common lodging-houses in each large town is growing up silently a great evil, a network of single "furnished rooms," which are the last refuge of evicted householders, but also the home of immorality. The insufficient provision of the common lodging-house is being silently largely supplemented by these. These evils are flagrant. Yet they cannot be *suppressed*. The homeless must have somewhere to go. The crowding of slum areas by "lodgers" is as grave an evil.

The "way out" is to *provide* in every town, under charge of the Municipality, *well-regulated sanitary* and *sufficient* accommodation. As a *national* provision is required, Municipalities of smaller towns might be encouraged by loans for building purposes on national credit, Government in return exercising care as to expense. Glasgow has shown that such enterprises

(1) Suppress the poor insufficient houses,

(2) Provide adequate return on capital,

(3) Lead to the rise of still better accommodation for working men.

A Municipal lodging-house should be linked to remedial agencies, and a chain should exist on routes of travel.

Especially for *women*, municipal lodging-houses are a *necessity*. With regard to the question of "bunks" *versus* "beds," it is strange that while on the one hand for sanitary reasons the Government allows plank beds and wire mattresses, it is about to enforce *for a class confessedly dirtier* (see Vagrancy Report, 335) a universal bed. The idea that "inspection" can keep beds clean without stoving is futile. Some of the vermin most troublesome to get rid of are

microscopic. Also the idea that people undress to go to bed, and do not undress in a bunk, is not correct. The class that possess only "what they stand up in" possess no night garments. Women keep some of their garments on. Men may undress (for *protection* from vermin). All the garments not worn all night are usually tucked into the bed for fear of thefts. I have seen women undressing similarly in a bunk. The Salvation Army keeps its shelters spotlessly clean and free from vermin. Unless cleansing of the person is compelled by law, all that can be done for the lowest class of all is to provide some easily cleansed resting-place (see p. 30. Something must be done to prevent the scandal of "sleeping out" in our wealthy cities.

The popularity of the Shelter shows it meets a social need. Also in connection with public institutions, remedial action and sorting into classes is possible, which is impossible in places provided for private profit. We should aim at getting every individual into a safe and sanitary shelter at night. How can a *destitute* woman find 3*s*. 6*d*. per week for bare shelter? If she pays this should not it entitle her to a place which is clean, where she can keep herself clean, and can *keep her self-respect*?

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FOOTNOTES:

[1] See pp. 83-86.

[2] "Low as is the standard of comfort of the ordinary vagrant, that of the class of people who frequent the charitable shelters or habitually 'sleep out' in London and other large

towns is still lower. The casual pauper is at least clean, while the man who sleeps in his clothes at a shelter, or passes the night on a staircase, is often verminous and always filthy. These people seldom or never go to casual wards, and they can only find a living in large towns" (Vagrancy Report, p. 26). These town-dwellers are not, however, *hereditary* vagrants as a rule.

[3] "No doubt the coming into existence of a pauper class was a new and startling phenomenon of Tudor times; it is probable, too, that the suppression of the monasteries led to a large increase of the vagrant population" (Vagrancy Report, p. 6).

[4] This was, however, only a portion of the "Statute of Labourers" (7 Rich. II., ch. 5; Vagrancy Report, p. 3).

[5] The Vagrancy Report gives a full historical summary of this repressive treatment (chap. 1, sections 8, 11), but points out (section 12) that all legislation was then harsh, and that some punishments, such as branding, may have been intended for identification, as with lost sheep. It questions the existence of a widespread social evil.

[6] Statistics of vagrancy (Vagrancy Report, section 74) estimate the difference between the number "on the road" in a time of trade depression as 70,000 or 80,000, as against 20,000 or 30,000 in times of industrial activity (as in 1900). See also effect of South African War (section 76).

[7] The Report points out that the term "vagrant" is elastic, including gipsies, hawkers, pedlars, and those employed in hop-picking or fruit-picking (section 78; see also sections 400, 401). It appears (section 402) that arrangements for these seasonal migrations are improving in the hop-picking and fruit-picking counties, owing to the action of local sanitary authorities and philanthropic societies. The "casual labourer," on the contrary, is a constant addition to the ranks of vagrancy (see section 81). "The vagrant of this class is usually a man who has been unable to keep his employment from idleness, want of skill, drinking habits, or general incapacity, or perhaps from physical disability. As time goes on, he succumbs to the influence of his demoralising mode of life, and falls into the ranks of the habitual vagrant." Lack of unskilled employment, which is mainly seasonal, is as large a cause.

[8] "The penal laws against vagrants were enacted contemporaneously with the establishment of poor relief for the aged and infirm, and with repeated attempts to build up a system for the correction and reformation of the vagrant" (section 11, Vagrancy Report; see also sections 257-260).

[9] The Report on Vagrancy does not appear to the author to deal with the origin of this class (see sections 82, 83). The presence of the "work-shy" class is recognised, and in section 81 the additions to it from the ranks of casual labour attributed to bad habits or incapacity. But the fact that the existence of this class is a *necessary result of rise in capacity* of the artisan classes is not alluded to. It would be interesting to investigate how many of the "unskilled" and "work-shy" have worked and earned their living for years, but have found it impossible to keep a foothold. As *capacity* rises, the strata of "inefficient" must be left behind.

[10] In section 79 the Report deals with the *bonâ fide* working man looking for work. The author believes that though the Committee regarded such as only a small proportion, this does not represent the real facts. If, as is stated, the number of "vagrants" doubles in times of unemployment, it is evident that the 50 per cent. squeezed out were previously employed in some way. Evidently the ranks of vagrancy are largely recruited from "working men," though by those most inefficient. Six weeks' tramp has been stated to the author as long enough to turn a "working man" into a "loafer."

[11] See Vagrancy Report, section 20.

[12] It will be seen that in 1848 the increase of vagrancy called for attention. The report given by the inspectors led to a minute of the Poor Law Board, signed by Sir C. Buller, on "the growing evil of vagrancy." The decrease in vagrancy was put down to more stringent regulations, but may have coincided with better industrial conditions, as in 1853 the numbers again rose (Vagrancy Report, sections 28, 29, 30).

[13] It is not surprising that London should be the first to feel the pressure of migratory destitution resulting in the Houseless Poor Acts, 1864, 1865 (see Vagrancy Report, section 33).

[14] See sections 38, 39 (Vagrancy Report).

[15] Mr. Curtis, clerk to the King's Norton Guardians, says: "In my judgment the present measures have *totally failed to achieve their object*" (Vagrancy Report, section 113).

[16] In 1866 a dietary was prescribed (Vagrancy Report, section 37).

[17] "In 374 unions the casual pauper gets only bread for breakfast and supper ... for the mid-day meal 474 unions give only bread and cheese" (Vagrancy Report, section 95).

[18] "The rule to detain vagrants two nights is but little observed" (Vagrancy Report, section 94).

[19] See section 49, Vagrancy Report.

[20] "In the four years 1891 to 1895 the figures (for Jan. 1) rose from 4,960 to 8,810, an increase of 3,850; while the recent rise spread over five years (1900 to 1905) was from 5,579 to 9,768, an increase of 4,189" (Vagrancy Report, section 76).

[21] See section 70, Vagrancy Report, respecting vagrants in common lodging-houses. It is surprising how many inmates are "without settled home." I have personally interrogated many women who have been homeless for years with their husbands, but have lived in lodging-houses. The seasonal migration of the rich produces a reflex tide of migration of "hangers on" of all kinds; there are also other seasonal migrations such as that of the navvy (see section 33, Vagrancy Report).

[22] It is probable that a larger proportion of the inmates of casual wards in London are of the "work-shy" class than in the north, because London acts as a kind of national cesspool attracting the dregs, partly by reason of its charities. The same may be said of a large centre like Manchester. But if sufficient skilled observation had been given over long periods, it would probably be found, as I have indicated, that there are great changes in the *personnel* of the tramp ward. It is indicated in the Report (section 87) that the free shelters attract the *lowest* class. Hence the rise in the standard of cleanliness may mean that the tramp ward now actually accommodates a higher social stratum than formerly.

[23] See Chap. XV., Vagrancy Report. It is doubted that the percentage is so high. It will vary in different localities.

[24] "Evidence before us shows that severity of discipline in one union may merely cause the vagrants to frequent other unions."

[25] It is acknowledged that the present dietary is insufficient, not only owing to absence of a mid-day meal (section 160), but also as a minimum for "a fair day's work," which requires (section 307) at least 2,500 calories in heat-producing value and 55 grammes of proteid. The proposed amended dietary is as follows:—

Breakfast: Bread, 8 oz.; margarine, ¾ oz.; cocoa (made with cocoa husk), 1 pint.

Dinner: Bread, 8 oz.; cheese, 1½ oz.

Supper: Bread, 8 oz.; margarine, ¾ oz.; potatoes (cooked), 6 oz. Salt, 1 oz. per five men daily.

This would provide 2,500 calories with 63 grammes of proteid.

[26] The superiority of the prison dietary is freely acknowledged in the Report (see sections 203-206).

[27] See sections 197-201, Vagrancy Report. "Many tramps openly declare that they prefer prison to the casual wards."... "Vagrants assigned as a reason for refusing to work that they wished to lay up for a fortnight during the winter in gaol." Window-breaking and tearing-up clothes are freely resorted to in order to get into prison. On the 28th of February, 1905, 3,736 male prisoners out of 12,369 were reported by the prison governors as persons with no fixed abode, and with no regular means of subsistence (section 59). In London, in 1904, 1,167 casuals shirked work or tore their clothes (section 107).

[28] See Vagrancy Report (section 41) with regard to the enforcement of the four nights in London. In 1904, 16,060 cases were detained four nights. A list has been made of 950 habitual tramps who live in London tramp wards (section 110). A similar list might be made of tramps who circle round in the towns in the Manchester district. In 1904, in London, 21,367 people were *refused admission* to tramp wards (Vagrancy Report, section 104).

[29] The opinion of the Committee is very unfavourable as to shelters (see sections 338-359). It does not, however, appear to be sufficiently recognised that these shelters have arisen as a direct result of the repressive policy of the tramp ward and the insufficient national provision for destitution. The dregs of our social system must congregate somewhere; they will naturally gravitate where conditions are most favourable, and where existence can be maintained. It is impossible to sustain existence on a tramp-ward dietary, and regulations will not allow the homeless wanderer to settle there. Consequently he goes elsewhere. Until a more effective national provision is made, the shelter is at any rate a provision for the most destitute. Free shelters, however, especially if in an insanitary condition, may constitute a danger, being out of relation to the true national policy of dealing with destitution. The care of this lowest class is better understood abroad. If the State accepts the care of the destitute, some provision must be made for those "past work." The Report is written as if the state of these men was due to the "demoralising effect of the shelters." Mr. Crooks, however, says: "The poor chaps have become degenerate; they cannot work; they have got quite *past work*; they can hardly beg; they go in and have a meal, good sound food, stop all night, and come out in the morning. What do they do in the morning? All life is objectless; they have nothing to do; they have simply to loaf away another day without any object in life at all."

In his evidence he attributes this to "general break-up," due to the absence of proper food and shelter. He shows that people of this character "loafing and lurching with eyes like the eyes of a dead fish," were "improved out of all knowledge" at the Laindon farm colony.

A few nights' "sleeping out" may reduce a man to a most miserable condition. It is a wonder that many survive. The writer has been receiving for years *women* reduced to the extremest destitution and incapable of work without rest and food. The majority have passed on to employment, but in the state received it would have been impossible for them to obtain it.

[30] Repeatedly asserted by tramp ward inmates.

[31] Note 25.

[32] See section 15 as regards Shakespeare's "vagrom men."

[33] It is surprising how little is said in the Report about common lodging-houses, though in the chapter on spread of disease by vagrants useful recommendations are made as to stricter enforcement of existing laws. As a rule, cleanliness in shelters (in spite of the use of the "bunk" for sleeping) is far in advance of the common lodging-house. Beds, especially flock beds, are often most insanitary for this class of persons. Inspection is often merely perfunctory or too infrequent to act as a check. Even in London inspection leaves much to be desired though conditions are greatly improved.

[34] This lodging-house has since been removed or suppressed.

[35] This was a northern lodging-house.

[36] The average number *prosecuted* in 1899-1903 reached 9,003. It would be much greater but for the leniency of the police (Vagrancy Report, section 379). On the 7th July, 1905, in Holborn district, 1,055 males and 176 females were found "principally on the Embankment, the larger number of them on the seats."

[37] The Vagrancy Report gives very varying estimates (section 74), varying from 25,000 to 80,000. But it is to be noted that these figures include all persons "without settled home or visible means of subsistence." The writer estimates at 10,000 those belonging to the confirmed tramp class. A number of those estimated in the total are included in "Vagrants Wandering to their own Hurt," see sections 389-391.

[38] See "Vagrants Wandering to their own Hurt," Chap. XIV., Vagrancy Report.

[39] An account of the labour colonies in Holland, Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland is given in the Vagrancy Report, sections 228-256. In Germany the average net cost is £6 per head per year. At Merxplas, Belgium, it is £9. See also Appendix III.

[40] The German Relief System is described (sections 168-170), Vagrancy Report. The adoption universally of the way-ticket and provision for "seekers for work" would assimilate our system to this.

[41] See sections 228-230, Vagrancy Report.

[42] See sections 249-256, Vagrancy Report.

[43] See sections 171, 172, Vagrancy Report.

[44] "In view of the subsequent history of the law as to casual paupers, it is matter for regret that Parliament should have thus abandoned the older tradition by which county authorities were charged with a responsibility for vagrants nearly akin to the responsibility falling on parochial authorities in respect of ordinary paupers" (Vagrancy Report, section 260).

[45] The way-ticket system appears likely to pass into legislation (see sections 173-182, Vagrancy Report).

[46] The Gloucestershire way-ticket system is described in sections 160, 161, 176, Vagrancy Report.

[47] See section 164, Vagrancy Report.

[48] It will be seen that these recommendations are in substance adopted by the Committee, Appendix II.

[49] This is also practically adopted in Report (see sections 221, 222, 224).

[50] "The short period during which, on an average, a colonist stays at Hadleigh, and the absence of any power of detention, militate against the possibility of financial success" (Vagrancy Report, section 267).

[51] Only 158 remained in Hadleigh Colony more than six months of 523 persons received during the two years ending September, 1904. Sixty "satisfactory" cases were readmitted later (Vagrancy Report, sections 263, 264).

[52] See "How to Deal with the Unemployed" (Brown, Langham & Co.), pp. 181-184.

[53] See sections 268-271, Vagrancy Report, also Appendix III.

[54] The "way-ticket" system will partly meet this need, but it cannot be properly met with without the provision of better lodging-houses, well-regulated and sanitary.

[55] See sections 403-409, Vagrancy Report, Appendix IV. and VII.

[56] "We are strongly of opinion that some better provision should be made to assist the man genuinely in search of work" (section 155).

[57] "It is most important to remove the excuse for casual almsgiving" (section 155). (See also sections 385-388.)

[58] See evils of short sentences (Appendix V.).

[59] The comprehensive scheme for labour colonies is outlined in sections 227-286, Vagrancy Report.

[60] "The general principle of a compulsory labour colony on habitual vagrants may be borrowed from abroad, but the essential details must be worked out at home." The proposal is to bring subsidised philanthropic institutions to bear on the problem, but to form one State colony for vagrants (Vagrancy Report, sections 277-305).

[61] The proposal to place the casual ward in charge of the police will tend to this unification.

[62] See section 132, Vagrancy Report.

[63] The placing of the tramp ward under the police is a step in the right direction, but further reforms are urgent in poor-law administration.

[64] Section 179, Vagrancy Report.

[65] Section 130, Vagrancy Report.

[66] This need does not appear to be recognised in Vagrancy Report.

[67] Sections 184, 185, Vagrancy Report.

[68] Section 136, Vagrancy Report. The transfer of vagrancy charges to police will greatly simplify the question of finance.

[69] Sections 95, 181, 308-10; sections 93, 148, 149, Vagrancy Report.

[70] Sections 345-388, Vagrancy Report.

[71] Sections 284, 285, 304, Vagrancy Report.

[72] Sections 178-182, Vagrancy Report.

[73] Section 300, Vagrancy Report.

[74] It is estimated that £100,000 is given away in London in a year to street beggars (section 386, Vagrancy Report).

[75] "We believe that the best and simplest method of securing the desired end (incentive to work) would be to allow the colonists to earn by industry and good conduct small sums of money, a portion of which would be retained till discharged and a portion handed over to them weekly to spend, if they like, at the canteen of the colony." Vagrancy Report, section 260.

[76] See enormous cost of casual wards, Vagrancy Report, Chap. IX. Paddington cost £195, Poplar £219, and Hackney £346 *per head*. The *average* cost in the country is £60 and in London £150 per head. See also "The Extravagance of the Poor Law," *Contemporary Review*, June, 1906.

[77] The proposed reforms go much further in the right direction. It is to be hoped they will not be minimised in passing into law.

[78] See sections 403-409, Vagrancy Report. The Committee regard the question of "female vagrants" as "comparatively unimportant." But it is not sufficiently considered that the disparity in numbers of men and women vagrants (887 females to 8,693 males on January 1st, 1905), and the smaller numbers of women found "sleeping out," are due to the existence of a possible method of livelihood for women by prostitution, absent in the case of men, but exceedingly harmful to the State. The temptation to prostitution through destitution should be as far as possible removed. (See Chap. V.)

[79] See recommendations 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 16, Appendix II.

[80] The one objection to the Report is the delay consequent on the necessity for legislation. It is a pity that there is not a recommendation to proceed at once by Local Government Board Order in the direction of the finding of the Committee. Legislation may be postponed till after the Poor Law Commission.

[81] The author has more fully developed the psychical principles involved in right classification of the undeveloped in an article published in the *Contemporary Review*, June, 1906.

[82] See Appendix VII.

[83] See p. **30**.

[84] See Appendix VII.

[85] First published in *The Contemporary Review* May, 1904, under title "The Tramp Ward."

[86] See previous chapter.

[87] Probably it was not known. News filters from one to another slowly. Besides, a man may not return to the tramp ward, after seeking work, for another night.

[88] Official regulations say the bath should come first, "as soon as possible after admission." This means giving food in bed, and is, no doubt, often evaded.

[89] See p. **26**.

[90] See p. **137**.

[91] See p. **78**.

[92] My companion was a "working woman," used to a hard day's work.

[93] See p. **51**.

[94] See p. **28**.

[95] See p. **30**.

[96] See p. **49**.

[97] See p. **50**.

[98] See p. **75**.

[99] See p. **64**.

[100] See Appendix VII.

[101] See Chap. V.

[102] Contrast tramp ward fare, pp. **112**, **124**, **152**.

[103] See Appendix VII.

[104] See p. **48**, note.

[105] See Appendix VII.

[106] See p. **132**.

[107] See Chap. V.

[108] See page **49**. Lodging-houses for women do not exist in many towns, there are only common lodging houses, worse still than the above. See pp. **96-105**, also Chap. VI.

[109] See pp, **45**, **50**.

[110] See Chap. II., pp. **130-135**, also Appendix VII.

[111] See p. **193**.

[112] See p. **190**.

[113] See p. **194** for contrast.

[114] See p. **194**.

[115] See Appendix VII.

[116] See p. **28**.

[117] See Appendix VII.

[118] See p. **97**.

[119] See p, **193**.

[120] See Appendix VII.

[121] See p. **190**, and as a contrast p. **200**.

[122] See Appendices VII. and VIII.

[123] See p. **49**; also Appendix VIII.

[124] See p. **195**.

[125] It is not sufficient to provide a refuge, there should be accommodation not charitable, not for *rescue* but for *prevention*, as working women require to be free to come and go.

[126] Contrast, p. **257**.

[127] See pp. **92**, **104**.

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[128] See p. **200**.

[129] A woman has, during the day, no access to a private room, where search is possible, and the washing places are in the common kitchen usually, or at any rate not private. Few lodging-houses have stoving apparatus, it is too costly.

[130] See Appendix VIII.

[131] The contrast between the sanitary precautions of the tramp ward, and the absence of common sanitation in the common lodging-house is startling.

[132] See pp. **36**, **47**.

[133] These rooms, as they exist at present, are a grave social danger. They also should be inspected and under municipal control See as to Berlin arrangements, p. **21**. These rooms are largely used for prostitution. All places used as temporary dwelling places need most careful and rigid supervision. Coroner's inquests often reveal sad dangers to child-life, in such "holes and corners" as are now let at exorbitant rents. A man can let *each room* at a price that may cover the house rent. 8*d*. per night is a usual charge in the north. Light and fire to be found. See Appendix VIII.

[134] See Appendix VII., VIII.

[135] See p. **97**.

[136] See pages **259-267**.

[137] See p. **49**. This lodging-house is now suppressed.

[138] See Appendix VIII.

[139] Reprinted from *Daily News* of April 18th, 1905.

[140] This is not true, but where a doctor is not in residence it appears as if officials often will not take the trouble to detain tramps to see him, and permission if asked for is often refused. See pp. **43**, **157**.

[141] See p. **29**.

[142] My friend was at one time accustomed to wash for a family of nine.

[143] See pp. **26**, **213**.

[144] See p. **171**.

[145] See pp. **30**, **49**.

[146] See p. **51**.

[147] See p. **26**.

[148] See p. **31**.

[149] See p. **29**.

[150] See p. **41**41.

[151] See p. **19**.

[152] It must be remembered that the largest cities attract such, and form, as it were, cesspools of degeneration. The honest traveller may be in some lodging-houses in larger proportion, but he has to herd with the worst, or sleep out. See pp. **35-37**.

[153] See Chap. V.

[154] See p. **19**.

[155] See Minutes of Evidence before Vagrancy Committee, 10,482-10,492.

[156] See p. **213**.

[157] Rowton Houses, however, accommodate large numbers of working men

[158] References in parentheses are to sections in the Vagrancy Report.

[159] I do not agree as to time task. See p. **45**45. See pp. **181-184**, "How to Deal with the Unemployed."

[160] Chapter VII., Vagrancy Report.

[161] See Appendix I. Great care will be necessary to ensure admission to *all really destitute*.

[162] See Appendix VII.

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